



Master Thesis

Supervisor: Drs. Erwin van Tuijl

***The case of Agrotourism in Greece and its  
contribution to regional development***

---

Maria Chronopoulou – 368318

July 2013

## Contents

1	Introduction .....	7
1.1	Relevance .....	7
2	Theoretical Discussion and Literature Review .....	11
2.1	Introduction.....	11
2.2	Definition of Tourism .....	11
2.3	Subjects of Tourism.....	15
2.4	Agrotourism / A general approach .....	21
3	Agrotourism in Austria, Italy and Sweden .....	34
3.1	An overview of agrotourism development in Austria.....	35
3.2	An overview of agrotourism development in Italy .....	39
3.3	An overview of agrotourism development in Sweden .....	43
3.4	Comparative analysis among the three case – studies (North Tyrol, Tuscany, Scane) 46	
4	Methodology.....	54
4.1	Introduction.....	54
4.2	Introduction to the qualitative research and derived benefits .....	55
4.3	Selection of the sample.....	56
4.4	Critical thought .....	57
5	Agrotourism development in Greece .....	58
5.1	Introduction.....	58
5.2	An overview of agrotourism development in Greece.....	58
5.3	Institutional framework and legislative mechanisms .....	61
5.4	Agrotourism development in the Messenia region .....	63
6	Results and Discussion.....	72
6.1	Similarities and Points of Difference between the literature and the findings for Greece 72	
6.2	Comparative analysis between the three case – studies and Messenia.....	74
6.3	Factors of Success and Barriers in the implementation of Agrotourism .....	83
7	Conclusions, Policy Recommendations and Implications for Further Research .....	87
7.1	Conclusions.....	87
7.2	Policy Recommendations .....	89
7.3	Implications for further research.....	92
	List of References .....	95
	Appendix.....	99

## **List of Tables**

<b>Table 1:</b> The three approaches of tourism.....	12
<b>Table 2:</b> Definitions and labels of agrotourism.....	24
<b>Table 3:</b> Positive and negative aspects of agrotourism .....	29
<b>Table 4:</b> Actors in the organization of agrotourism .....	31
<b>Table 5:</b> Definition of agrotourism / Types of agrotourists .....	47
<b>Table 6:</b> Ramifications of agrotourism .....	49
<b>Table 7:</b> Organization of agrotourism.....	51
<b>Table 8:</b> Definition of agrotourism.....	64
<b>Table 9:</b> Types of agrotourists .....	66
<b>Table 10:</b> Ramifications of agrotourism .....	67
<b>Table 11:</b> Legislative / Structural settings .....	69
<b>Table 12:</b> Marketing / Advertising .....	70
<b>Table 13:</b> Definition of agrotourism / Types of agrotourists .....	75
<b>Table 14:</b> Ramifications of agrotourism .....	77
<b>Table 15:</b> Organization of agrotourism .....	80
<b>Table 16:</b> Factors of Success .....	83
<b>Table 17:</b> Barriers and Constraints.....	85

## **List of Figures**

<b>Figure 1:</b> Definition of tourism / Supply – Demand side.....	14
<b>Figure 2:</b> Forms of Tourism.....	15
<b>Figure 3:</b> Location of the three analyzed regions.....	34
<b>Figure 4:</b> Depiction of the three examined regions.....	35
<b>Figure 5:</b> Map of Tyrol.....	37
<b>Figure 6:</b> Map of Tuscany .....	40
<b>Figure 7:</b> Map of Scane.....	44
<b>Figure 8:</b> Map of Messenia .....	63

## ***Acknowledgements***

Reaching the end of this master with the completion of the master thesis, I take this opportunity to express the deepest appreciation to all these people who played an incremental role in the successful implementation of this project.

First of all, I would like to express my gratefulness to my supervisor Erwin van Tuijl, as he encouraged me from the very first moment to follow the current topic and supported me with enthusiasm throughout the whole process. He was always trying to motivate and challenge me with his useful comments and remarks in order to get the best out of me. Attending our meetings was a unique experience of sharing ideas and transfer of knowledge.

Furthermore, I need to thank all the participants in my research who with eagerness devoted their precious time during the interviews and let me visit their units and farms. They supplied me with plenty of material for my work and offered me the chance to be part of a typical day in their working environment.

