

## AGRITOURISM FARM IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK AND ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

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### ABSTRACT

The agritourism represents a new source of tourism and is linked not only to the rural world, but mainly to agriculture. The last three decades have multiplied operating facilities abroad, in countries such as the UK, France, the Netherlands and Germany, but also Austria. Italy, compared with these countries, is a young territory from the point of view of rural tourism, but the development of recent years has been uneven. The agritourism was established as a response to the crisis in the agricultural sector, which is why one of the factors necessary for the opening is, the possession of an agricultural activity. The structure is therefore not an independent activity, but an integral part of agricultural activity, with the aim of enhancing not only the agricultural fund but also the products drawn from them. The aim of the research and analysis which was carried out, is to identify the main features of the agritourism and its fast development in Italy. Therefore, we propose to analyse not only from a touristic point of view, but also statistical, the agritourist supply and demand for this type of tourism in a country with a thousand possibilities from the point of view of tourism. This paper presents the results of the analysis of the Italian agritouristic structure. In order to realize I used the available data in the various websites such as ISTAT, EUROSTAT, of the different associations and even some interviews and a questionnaire.

### KEYWORDS

*farmhouse, agritourism, sustainable development, rural development, agriculture, environment*

### INTRODUCTION

The primary sector in Europe has experienced profound transformations in recent years. The system of guaranteed prices, which featured the scene of European agriculture for decades, was gradually replaced by a new model of agricultural development that makes quality of agricultural food production and the environment its own strengths.

The European Union has become a promoter of change, defining new strategies and guidelines to ensure the permanence of the farmers in the area and allow the progressive transformation of farm in rural enterprise. Additionally, with a business management can be offered, in addition to land traditional products, also a wide range of essential services to compete successfully in the changing international scenario.

Important results have already been achieved in the field of enhancement of typical local products, natural and artistic beauties, but it appears undeniable increase the receive activities, hospitality and leisure in rural areas, with the dual purpose of allowing farmers to supplement their income with complementary activities (Lanfranchi et al., 2014c) and to respond simultaneously to the needs of modern society, more and more brought to the rediscovery of flavours and values that are part of its history.

In light of these considerations, it becomes understandable why the agritouristic phenomenon has greatly enlarged valorising traditions, art, culture and nature. It is important to note, also, that for this task a holiday farm must equip itself with adequate promotional activity with different advertising and marketing channels in order to achieve a vital source of supplementary income, beneficial to the business. On this basis, the holiday farm can also arise as a new development model that will safeguard environmental quality and quality of life.

### 1. TOURISMS OF NATURE

In new types of tourism, activity that in recent times has emerged with a positive growth trend is the so-called "outdoor" tourism or nature tourism or green tourism. This tourism is made up of various components hard to be identified in which the tourist is a "consumer" of green areas and the main motivation to vacation is the observation and appreciation of nature and traditional crops (Bini, 2004).

Moreover, tourism motivated by nature element is difficult to be measured because, in the most cases, it is associated with other motivations as gastronomy, cultural aspects and its rapid growth requires planning in order to not destroy the product that the tourist research. So also the modification of a landscape can have negative effects when there is a substantial and irreversible loss of the original value of resources too exploited for tourism purposes (Bizzarri and Querini, 2006).

The agritourism, as well as being a direct result of the rediscovery of the natural environment, is a new way of tourism fruition to meet the human desire to a different lifestyle than the usual, through a new and alternative holiday.

The agritourism appears, as an integrative economic activity than agricultural, the outcome of which is linked to the quality of landscape and of the surrounding environment to which it is necessary to have the utmost respect, as this is also a source of income. The phenomenon of self-production of the holiday dedicated to green and therefore to the appreciation of nature, of genuine living and rediscovery the authentic values, showed an increase in the total turnover to which also contribute the ecotourism and tourism in parks and protected areas.

Ecotourism, then, together with adventure tourism, stands in the tourism market as an important sector of tourism of nature, in which, however, compared to adventure tourism, it tends to stand out in a very original, thanks to its strong connotation of sustainability linked to the different way of being with the environment. Adventure tourism, in fact, lives and uses the natural environment primarily as a place for physical activities. Ecotourism, however, research a contact with the environment to know and rediscover it, observing and interpreting it, according to its integrity, both in natural and socio-cultural components that it is committed to preserving and defending. To these characteristics, then, ecotourism maintains fruitful relations with rural tourism and to a lesser extent with cultural tourism, having as common denominator the natural landscape.

