04. AGRICULTURE: OBSERVATIONS, TRENDS AND OPPORTUNITIES
Agriculture: Trends and Development

With the world population ever rising and expected to reach 11 billion in the long term, the key issue related to future developments in agriculture is whether we will be able to keep feeding the world. While most scientists agree that this is possible, there is much more debate on how to reach this goal. Some proclaim that the future lies in industrialization of agriculture, making food production more and more like production in factories. Others believe that agriculture based on how natural functions can also feed the world. In this context it is important to realize that intensive agriculture, the dominant system in more developed countries, has a negative long-term impact on future agricultural productivity. This is a result of negative impacts on the natural assets needed to produce food, not to mention negative impacts on the environment and climate change. One striking example of a negative pact of intensive agriculture is soil degradation and erosion.

However, well-designed and well-managed modern farming systems can give very high yields while at the same time greatly reducing negative impacts. While organic agriculture is by some believed to be the system of the future, it is not necessarily the only system that can do the trick. Other alternative systems and well-managed conventional systems can also be successful. Integrated pest management (IPM), and Integrated Soil Fertility Management (ISFM) are approaches that can be applied in these contexts. These methods of agricultural development lend themselves well to being combined with sound landscape development and management in which the landscape also contributes to agriculture via so-called ecosystem services. When agriculture and the landscape more broadly are managed wisely, the overall impact on climate change will be lower. Likewise, agriculture and the broader landscape will be more resilient to the negative impacts resulting from climate change.

For instance, reforestation contributes to more water infiltrating in the soil during heavy rains that will occur more frequently under climate change, which increases the availability of water for the agricultural plots in the area. Moreover, it reduces flash floods and erosion, thus contributing to keeping agricultural soils and the landscape productive.
Soil of Qeparo region

For more detailed information about the soil, please see “Research Maps” in the Annex.
Agriculture in Albania

With agriculture in Albania in full development, the opportunity exists to choose the right development path. To use the lessons learned in other parts of the world with over-intensive agricultural systems that have negative impacts on future agricultural productivity and on the environment. This holds in general for Albanian agriculture but even more so for agriculture and landscape management in the Albanian Riviera. Due to the mountainous nature of the Riviera, agricultural fields are much smaller and areas with high fertility and deep soils are smaller, too.

Large Scale vs. Small Scale

Water availability is also a large challenge. These characteristics make the Riviera unsuitable for large-scale intensive systems and could therefore not compete with other areas in Albania and the world much more suitable to mass production. Opportunities therefore lie in aiming at other market segments for high quality food of superior taste, local uniqueness, and higher prices.
Imports and Exports

Although Albania does export agricultural products, mostly to neighbouring countries, the import sector is much greater. It includes crops and food that are also produced in Albania such as citrus, grapes, and olive oil. While very developed and high-value markets such as the Netherlands and other NW-European countries are interesting export destinations, it will be very hard for Albanian producers and traders to meet the quality and certification standards required for those markets. It will also be difficult to produce sufficiently large and constant volumes of produce to generate economies of scale and compete in international markets. Aligning periods of supply with periods of market demand is also a critical challenge.

Water Management

Due to the topography, high rainfall intensity during parts of the year, and the quality of soil, erosion is a problem on the hills and mountain regions of the area. Particularly when soils have been denuded from vegetation either by overgrazing or unsustainable agricultural practices. Low-lying areas consequently may suffer from poor drainage and frequent floods when heavy rains occur. These effects will in the future be more common and severe as climate change will lead to more extreme weather events, including heavy rains. Various irrigation systems are in use from sprinkler to gravity irrigation, though these are often not functioning or not functioning properly.
When talking about the link between agriculture and tourism the general public usually thinks of farm visits and farm stays. Farms, comprising of the farm buildings and the pastures, fields and forests, that are attractive and representative of the region, while being hospitable, pleasant places to be with good facilities, possibly complemented by farm activities, processing of food (e.g. cheese making) and a farm shop, are certainly an important component of agro-tourism. However, there are several more ways in which agro & tourism can be combined. It is this multitude of ways that make it a promising opportunity for the Albanian Riviera.

As the example of the region around Almeria in Spain versus Burgundy in France clearly illustrates, massive high-intensive agriculture can destroy other assets of a region, most importantly the touristic potential. A more local and specific approach, related to the territory can yield a more ‘natural’ system, that is less dependent on technology and can thus also have a more appealing physical appearance. At the same time, this does not imply that the agriculture is not productive. Most likely it will not be as productive as under highly intense production systems. However, while maintaining the spatial design and crop and animal husbandry composition traditionally specific to the region, improvements can be made in terms of farm management and thus productivity, while maintaining an attractive landscape. While organic agriculture lends itself well to a combination with tourism, well-designed and managed conventional production systems can also provide an attractive landscape.
Specialties
In addition to the landscape design, the choice of crop and animal species, and specifically the choice of crop varieties of a certain crop and the animal breeds of a certain animal species, make a successful link with tourism possible. Crops, cattle and varieties and breeds that are unique for the area are essential ingredients for the local cuisine and add to the experience that tourists/visitors will have. This is well know by the general public for products such as wine and increasingly also olive oil, but also applies to other fresh produce and food products. When local restaurants and hotels source their ingredients at local farms and producers and use region-specific quality produce and animal products, the visitor's experience and the 'branding' of the region is enhanced.