Last but not least, I wish to thank my beloved ones for being in my side all this year. Having their support empowered me to move forwards and not let difficulties let me down or dictate the life path I have chosen. Their trust and faith in me acted as catalysts to my career so far, and it is an undeniable fact that without their encouragement I would not be in this position right now. Thus, I will always feel grateful and lucky for their constant support, help and love.

## **Abstract**

A global tendency towards agrotourism is identified given the fact that tourists have become more sophisticated, environmentally conscious and curious to experience the country life. Thus, the purpose of this study is to present an overall view of the agrotourism concept and points out its contribution to regional development. Greece will be the benchmark of this report and in particular, the prefecture of Messenia. Based on an extensive theoretical background complementary with a qualitative analysis of structured interviews, it investigates the several actions and initiatives taken for the development of agrotourism, as well as, the major success factors and bottlenecks in the implementation process. According to the former, passion for nature, the morphology and the climate of the due region are to be mentioned, while the major barriers which derived from the research are lack of cooperation, poor marketing and insufficient guidance from public actors and authorities. Part of the methodology will also be a comparative analysis between Messenia and three regions of relevance; North Tyrol, Tuscany and Scane, in order to shed light to the main similarities and differences among them. Quite surprising is the fact that Messenia proved to be closer to North Tyrol and Scane, than to Tuscany region, in the way *agrotourism* is applied. Ultimately, concerning the role of alternative types of tourism in rustic areas, the current study came with several results and conclusions. With respect to the aforementioned, not all regions can be considered suitable or attractive locations for agrotourism and its social effect turned out to be more powerful than the financial one. However, the focal point here is that, even if people of rural areas are driven by social gains, they seem to be considerably sensitive when it comes to job creation. Overall, this thesis suggests that human – oriented actions and initiatives promoting innovativeness and diversification will have to be taken in tandem with a greater public intervention and aims to fulfill certain gaps in the literature and shed more light to issues seeking attention through relevant policy recommendations and implications for further research.

**Keywords:** tourism, agrotourism, regional development, Messenia

# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Relevance

Tourism is the basis of economic and cultural development. It was after the mid twenties' that started to grow progressively, becoming one of the major sectors in the world economy (Eadington et al., 1991). The focus of this paper will be targeted towards agrotourism, which is an alternative type of tourism. In the existing literature, it is supported that agrotourism through agriculture conduces to the economic regional development, the maintenance of cultural heritage and the promotion of natural beauty (Brouwer, 2004). With reference to the aforementioned effects, a plethora of scholars, to name a few; Gousiou et al., (2001), Ohe et al., (2011), Gossling and Mattsson, (2002), Forbord et al., (2012), Petrișor-Mateuț O. and Akrinar et al., (2005), have studied the topic, examining from a more narrow perspective the influence of agrotourism on farm and rural population characteristics in Greece and respectively, Ohe et al., (2011), demonstrate in their paper two different types of agrotourism activities which hold in Italy in the region of Tuscany. Gossling and Mattsson, (2002) and Forbord et al., (2012), have examined the regions of Scane in Sweden and North Tyrol in Austria, with the former trying to acknowledge and analyze all the necessities and requirements needed for agrotourism to be implemented, and the latter, focusing on the evolutionary path of agrotourism through the decades, respectively.

However, agrotourism is not only a relevant topic being discussed in the academic society or even in the business cycles; rather it is the trend of modern societies. Given the fact that tourists have become more sophisticated, environmentally conscious and curious to experience the country life (Knezevic, 2011), it can be assumed that there is a global tendency towards agrotourism. The aforementioned assumption can be supported from manifold examples which lie on Cyprus (Bryan T., 2012), and the revitalization of a whole village due to private and EU funds, on Greece (Gill J. et al., 2013), based on initiatives to exploit the potential of certain areas in the framework of the economic crisis, and The United States (Neuman W., 2011), where evidence show that 23.000 farms offering agrotouristic activities, brought approximately 24.300\$ each in additive income. Furthermore, the conduct of the 44<sup>th</sup> Croatian and 4<sup>th</sup> International Symposium based on Agriculture (Calina et al., 2009), is indicative of the topic's significance and relevance.