The quantitative dimension of tourism in parks and protected areas is due to the fact that this flow is determined not only by the attractiveness of the parks itself but, above all, by the fact that the parks are experienced as an integrated system, a set of multiple functions within which the natural component is only one of liveable experiences besides the architectural heritage, cultural tourism in Art Cities, wine and food initiatives, etc. Ultimately, the park today is a system in which nature acts as a connective or wonderful setting for a touristic experience that is also found in other components of its full realization (Polci and Gambassi, 2003).

In fact, a development model that emphasizes the different socio-economic contexts of the Union and inspires the local rural areas development processes, "directing them in agro-environmental sense, agritouristic, agricultural and handcraft, agri naturalistic" (Calatrava Requena and Ruiz Avilès, 1997), depending on the characteristics of the territories. All practices of nature tourism and quality, especially the eco tourist practice by educating tourists to research and to the enjoyment of intact natural settings and food and other typical and traditional otherwise, are able to promote and schedule in-Park areas, activities with positive impacts and to provide the necessary financial resources as well, both for the better preservation of the environment, and for the presence and local and traditional production activities from which depends in part on the quality of an eco holiday.

## 2. THE AGRITOURISM BUSINESS

The farm tourism consists of a form of suburban tourism reserved for agricultural entrepreneurs. The farm was born as a response to the increasingly less profitable farming and respecting the principle of sustainability using environmental spaces for tourism services and create an additional income to the sole activity of production.

A holiday farm in fact allows to produce some income while respecting the protection of environmental and cultural heritage of the countryside. From now on the agricultural activity is then considered, in addition to its production function, also for its ability to provide goods and services.

Farm holiday is synonymous with rural tourism, that is the set of tourism activities carried out in rural areas. Rural tourism is mainly due to the holiday farms and in Italy is a rapidly growing phenomenon. Just look at the data between 2003 and 2013 in which there was a 57% increase in the number of farmhouses. In Italy the highest concentration of farmhouses is in the North (48%), follows the Centre (35%) and finally the South (19%) of the country (ISTAT, 2015). Trentino South Tyrol and Tuscany, where the hospitality is more rooted for historical reasons, are the regions leaders such as presence of farmhouses.

Agritourism means, therefore, any activities of hospitality and reception set up by farmers in their farms. It should be noted that the agritourism activity is closely related to agriculture and therefore can only exist in the presence of a farm and a farmer who decides to use his own company to welcoming tourists. From the agritourism the agriculture it draws a strong advantage in terms of increase of its revenue. However, the benefits are not just for the farm but also for tourists that translate into lower prices and accessible than a structure like a hotel, keeping in mind, however, that agritourism supply being varied can be find a simple accommodation in isolated farms in the countryside and well-kept villas where prices are obviously higher.

The farmhouse is a rural accommodation facility used inside of farm buildings where tourists can stay. Cannot be used buildings not closely linked to the farm and located in a place other than the fund in which you want to carry on the business of agritourism. It is not possible to use buildings from scratch, but only renovated houses and recovered.

The term "agritourism" is used to indicate the following types of agricultural companies:

- *those that offer only accommodation;*
- *those that offer accommodation and Food Services;*
- *those that apart from accommodation and catering offer other activities related to the social, environment, sports, gaming.*

The farmhouse differs from the formula of the "bed and breakfast" because the latter offers accommodation service in their own home with a limited availability of rooms and beds.

## 3. TOURISM BETWEEN AGRICULTURE AND TERRITORY

In general, the common element of agritourism and rural tourism is that of consolidating sustainable development processes in rural areas where the territory is considered a relationship between landscape resource and environmental resource. When it comes to landscape, element of immediate perception of a given territory, a distinction must be made between natural landscapes created by nature and agricultural landscape that, however, has been altered by farmer man. The interaction of one with another form the rural territory. Environmental resources represent a resource that is not reproducible and multiform and the transmission of the characteristics of the territory itself in agrotouristic practice transforms them into environmental resource. The agritourism, namely, can transform the territory and its factors in the strengths of the rural world, becoming the natural link between all the elements and actors of the country universe.

The agricultural employer, therefore, expresses "its agricultural culture, its traditions, its customs, the characteristics of its offer, while maintaining strong links and intensely lived with their past" (Di Muzio et al., 2000).

The anthropological component, in this sense, is a priceless heritage not subject to reproducibility and endangered if it is not preserved and handed down. The constituent elements of the anthropological component are closely related to the rural territory as they have contributed to the creation of the agrarian landscape. They can be identified in the popular festivities, food and wine traditions and local products and crafts, in the uses and customs.

With regard to, above all, food and wine traditions and traditional food products, the farm can act as a tool for recovery and reuse of traditional gastronomic food of resources related to rural culture of a particular local context.