Burgundy
Market Approach
This approach fits very well with market opportunities that we see: being in better paying niche markets. The following stepping stone approach to market development of better paying market segments, by focusing on the national market for products such as olive oil and fruits and vegetables, is recommended:

1. Supply to the tourist sector, particularly the higher end of the tourism market.
2. Supply to quality restaurants willing to pay a price premium for quality / tasty produce.
3. Further develop the domestic market, thus working towards import substitution.
4. All the above steps offer opportunities to gradually develop the agricultural products and value chains towards higher levels. Once such levels are attained this can be used as a jumping board to export markets, for which the sector will then be better prepared.

Part of such a stepping stone approach is to add more value within the region or country. This can be done by proper transport & logistics (maintaining the quality of the produce also over longer period and travel distances), proper and attractive packaging and marketing, processing produce into high quality end products (e.g.
Seasonality

One challenge, however, that needs to be overcome is the strong seasonality of tourism, leading to a mismatch between supply and demand of food produced locally. For that reason opportunities such as described above (e.g. further developing the dome market, selling to higher-end quality shops in larger cities) need to be developed and processing needs to be explored to conserve and valorise food produced outside the tourist season.

Quality Wine from Bourgogne Area - for the same price

2003 Louis Boillot et Fils - Nuits St Georges Les Pruliers 1er Cru 750ml

France - Burgundy - Cote de Nuits - Nuits St Georges | Premier Cru/ Red / Pinot Noir

Buy It Now

€ $99.95
Best practises

Menfi, Italy

Menfi is located at the southern coast of Sicily and is characterized by small scale agriculture, mostly in wine. Farmers are organized in two main cooperatives and collectively market their product on a global market.

The cooperatives also actively engages in the promotion of a number of local ‘Slow Food’ specialities, most notably Carciofi Spinoza. Around the agricultural products a variety of activities are organized that serve as entertainment program for visitors that the region attracts, mainly due to its high quality beaches.

As a result organic farming is developing successfully and is strengthening other economic sectors. Farmers are not so much working on the optimization of individual yields, but rather have three or four sources of income, such as agricultural products, hospitality through small AirBnB’s, and additional revenue, for example through cooking workshops or similar.

Traditional food is served everywhere and recipes can be learned in special workshops in different guest houses. Wine is an essential part not only of the economy of Menfi, but also its culture. Each member of the community’s life on the vineyard is a unique experience, so every wine has a different story to tell.

Wine Tasting Event

www.cantinesettesoli.it
Activities

- Visit the vineyards and winery
- Enjoy traditional organic food served in winery
- Experience the vineyards harvesting atmosphere
- Learn about wine tasting in an workshop
- Visit the coast with a sailing ship
- Attend lectures in traditional cooking
- Take basic lessons in equestrian centre
- Harvest olives
- Scuba dive
- Learn archery
- Fly over the country
- Mountain bike through the natural terrain
Uka Farm, Albania

UKA farm is a perfect example of agrotourism right outside of Tirana. A family run oasis in an area that is predominated by seemingly uncontrolled urban sprawl. UKA is based on organic and biodynamic principles that can inspire enterprises and projects throughout Albania.

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Uka Farm is a biodynamic & organic farm, restaurant, and winery run by Uka family. Flori Uka is a young oenologist in Albania. Combining his fathers knowledge of farming and Italian schooling makes this young man a winemaker to watch. He serves his hand crafted wines only at his Restaurant. The grapes used are all from Albania. The dishes are delicious with a simple preparation using organic vegetables from their Farm. Meat, such as chicken and steak are locally raised.
Deemed by Unesco to be an outstanding example of a Mediterranean landscape, the Amalfi Coast is a beguiling combination of great beauty and gripping drama: coastal mountains plunge into the sea in a stunning vertical scene of precipitous crags, picturesque towns and lush forests. The Amalfi coast is not only knowns for its beautiful Mediterranean landscape, but also for its many terraces filled with lemon trees, that creates an authentic look and enjoyable paths for walking. Agriculture is the reason for the specific beauty and the special region's products, such as limoncello and lemon candy. These products are highly ranked, it's the region's quality product. Aside from its sheer beauty, the region is home to some superb restaurants and hotels. It is also one of Italy's top spots for hiking, with well-marked trails providing a great means of getting away from the coastal clamour.
This report has been prepared in collaboration of CITYFÖRSTER, MVO Nederland and:

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