Notwithstanding the fact that many countries worldwide deserve the attention concerning the way they applied and developed agrotourism over time, however, Greece will be the

benchmark of this report. Taking into consideration the previous facts with relevance to Greece and its rich natural resources, it will be subjected to analysis, as it has shown so far a slight evolvement and diversification from its primitive form with respect to agrotourism, although it has all the requirements needed to exploit it. Additionally, the financial crisis which started in 2008 and holds until today, has severely influenced many sectors of economy and the economic liquidity of the country (Pagoulatos et al., 2009), consequently, it contributed to a fully restructuring of the society. Thus, it would be interesting to examine if the difficulties that the Greek economy faces will be surpassed in the context of agrotourism.

### ***Problem Statement and Aim***

Although agrotourism in Greece started from women's cooperatives, they have not expanded or evolved according to innovative criteria or comparing to similar cases in other countries (Koutsou, 2003). Not only that, the fact that the rural regions of EU and as a consequence, of Greece, are experiencing a constant decline the last decades, it calls for action. Factors identified to be influenced the most from the aforementioned trend are the survival of these areas, employment rates, high age – levels and a movement to urban areas (Arabatzis et al., 2010, p. 302). In addition with the current financial crisis that Greece is facing the last five years, and taking into consideration that rural areas base their viability and growth in agriculture, it is thus, an imperative need for a solution to be found linking these two factors.

Evident from several studies conducted in Greece with respect to agrotourism, has shown that until today the latter is more perceived and applied as mass tourism than it is its real definition (Gousiou et al., 2011). Thus, this study seeks to examine the concept of agrotourism in a spherical way, and analyze in depth its impact on regional economy, the maintenance of the cultural heritage and natural beauty. However, the most important reason for conducting this study will be to present an alternative perspective of growth in Greece and especially the county of Messenia, taking into consideration the manifold unexploited natural resources of the region.

Hence, the main question that arises at this point is: *“How can agrotourism contribute to the development of rural areas”*? It should be pinpointed that the main research question will be complemented with an additional one expressing another aim of this report, hence, the



question: “How could Greece successfully implement agrotourism?” will be answered as well. The analysis with respect to the aforementioned main question will be done regarding the economic impact, promotion of the natural beauty and maintenance of cultural heritage of the respected region, which in the current study it will be the county of Messenia in Greece. The selection of the certain region derived from the fact that Messenia<sup>1</sup> is one of the most charismatic prefectures in Greece, with an intensive agriculture activity, a landscape consisting of endless coastline and large mountains and a long history to explore.

The sub – questions deriving from the main research question could be formulated as follows:

1. How agrotourism is defined?
  - a) Who is considered as “agrotourist”?
  - b) What are the ramifications of agrotourism?
  - c) Which actors are involved in the organization of agrotourism?
2. What are the benefits and the drawbacks of such an initiative?
3. a) Which are the key factors that determine agrotourism growth and how could they be applied in the case of Greece?
  - b) What are the barriers in the implementation process?

The questions above will be answered through an extended literature basis but also via a series of interviews and secondary data like, web - sites, policy reports, etc. Having determined the problem, this study seeks to present the concept of agrotourism in Greece and examine the possible ways of enhancing the local economy. Moreover, it aims to provide information about other countries’ experiences in agrotourism and try to find out if they could be suitable in our examined case, without overlooking though, the incremental characteristics of each region.

### **Methodology**

Taking into consideration the exploratory nature of the study, a qualitative method is considered more suitable. Thus, structured interviews encompassing open – ended and

---

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.Messenia-guide.gr/?cat=82&lang=en>, last visit on 12/04/2013

closed questions will be used, targeted at people working in the tourism sector, public administration and agriculture. The focus will be on the county of Messenia, which is on the south - west part of Greece, and its respected municipalities. Messenia is of particular interest because of its potential to deploy agrotouristic activities along the periphery. Cases of agrotourism development in other countries will also be part of the current methodology in order to be compared to the case of Greece.