The Italy, in particular, can boast the largest number of typical products in Europe, each of them passes on a vision of the unique and unmistakable territory of origin. Finally, between the resources available to a good agricultural tourism we must mention those architectural corporate, housing facilities of rural type, no longer necessary to the fund management, intended to agrotourism activity. Over the past twenty years the concept of agriculture evolved considerably freeing itself from the traditional concept of activities aimed at the production of alimentary goods. In the current context, the agricultural sector is affected by a profound transformation, both in terms of social and economic.

The increase in production is no longer the sole objective to be pursued through activities of land exploitation and its resources but also other issues emerge predominantly relating to environmental protection, biodiversity, sustainability and eco-compatibility of agricultural production and, in general, the quality of life. Rural development in this direction took a strategic role for the development of our society in which the farmer is increasingly called upon to play a very important role as the person who lives and works on rural territory. In summary, the economic development of rural areas must take into account:

- the management of natural resources;
- the environment functions;
- the promotion of culture, tourism and leisure.

The happy blend of agriculture and tourism are born in rural areas, sustainable development processes that aim, on the one hand to safeguard the values that these areas represent, on the other to enhance "the existing resources in a perspective not longer agricultural and productivistic, but integrated and multifunctional" (INEA, 2002).

Of course, the relationship between agriculture and tourism provides a very different pattern of use of the territorial resources than the previous organization exclusively agricultural of the company. The agriturismo arises, then, as a fundamental tool for the redefinition of the local context in its structuring of the territory by relying on a different and more effective enhancing local resources, from natural ones to those landscapes, cultural-historical and architectural ones, those food and crafts.

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#### **4. THE AGRITOURISM AS A FACTOR OF LOCAL DEVELOPMENT AND PROMOTION OF A TERRITORY**

The agricultural sector, in recent years, has been marked by deep transformations. The EU has been at the forefront of this change, by defining new strategies and guidelines to ensure the permanence of the farmers in the territory and allow the progressive transformation of farm in rural enterprise, managed with adequate level of managerial skills and able to compete in the various market levels.

Important results have already been achieved in the field of enhancement of typical local products, natural and artistic beauties. But it is undeniable that to strengthen the activities of reception, hospitality and leisure in rural areas, with the dual purpose of allowing farmers to supplement their income with complementary activities and to meet the needs of modern society increasingly brought to the rediscovery of tastes and values that are part of its history.

The tourist approaches the countryside to look for genuine products, but also to meet its needs for leisure and entertainment, to retrieve the physical well-being, to search for a direct and immediate contact with the peasant wisdom. In fact, the prospective customer perceives the agriturismo reality as a world dominated by peace, by the slow flow of the seasons, by sounds and scents typical of the countryside.

In light of these considerations, it is understandable why the agritouristic phenomenon in recent years, the farm has experienced an explosion in countries steeped in tradition and artistic and natural beauty. Also, it is important to point out that a holiday farm should not be perceived by the customer as a mere "countryside hotel" but involve him and make him feel at ease, in a climate of cordial hospitality, living and thoroughly enjoy the same situations of master of the house. So in addition to relaxation and tranquillity, to involve him in the administration of meals, tastings and organization of rural itineraries, and complementary activities and ancillary to agriculture, natural heritage protection and of the building, rural architecture, the enhancement of traditional and organic farming products.

The "taste farms", the places of culinary traditions rediscovery, of the craftsmanship and memory peasant farms, that farmhouse re-proposes in a continuous evolution through the organization of sensory workshops, tastings, cooking classes, etc., are, therefore, the link between the past and the hope of a life based on authentic values.

We must not forget, moreover, the so-called "didactic farms" whose purpose is to offer to students and families the opportunity to rediscover not only the countryside and the environment that surrounds it, but also, tastes, traditions and crafts forgotten in a real and natural scenario / workshop.

The agriturismo represents the sector of development that best meets the objectives of "sustainable tourism", intended as a phenomenon that affects primarily the areas with a good degree of conservation of the land and its natural characteristics, containment of land consumption, safeguarding environmental resources, labour market integration. To this is added a very important component in business

management terms and that is the possibility of establishing sectoral processes of supply chain given the proper character of the farm as an asset that can be integrated with other economic sectors.

Characterizing the tourist offer by linking it to the environmental and cultural resources it makes the territory a "product" that will implement both direct tourist activities (hotel and extra-hotel facilities, support structures, businesses, etc.) and indirect tourism activities (catering, sports and recreational activities, cultural events, etc.).

In this sense, the nature-orientated tourism component becomes, more and more a territory's presentation tool in its entirety and now visible across the network of facilities and services which form the deeper connective tissue. The more consolidated are its joints and narrow connections much stronger and more competitive tourism is the answer that a territory has to offer.

## 5. MOTIVATIONS FOR AGRITOURISM

Among the reasons that may induce farmers to transform their working farm a holiday farm, can be specified:

- the integration of agricultural income;
- the income differentiation untying a part to seasonal variables;
- investment in real estate and tourist accommodation activities;
- the possibility of producing genuine products marketable through channels different than conventional.

It is, however, evident that the agritouristic entrepreneur must take into account the multiple external and internal strengths and weaknesses to its business, which could affect the effective validity of the choice of starting a farm.

External factors are those which derive essentially from the context in which the farm is already inserted in place and in which must be initiated and developed the agritourism activity can be identify as follows:

- the landscape resource and environmental;
- the architectural resources;
- the cultural resources;
- gastronomic resources and handicrafts.

All factors affecting and involving directly the relevance and attractiveness of the territory in which the activity will be carried out.

Internal factors are, vice versa, those more directly connected to the enterprise and can be identified in:

- agricultural resources;
- human resources;
- financial resources;

Actually available to the contractor both in terms of quantity (especially financial resources) is, in terms of quality and expertise (especially human resources).

In turn the effects that the agritouristic activity determines on the agricultural enterprise are several:

- crop diversification;
- the recovery of typical local products;
- the creation of an internal market to the company due to the direct sale of products;
- realization of the conditions for the organic production (eco-compatibility);
- the farm processing of raw materials in typical products.

It is evident that the agritourism activities, as well as affect the company directly, is able to determine a positive effects on the entire social and economic fabric of reference, encouraging and supporting development and exploitation paths and jobs (in terms of authenticity, genuineness, quality of products and services offered) the entire territory can extend its positive effects on the entire local economy.

Focus on customers and their needs; efficient organizational structure, lean and governed with responsibility, in a vision of network and partnership with suppliers and institutions; improvement of environmental performance; continuous improvement and innovation based on value, developing people and capitalising on experience and valuable knowledge: these are some of the contributions in conceptual terms that quality has made in search of innovation and excellence in organisational systems (both companies and of public administrations) for sustainable development over time. Are the factors that have allowed many companies and public and private organisations to succeed and maintain a high level of competitiveness for the quality of their products or services, despite the various crises that have occurred nationally and globally.

## 6. THE AGRITOURISTIC STRUCTURE: A DECADE OF GROWTH

The agritourism is a reality that in the past decade has been considerably widespread also in Italy, while in the rest of Europe is in a stage of maturity. Italian scenario is presented below for the farmhouses in the area, using ISTAT data, processed and updated at 31 December 2013 (last year with official data).

In Italy, in the period 2008-2013, the authorized agritourism farms grew by 13.1%, from 18.5 to 20.9 thousand units. The increase relates to an extent more sustained in the northern regions, in particular Lombardy (1,132 in 1,521) and Piedmont (from 933 to 1,220 companies); in the Centre the largest increase was recorded in Latium (255 units). For the South, the most significant increase is noted in Sicily (176 units). Over the five years considered increasing the Tourist farms with accommodation (+ 11.5% of companies), while the number of beds rose from 189 to 225 thousand units. During the same period also grow farm restaurants (+ 17.8%) and the seats (+

20.6%). Over the last few years, the offer of agrotourism services evolves, going in many cases in addition to accommodation and dining facilities.

From 2008 to 2013 were up even companies with tasting of local products and local business (+ 8.6%) and those that offer other farm activities related to outdoor life (+ 16.8%), in particular, increase the activity of naturalistic observations (+ 60.1%) and that of the courses (+ 25.8%). The survey notes that as of 2010 there are farms that also perform the teaching activities (+ 56.4%).

The agritourism is a typical Italian reality, other than the rural tourism, regulated in other European countries. The close link between the agritourism activities and overall management of the farm qualifying the sector as a key resource of multifunctional corporate and Italian agricultural reality.

The evolution of farmhouses in the decade 2003-2013 highlights the substantial growth of the sector. In ten years (2004-2013), agritouristic farms increased by 60.5% (13,019 to 20,897), those that provide accommodation of 58.8% (10,767 to 17,102), the percentage of agritouristic farms that offer only accommodation (without other services) compared to the totality of companies with lodging, rose from 52% to 24% and the agritourists of 69.8% (6,193 to 10,514) (table 1). Also between 2003 and 2013, are also growing the number of beds (+ 94,738) and those sitting (+ 157,615). Even agritouristic farms with tasting and those with other agritourism activities grow considerably (+47.9% and +62.7%). Among other activities, are rising sharply sports, teaching farms and varied activities (involving respectively 2,161; 1,176 and 2,247 agritouristic farms).