### ***Structure***

The current study will be structured as follows: firstly, the chapter of literature review (Chapter 2) will cover every aspect of the agrotourism concept and give an insight of its distinctive characteristics, answering fully the first research sub – questions. Starting with a short definition of tourism and tourists, then, an extensive analysis of the agrotourism concept will take place attempting to give a single definition and analyze it in its main components. In the third chapter (Chapter 3), the early signs of agrotourism activities in the tourism industry will be mentioned referring to cases of other countries; Austria, Italy and Sweden. A comparative analysis among them will shed light to the way agrotourism is applied in each region mentioning similarities and differences. Moving on to the part of methodology (Chapter 4), suitable ways to examine the issue will be presented based on a qualitative approach. In the fifth chapter (Chapter 5), the case of Greece will be narrowly discussed including the development of agrotourism in Greece, the current situation and in a separate section, a breakdown of the case of Messenia. An analysis of the results will be the next chapter (Chapter 6) in order to provide useful information and identify the success factors and the bottlenecks or difficulties existing in the sector. Although Greece is the country of interest of this study, however, agrotourism models in other countries will also be entailed for comparative reasons. Thus, in this chapter the third and last research sub – question will attempted to be answered. The last part of the analysis of this paper (Chapter 7) will give some conclusions, policy recommendations and implications for further research. Consequently, the additional research question will also be underpinned in the current chapter.

## **2 Theoretical Discussion and Literature Review**

### **2.1 Introduction**

Tourism activity may not be a new field in business activity but it is the last decades that it has been conceived worthy of serious business endeavor and of further academic study and research. However, its global standing and significance upon economies, environments and societies cannot be overwhelmed, thus, attracting even more the attention of the academic cycles. The aforementioned comes as a consequence from the fact that tourism is considered to play a key role in world's economy and contributes to world peace, in the context of a globalization and internationalization era. Furthermore, its relevance in the modern societies is apparent, because of its strong dependency on technology and the derived effects in the tourism industry as a whole. Undoubtedly, the acceptance of the latter as an issue of great interest by the governments, acted as a catalyst for the academic community to flourish the level of the theoretical foundation. Hence, numerous papers, books and studies are examining the tourist sector and try to analyze it in its subjects. As a result, a plethora of different perceptions of tourism can be displaced, with some of them trying to reverse its alluring image (Cooper et al., 2008, pp. 3 - 5).

In the following section, the framework of tourism will be narrowly presented, covering all aspects seeking for analysis, such as a main definition among others and a description of tourism activity both from the supply and demand side (Section 2.2). The subjects of tourists will be described in a different section (Section 2.3), analyzing the following issues: tourism resources (2.3.1), definition of tourist (2.3.2) and the tourist industry (2.3.3).

### **2.2 Definition of Tourism**

The study of tourism as a central subject has been treated from academics with a more facetious attitude, because it lacked a strong theoretical background and went against well-established disciplines. Nevertheless, the progressive maturation of the tourist industry, governments' involvement and awareness, and thereafter, the cognition of the academic society of tourism's objective and suggestions lead gradually to more sophisticated studies (Leiper, 1979, pp. 391 - 392). Even then, however, a clear and accurate definition was imperative, but in contradiction to this, manifold definitions were given, which, they still

exist. In the current section, it will be attempted to present all the relevant forms of tourism which are mentioned in the existing literature. Hence, three approaches can be recognized, namely; economic, technical and holistic as shown in **Table 1**.

**Table 1: The three approaches of tourism**

	<b>ECONOMIC</b>	<b>TECHNICAL</b>	<b>HOLISTIC</b>
<b>DEFINITIONS of TOURISM</b>	<p><i>"Tourism is an identifiable nationally important industry. The industry involves a wide cross section of component activities including the provision of transportation, accommodation, recreation, food, and related services</i></p> <p>(Australian Department of Tourism &amp; Recreation 1975:2, as cited at Leiper, 1979, p. 392)</p>	<p><i>"Technical definitions provide instruments for particular statistical, legislative, and industrial purposes"</i></p> <p>(Burkart &amp; Medlik, 1974:39, as cited at Leiper, 1979, p.393)</p>	<p><i>"Holistic definitions attempt to embrace "the whole" essence of a subject: The sum of the phenomena and relationships arising from the travel and stay of non-residents, in so far as they do not lead to permanent residence and are not connected to any earning activity"</i></p> <p>(Hunziker &amp; Kraph in Burkart &amp; Medlik 1974:40, as cited at Leiper, 1979, p.393)</p>
<b>DEFINITIONS of TOURISM</b>	<p><i>"Tourism refers to the provision of transportation, accommodation, recreation, food, and related services for domestic and overseas travelers. It involves travel for all purposes,</i></p>		<p><i>"Tourism is the study of man away from his usual habitat, of the industry which responds to his needs, and of the impacts that both he and the industry</i></p>