In comparison with data of the agricultural census of 2010, compared with the total of farms, farmhouses are relatively widespread in the North (48% of total agritouristic farms compared to 24.5% of total farms), in the Centre (34.2% compared to 15.5%) and in the mountains (33% versus 17%); on the other hand, the farmhouses are much less present in southern Italy (17.7% compared to 60%) and plain areas (15.4% versus 31.6%). Currently, the percentage of agritouristic farms present in the different geographical areas shows a substantial uniformity concerning the hills; a value slightly less than double for the mountain; a value nearly halved over the plain.

Table 1. Types of agritourism farms - years 2003-2013

AGRITOURISTIC TYPES	FARM	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	Variation 2013/2003	
													Absolute	%
<b>ACCOMMODATION</b>														
- firms		10,767	11,575	12,593	13,854	14,822	15,334	15,681	16,504	16,759	16,906	17,102	6,335	58.8
- number of beds		130,195	140,685	150,856	167,087	179,985	189,013	193,480	206,145	210,747	217,946	224,933	94,738	72.8
- Rest areas		4,540	5,386	5,826	6,935	7,055	7,320	7,785	8,759	9,113	8,363	8,180	3,640	80.2
<b>FOOD SERVICE</b>														
- firms		6,193	6,833	7,201	7,898	8,516	8,928	9,335	9,914	10,033	10,144	10,514	4,321	69.8
- sitting		249,342	266,654	277,866	298,003	322,145	337,385	365,943	385,470	385,075	397,175	406,957	157,615	63.2
<b>TASTING</b>														
- firms		2,426	2,737	2,542	2,664	3,224	3,304	3,400	3,836	3,876	3,449	3,588	1,162	47.9
<b>OTHER ACTIVITIES</b>														
- firms		7,436	8,240	8,755	9,643	9,715	10,354	10,583	11,421	11,785	11,982	12,096	4,660	62.7
<i>of which:</i>														
- Horseback riding		1,364	1,494	1,478	1,557	1,559	1,615	1,548	1,638	1,662	1,489	1,230	-134	-9.8
- Hiking		2,452	2,692	2,981	3,131	2,879	3,140	3,071	3,190	3,233	3,324	3,124	672	27.4
...Nature observation		224	265	575	517	558	607	623	784	891	932	972	748	333.9
- Trekking		1,350	1,463	1,426	1,465	1,629	1,657	1,674	1,950	1,949	1,821	1,717	367	27.2
- Mountain bike		2,101	2,422	2,258	2,311	2,347	2,398	2,309	2,800	2,794	2,785	2,851	750	35.7
- Teaching farms		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	752	1,122	1,251	1,176	1,176	-
- Courses		693	812	942	1,025	1,256	1,407	974	1,967	1,878	2,009	1,770	1,077	155.4
- Sports		2,927	3,006	3,474	3,682	3,758	4,203	4,168	4,152	4,141	5,058	5,088	2,161	73.8
- Other activities		3,786	4,003	4,288	5,043	5,395	5,616	5,994	6,312	6,737	4,917	6,033	2,247	59.4
<b>AGRITOURISM</b>														
- Total agritourism firms		13,019	14,017	15,327	16,765	17,720	18,480	19,019	19,973	20,413	20,474	20,897	7,878	60.5

Source: own elaboration based on ISTAT 2014 data (12/31/2013)

Compared to the year 2012, there is a substantial increase regarding the distribution level of farms managed by women: in the North (+6.3%), more content in the Centre (+1.7%), while there is a decline (-3.1%) in the other southern regions. Tourist farms managed by women are 7,436 and compared to 2012 have recorded a growth stronger of those managed by men respectively + 2.4 to + 1.9 (table 2).

Table 2. Agritourism farms by gender of the conductor and by region

GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION	Men						Women					
	2012		2013		variation		2012		2013		variation	
	Number	%	Number	%	absolute	%	Number	%	Number	%	absolute	%
<b>ITALY</b>	<b>13,212</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>13,461</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>249</b>	<b>1.9</b>	<b>7,262</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>7,436</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>174</b>	<b>2.4</b>
<b>North</b>	6,858	51.9	7,156	53.2	298	4.3	2,709	37.3	2,880	38.7	171	6.3
Northwest	1,936	14.7	2,034	15.1	98	5.1	1,240	17.1	1,327	17.8	87	7.0
North East	4,922	37.3	5,122	38.1	200	4.1	1,469	20.2	1,553	20.9	84	5.7
<b>Centre</b>	4,053	30.7	4,078	30.3	25	0.6	3,023	41.6	3,074	41.3	51	1.7