	<i>including recreation and business" (Ansett Airlines 1977:773, as cited at Leiper, 1979, p. 392)</i>		<i>have on the host's socio-cultural, economic and physical environments" (Jafari 1977:8, as cited at Leiper, 1979, p.393)</i>
--	--	--	--

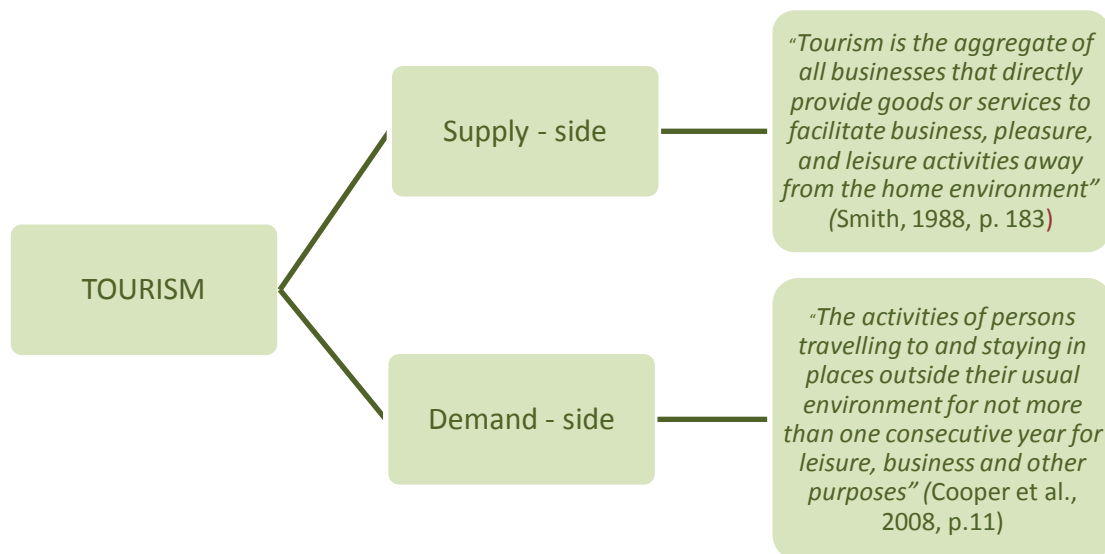
Taking into consideration all the above mentioned definitions with respect to tourism, we conclude that the current issue cannot be examined unilaterally, but needs to be approached from different perspectives. Economic or business insinuations focus on the component activities in which the tourism industry is based, whereas the technical ones seek to determine the term of tourist in the broad context of tourism. Finally, holistic definitions aim to provide a general idea or notion of the topic.

As a result of extended concern for measuring the size and nature of tourist markets, and due to frustrations caused by the numerous different aspects of tourism, one main description should be apposed, thus, according to Leiper (1979, pp. 403-404): *"The system involving the discretionary travel and temporary stay of persons away from their usual place of residence for one or more nights, excepting tours made for the primary purpose of earning remuneration from points' enroute. The elements of the system are tourists, generating regions, transit routes, destination regions, and a tourist industry. These five elements are arranged in spatial and functional connections. Having the characteristics of an open system, the organization of five elements operates within broader environments: physical, cultural, social, economic, political, technological with which it interacts"*, (as cited at Smith, 1988, p. 181).