<b>Southern</b>	2,301	17,4	2,227	16.5	-74	-3.2	1,530	21.1	1,482	19.9	-48	-3.1
<i>South</i>	1,362	10,3	1,273	9.5	-89	-6.5	1,033	14.2	984	13.2	-49	-4.7
<i>Islands</i>	939	7,1	954	7.1	15	1.6	497	6.8	498	6.7	1	0.2

Source: own elaboration based on ISTAT 2014 data (12/31/2013)

Farms authorized to per accommodation are 17,102 (+1.2% compared to 2012) and represent the 81.8% of the total national farmhouses; these companies have 224,933 number of beds (+3.2%) and 8180 rest areas for camping (-2.2%) with a total of 8,180. Among the companies authorized to accommodation, 4,083 (about a quarter of the total) only provide accommodation, 7,628 (44.6%) combine hospitality to restaurant facilities, 2,789 (16.3%) associate hospitality with a food tasting and 10,184 (59.5%) enrich the offer of accommodation with other activities (horseback riding, hiking, sports, courses, etc.) (Table 3).

Table 3. Agritourism farms by type of accommodation and geographic areas - year 2013 -

GEOGRAPHICAL AREAS	Total			only accommodation			accommodation and restaurant			accommodation with other activities		
	Farm houses	number of beds	rest areas	Farm houses	number of beds	rest areas	Farm houses	number of beds	rest areas	Farm houses	number of beds	rest areas
<b>ITALY</b>	<b>17,102</b>	<b>224,933</b>	<b>8,180</b>	<b>4,083</b>	<b>43,925</b>	<b>1,300</b>	<b>7,628</b>	<b>109,060</b>	<b>5,089</b>	<b>10,184</b>	<b>145,954</b>	<b>5,272</b>
<b>North</b>	7,194	82,667	2,319	2,534	26,848	543	2,769	34,247	1,322	3,446	40,868	1,360
<i>Northwest</i>	2,218	30,312	1,174	382	5,781	248	1,374	17,958	715	1,314	17,784	718
<i>North East</i>	4,976	52,355	1,145	2,152	21,067	295	1,395	16,289	607	2,132	23,084	642
<b>Centre</b>	6,708	96,696	1,680	1,250	13,666	361	2,360	39,004	760	4,759	73,682	1,085
<b>Southern</b>	3,200	45,570	4,181	299	3,411	396	2,499	35,809	3,007	1,979	31,404	2,827
<i>South</i>	1,977	28,364	2,884	163	2,047	289	1,540	21,729	2,016	1,398	21,603	2,000
<i>Islands</i>	1,223	17,206	1,297	136	1,364	107	959	14,080	991	581	9,801	827

Source: own elaboration based on ISTAT 2014 data (12/31/2013)

The Centre is the territorial distribution with multiple farms that offer simultaneously several types of activities: 3,226 companies with a different type of activity, 1,609 with two other types and 623 with three. The Center-South confirms the axis of agritourism accommodation, with 63.2% of the national total of firms authorized to provide accommodation and the 57.9% of number of beds.

In particular, 40.8% (6,983 units) combines accommodation with another type of agritourism activities, 26.3% (4,490 companies) with two types of activities and 9% (1,546 units) with all three other agritouristic types.

Regarding the holiday farms authorized to the accommodation, was also found the number of rooms and beds located in residential houses or independent ones. The typology of ordinary housing or not independent (i.e. located in parts of farm buildings), which is the most prevalent concerns 10,616 companies (62.1% of farms authorised to housing), for a total of 125,608 number of beds, with an average of 11.8 number of beds per farm.

In line with what was recorded for accommodation, the farm restaurant – is increasing in all geographical areas except in the South-is altogether more present in the Central-southern regions, where is located 53.1% of the farms with restaurant business. Focusing on agritourist farms with restaurant business, the 13.8% of restaurant farms shall be authorised only to restaurant services, 72.6% also offers accommodation, 26% combines restaurant with the food tasting and the 58% completes the supply with the exercise of other activities (horseback riding, hiking, sports, courses, etc.). Farms offering restaurant grew (+ 3.6%) more than the total (+ 2.1%). The supply of other activities by the holiday farms includes a wide range, from hiking, horseback riding and various sports, nature observation to different courses. In 2013 include 12,096 companies (+1% compared to 2012) authorized to carry out other agritourism activities (horseback riding, hiking, nature observation, hiking, biking, educational farms, courses, sports and various): this is the 57.9% of farms (Table 4).

Table 4. Agritourism farms by type of other activities and geographic areas - Year 2013 -

GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION	Total	horseback riding	hiking	nature observation	Trekking	Mountain bike	educational farms	courses	sports	various
<b>ITALY</b>	<b>12,096</b>	<b>1,230</b>	<b>3,124</b>	<b>972</b>	<b>1,717</b>	<b>2,851</b>	<b>1,176</b>	<b>1,770</b>	<b>5,088</b>	<b>6,033</b>
<b>North</b>	4,794	548	1,441	378	306	651	892	795	1,414	2,662
<i>Northwest</i>	1,943	346	549	350	147	400	442	443	399	1,252
<i>North East</i>	2,851	202	892	28	159	251	450	352	1,015	1,410
<b>Centre</b>	5,066	377	1,119	178	1,065	1,825	117	690	2,817	2,087
<b>Southern</b>	2,236	305	564	416	346	375	167	285	857	1,284
<i>South</i>	1,590	245	254	239	241	329	128	187	480	1,105
<i>Islands</i>	646	60	310	177	105	46	39	98	377	179

Source: own elaboration based on ISTAT 2014 data (12/31/2013)

Among the companies authorized to carry out other activities, the most numerous are grouped in "sport" and "various", which include, respectively, 5,088 (42.1% of total) and 6,033 unit (49.9%). Hiking and use of mountain bikes are practiced, respectively, in 3124 and 2851 agritouristic farm. The courses, trekking and horseback riding concern, respectively, 1,717 and 1,770, and then 1,230 agritouristic farms; more limited the supply of naturalistic observation, involving 972 holiday farms.

The survey notes that in 2013 were 1,176 farmhouses which perform the activity of teaching farm compared to 2,363 in 2012 Teaching farms are an expression of the multi-functionality of farms and are fully included in the recreational, cultural and educational activities carried out by farmhouses (Table 5).

Table 5. Authorized teaching farms in Italy

GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION	2000	2005	2009	2011	2012
ITALY	258	620	1,752	2,134	2,363

Note: The 2012 data for the region Calabria are not available.

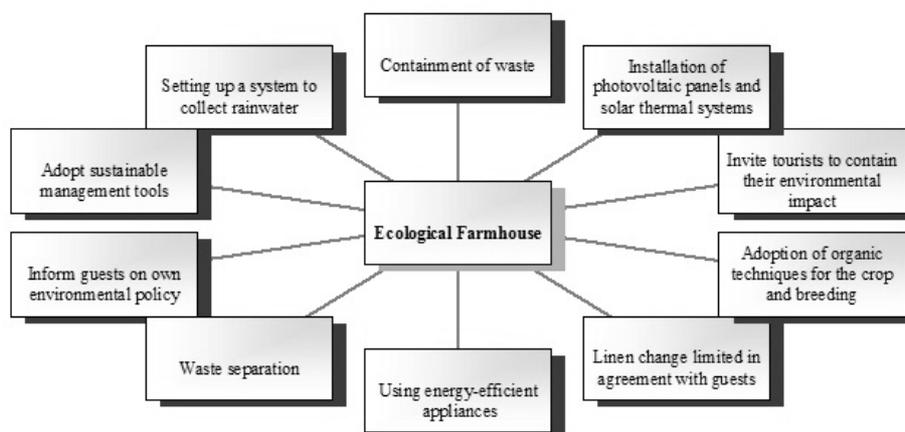
Source: own elaboration based on ALIMOS data, 2012

## 7. TOWARDS A FARMHOUSE MORE AND MORE "ECOLOGICAL"

In 2012, the National Tourism Observatory conducted a survey on "Customer care" of tourists in Italy, bringing out an important result. From the answers to the questionnaire, the environmental awareness of guests is growing, especially as the holiday destination is a place of great natural interest.

This aspect is very important for holiday farms which, by implementing specific organizational decisions and initiatives, can seize the opportunities of a tourism demand that demonstrates more and more interest and importance in terms of waste reduction and environmental protection. A farmhouse is considered in itself a proposal for a natural holiday by tourists, so it can take advantage of this great opportunity by responding adequately to the demands and ecological expectations of its guests.

All this can be done simply by putting in place certain organizational decisions and practical initiatives, in a consistent and visible, and above all adequately informing tourists of their ecological choices (figure 1).



Source: elaboration personal

Figure 1. Actions for a most ecological farmhouse

Finally, very important is the adoption of tools for sustainable management of the business. Among these we can identify: The green procurement, environmental management systems, eco-labels. The implementation of an Environmental Management System for a tourism company can create significant competitive advantage, especially against less dynamic competitors. It can enhance the company's image, respond to the increasing demand of tourists, contributing to environmental protection of the resort, sensitize the guests, but also improve the management of activity by reducing costs. Even the eco-labels and environmental certifications applied to agritourism represent a booming phenomenon. More and more agritourism farms decide to adopt some environmental certification, in order to fulfil their commitment to protect the environment, to raise awareness among tourists but also for the need to increase their value and differentiate themselves in the market.