After having presented the concept of tourism by the three main approaches, and based on the aforementioned description according to Smith's paper, it is suitable at this point to address the definition of tourism, both by the supply and demand side. The reason for that is that the multiple definitions that now exist, serve certain needs and conditions. This way, a sense of reliability and dominance should be provided for the interested parties, but also, there is need to be highlighted the more practical considerations of measurement and

enactment. Consequently, a supply – side definition has been created in order to differentiate the tourism industry and its products from the other industries. From the demand – side perspective, definitions of tourism have developed aiming to encompass the concept of tourism into conceptual descriptions combined with technical terms and meanings. In accordance to that, **Figure 1**, results:

**Figure 1: Definition of tourism / Supply – Demand side**



Finally, as a result of all the above assumptions, one last fragmentation of the tourism concept can be identified, based on the motivation which triggers people to travel according to their needs and preferences each time. Thus, different forms of tourism which are widely accepted and noticed will be demonstrated (Gonzalez and Bello, 2002, p. 55) in **Figure 2**, with the last one being the focal point of this study:

**Figure 2: Forms of Tourism**



In synopsis, tourism is defined in the literature according to certain aspects each time and scholars' perspective; Burkart & Medlik, 1979, Hunziker & Kraph, 1974, Jafari 1977, Leiper 1979 and Gonzalez and Bello, 2002. Based on the aforementioned definitions and approaches which may differ among scholars, my point of view regarding tourism has shaped as follows: "Tourism is an industry consisting of manifold components - actors attempting to serve and satisfy tourists' needs, who in turn are willing to fulfill these needs benefiting from the offered services. It is a duplex relationship, which extensions range from a local to global level, and has social – cultural, economic and environmental influences to host – communities."

### **2.3 Subjects of Tourism**

Tourism as thoroughly described in the previous section, has many facets, all strongly linked to each other. Hence, it is vital to pinpoint all these key elements which compose it, namely, tourism resources, tourists and tourist industry, which will be better analyzed in the upcoming parts.

### 2.3.1 Tourism resources

Several studies have attempted to address the tourism process through the different resources, as they are part of its main components. According to the literature, these resources are more referred to the supply side of tourism and can be categorized into five sub – categories (Leiper, 1979, p. 398):

1) *Leisure* can be a driving force for tourists in the decision process of the chosen destination as Gonzalez and Bello (2002) mention in their paper. More precisely, it is claimed that tourists who value highly the recreation as their purpose of traveling, they tend to be more flexible and open to different places.

2) *Tourists' organization, social, cultural and material resources*, from the aspect of organizing the trip / journey the tourists themselves or a travel agent is involved. This factor is referring mostly to the tourist and its preferable way to go on trips. Moving from the era of group – traveling to individually scheduled trips, very useful information can be mentioned as this way, the interaction between tourists diminishes. It is a fact that tourists' behavior changes in cultural showings when other people are in the same place and this attitude influences indirectly the cultural elements of the touristic experience as well. According to the material resources, these are usually, vehicles that tourists rent or own for their trip, boats or crafts or even sport equipment depending on the nature of the journey.

3) *Free inherent and natural resources*, referring to the climate, landscape, sea, local people. One of the most influential elements for tourists to visit a certain region is the feeling they get out of it, which comes as a result of the familiarity with the locals, the embeddedness in the ethics and traditions and the insurance of accommodation.

4) *Incidental industries* are those which offer tourists plenty of services and facilities. These are mostly restaurants, shops and entertaining facilities. However, by nature, the due industries are not only focused on tourists, rather the latter are part of their clientele.

5) *Tourist industry*, which presents many similarities with the previous category, however, it plays a special role in the tourism process as it is connected in a way with all elements of the



tourism system, and as such, it differentiates itself from the other resources inputs. However, due to the fact that in the literature there is a contradiction whether the term “tourist industry” is accurate, several scholars attempted to group tourism services into the following categories (Ashworth and Page, 2011): housing (Warnken, Russell and Faulkner, 2003), attractions (Ratz, Smith and Michalko, 2008), selling of products targeted at tourists (Bull and Church, 1994).

### 2.3.2 Definition of tourist

*“Being a tourist must be a pretty miserable existence”, (as cited at McCabe, 2005, p. 85)*

There is a general belief, highly supported by local people at destinations, that tourists seek a lazy and relaxed lifestyle. Even in the literature, tourists are negatively mentioned or get a non – positive criticism. Although, in the postmodern era, the aforementioned notion has changed, it challenged the academic cycles for many years becoming a major issue in tourist studies. Indeed, many scholars tried to identify and then describe the nature of the experience of tourists. Cohen (1979) in particular (as stated in McCabe, 2005, p. 88), introduced a number of tourist roles with similar characteristics like: permanency, voluntariness, direction, distance, recurrence, and purpose of trip. However, besides the motives that lie behind and confess tourists’ behavior, it is of importance to define the tourist as the human element in the tourist system, according to definitions given by the World Tourism Organization (WTO, 1999) and attempt to illustrate the differences from other groups which present pretty much the same attitudes, as stated in Gonzalez and Bello, (2002, p.53). In this respect, the connotations of: 1) tourist, 2) traveler, 3) visitor and 4) same - day visitor will be displayed:

1) **Tourist** (*overnight visitor*): *Visitor staying at least one night in collective or private accommodation in the place visited.*

2) **Traveler**: *Any person on a trip between two or more locations (WTO, 1995)*

- 3) **Visitor:** *Any person travelling to a place other than that of his / her usual environment for fewer than 12 consecutive months and whose main purpose of travel is not to work for pay in the place visited*
  
- 4) **Same – day visitor (excursionist):** *Visitor who doesn't spend the night in collective or private accommodation in the place visited*

In the existing literature many other scholars have attempted to present their own definitions about tourists, like Leiper (1979) and McCabe (2005). The former has categorized tourists, as Gonzalez and Bello did, but he has used different labels than the ones mentioned above. With respect to McCabe, he has focused more on pinpointing the differences between a tourist and a traveler supporting that they are two different concepts. Specifically, as stated in his paper, travelers are people looking for experience, getting to know the places and familiarize themselves with the locals; in contrast, tourists are more superficial and act according to a herd mentality, translated into sightseeing and visits to major attractions and monuments. Hence, comparing the papers, we could say that Gonzalez and Bello (2002) distinguish the types of tourists depending on whether overnight stay is involved, while Leiper gives more emphasis at the discretionary activities of tourists and the use of resources in the destinations visited. However, it is worth mentioning that all authors have stressed their attention at the demarcation of tourists and travelers; which are the terms the most misunderstood.

In general, the definition of tourist should be not only internationally but also locally accepted and approved. This way it enables the measurement of tourism, but also facilitates the involved parties to determine the attitudes, interests and opinions of this specific group comparing to the others, and thus, be more specific and focused regarding their policies and initiatives towards them. In the current study, “tourists” will be the reference point because their key characteristics are better linked to the agrotourism concept.

### 2.3.3 The tourist industry

As mentioned in a previous section, the tourist industry is a distinctive element in the tourism system and should be treated in a different manner from the other resources inputs, as supported at Leiper (1979). According to the latter, the tourism industry is better

described in the context of consumption rather than production. More precisely, the unmistakably different of selling a good or service to tourists instead of local residents is that in the first case the same action is perceived as “*tourist expenditure*”. Thus, tourist industry, diverges itself from the conventional classification of other industries with regard to the production process of the offered goods or services respectively.

The focus of tourism industry is to serve tourists’ needs supported by a marketing and design orientation. For better understanding and comprehension, six categories will shed light to the services provided to tourists, and exhibit the inter linkage between the geographical factors of the industry process. With respect to the aforementioned, these functions are (Lieper, 1979, pp. 400 - 401):

- I. *Tourist Marketing*, enabling the communication between the several components of the tourist industry. Advertisements, brochures and campaigns are some indicative examples of the policies being used under the umbrella of promotion tourist destinations.
- II. *Tourist carriers*, which facilitate the public transportation to and from tourist destinations. They usually locate in transit routes; mainly, these are trains, buses and airplanes depending on the infrastructure and the location of the region. Tourist carriers play a vital role as they contribute to the easy access and enhance the reachability, especially of these destinations which otherwise would remain remote.
- III. *Tourist Accommodation*, temporary provision of sheltering and other additional services. Mostly referred to hotels, hostels, guest houses and any type of accommodation suitable for tourists’ needs.
- IV. *Tourist attractions*, like monuments museums or special events, usually placed in destination regions or in the way on transit routes. The provision of such cultural affinities is inextricably linked to the tourism concept aiming to disseminate to tourists the history, as well as the tradition and ethics of each place. It should also be mentioned that sightseeing is the main activity and pleasure for many people when going on holiday.