In Europe, but especially in Italy, rural tourism related especially to agritourism facilities, represents a phenomenon in continuous development. The production of quality services by the agritourism facilities comes through the enhancement of the rural territory in which they operate. To protect it is necessary to implement specific tools that help to minimize the impacts of economic activities, in this case the agritouristic ones, and promote a more sustainable tourism through constant communication and information activities.

Among the tools that help the achievement of these objectives include ISO 14001 and EMAS environmental certifications, very similar to each other, and the European ECOLABEL.

The first two are applicable on a voluntary basis refers to modalities and management processes, the ECOLABEL is applicable to the products and services and has the function to certify the environmental excellence of products and services based on their ability to meet certain environmental performance requirements.

Certification is a voluntary act by which an independent certification body certifies that a product, a service or a management system meets certain requirements laid down by specific rules. This all system is based on "mutual recognition" of global Institutions and in Europe is governed by EA (European co-operation for Accreditation), formed by all national accreditation bodies with the aim of recognising the reliability and equivalence of certification awarded at European level.

If it is assumed the point of view of demand (customer, consumer) product certification, rather than the system, has acquired a growing importance in a time of crisis, that has substantially changed the consumptions.

In accordance with the above, here are some data from recent research conducted at national and international:

- Sales of organic products from the large-scale distribution in the first 5 months of 2014 recorded an increase of 17% (ISMEA, 2014). Over the last 12 months [...] 6 Italian families of 10 (just under 15 million households) have bought at least once a biological product (Nomisma, 2014);

- for the 52 percent of respondents in the survey conducted in 60 countries by Nielsen in 2014 - *Doing Well By Doing Good* - purchasing decisions were influenced by the ability of the package to reassure quickly and immediately on the social and environmental impact of a brand through the presence of label.

## CONCLUSIONS

In rural space, landscape extensions are obviously the largest, followed by agriculture ones, and very minor in space, from those with technological vocation. All the territorial structure must represent a mosaic of these three activities and not a monoculture. None monoculture, not even the tourist one, is in itself sustainable.

Worldwide, the underlying trend, after an initial phase of development almost exclusively urban, is the partial re-colonization of the countryside.

The reconsideration of the development of the road network in rural areas is given by the great demand in the international markets of products of controlled origin denomination, of products with a cultural identification that favors their market penetration and therefore also the growth of agritourism. This viability is not reached certain with the intensification of mass production of non-specific foods but by a greater consideration of rural area overall.

The production of landscapes, which inherently are always natural and cultural at the same time, refers to two imperatives: the dynamic conservation, through the enhancement of ecosystems, species, varieties, historical values, and the huge demand on the part of urban diversity to which are no longer used in their daily lives; demand also, but not only, or not primarily, of open spaces, of wilderness. There is here an emerging role and essential for tourism, a new vocation, a new ambition, to colonize, manage, enhance and capitalise on the landscapes, that is the largest and most diverse spaces of the Earth's surface where take place the main biological functions of global importance. Landscape and environment are thus essential service for sustainability and survival of new global society services and as such, as a service, and as an economic asset, need to be considered and valued.

The production of technology, its decentralization towards the rural environment is made possible now by penetration everywhere and in the same way of the information and much easier transport and cheap. Human predisposition, the quality of life and greater sense of responsibility in rural know-how are comparative advantages for installation and rural graft. Thus, the Silicon Valley's are multiplying in the world, with great employment opportunity. Industrial sustainability is no longer ensured by the urban concentration of large specific complexes, but the diversification of small companies, even and especially rural, as is happening in different geographic areas.

Still limited cases, but emblematic, are the ones of global villages, inspired by the ideas of Marshall McLuhan. Rural areas with energy independence, renovated historic villages and fully wired, perfectly equipped telematic villages are able to connect to global communication networks, receive and transmit programs and information.

Rural areas that have already arrived to produce worldwide annual growth of foods can be developed only when rural people, both old and new, will go from simple food producers, to producers of landscapes, and to manufacturers of highly innovative technology. In these three production activities, foods, landscapes and technology, will show an extreme professionalism and apply the three principles of quality, diversity and innovation. The added value of these three products, necessary to revitalize the rural space, comes from a cultural strong brand and from adaptability, human resources, from their capacity for innovation and creativity.

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