- V. *Miscellaneous tourist services*, referred to these shops which aim and serve tourists, like duty – free, souvenir, restaurants and taxis. This category is essential for the economic growth of the regions as most of them due to seasonality that characterizes tourism, depend heavily on their performance.
- VI. *Tourism regulation* helps the glossy conduct of tourist activities, and simultaneously protecting tourists. The due parties are in general, firms working on a sectoral, regional or industry – wide basis, governmental bodies and educational institutions. Indeed, the more security guidelines or regulations in a country, the more the chances to be in the list of the potential destinations.

Tourism - from the supply side – seems to be rather complex as many different industries are involved, attempting to seduce people into becoming tourists, influence their preferences and satisfy their needs. Furthermore, its sociolinguistic ramifications imply that tourism has a discourse of its own which is apparent through several actions taken by the suppliers / services in order to communicate and deliver the atmosphere of a destination to tourists / receivers. Not only that, according to SERVQUAL<sup>2</sup> scale, as conducted by Bhat (2012), all the parties involved in the tourism industry, are committed to meet the four standards for tourism services, namely assurance, tangibility, responsiveness and reliability.

Consequently, it derives from the aforementioned sections that the study of tourism cannot be isolated or approached only by one perspective, but, needs to be divided in its key elements; resources, definition of tourist, tourism industry. In this framework, the due subject can be better examined and analyzed and the possible bottlenecks that may arise will be recognized and managed to be solved. In the upcoming sections, the focus of the study will be stressed on the agrotourism concept, following pretty much the path of the tourism analysis. Thus, the multiple facets of the topic; definition of agrotourism / agrotourist, the ramifications of agrotourism, as well as the involved parties will be under extended discussion and consideration.

---

<sup>2</sup> SERVQUAL is the most widely accepted measurement scale for service quality, by Mushtaq Ahmad Bhat / Associate Professor at Department of Business & Financial Studies, University of Kashmir, Srinagar – 190006, Jammu and Kashmir, India.

## 2.4 Agrotourism / A general approach

The last fifty years can be characterized by a strong growth of tourism, contributing to economic development and upgrade of the due societies. The effect is even greater when looking at rural areas which so far had remained ignored; advancements in infrastructure and in the style of life are the two major ones to mention. Communication developments, reconsideration of rural areas and appreciation of rural legacy, come to supplement the aforementioned (Lopez and Garcia, 2006). However, the perception of tourism as a driving force in a local economy would be rather misleading if we wouldn't take into account the negative sides of it. Indeed, there are manifold studies which stress the weaknesses of the industry, especially the ones linked to the environment. The main concerns are whether tourist activities at certain destinations can be combined with reversible impacts on the environment. Thus, not only in the society but also in the academic cycles, the concept of "sustainable development" has prevailed in the tourism debate (Nijkamp and Verdonkschot, 1995).

Though, even today, not a single one and precised definition exists, causing confusions and disabling initiatives to be implemented in order to boost sustainable tourism, due to lack of a clear clarification. In accordance to the latter, the World Tourism Organization (2001) has designated sustainable tourism development as: *"Development that meets the needs of present tourists and host regions while protecting and enhancing opportunities for the future. It is envisaged as leading to management of all resources in such a way that economic, social and aesthetic needs can be fulfilled while maintaining cultural integrity essential ecological processes, biological diversity and life support systems"*, (as cited in Spilanis and Vayanni, 2003, p. 2).

Sustainable development is inextricably linked to rural development, thus, growth in less favored areas cannot be achieved without any environmental consciousness and initiative. Furthermore, the trend of our days, meaning a shift to more environmental / ecological goods, comes to support the above notion. The same trend can be noticed even in tourism, where people now, are striving for alternative options as a result of qualitative transitions in the way of life, activities and structure of modern societies. In addition to that, tourists are more sophisticated than ever, better informed and in a sense, tired of the concept that mass tourism promotes.

On the contrary, rural tourism offers the chance to experience unique activities in unexplored regions and territories. More specifically, peacefulness, nature and a closer relation, as well as acknowledge of the local traditions and cultural heritage, are the main characteristics of this type of tourism (Lopez and Garcia, 2006). From an economic point of view, several scholars, like, Ribeiro and Marques (2002) and Nielsen et al. (2010), have examined in their papers the relationship between economic development and rural tourism with regard to job opportunities and diversification of economic activities. They pretty much concluded that a switch to activities taken place in rural regions can be beneficial with the support of public or private associations and concrete policy actions. In any case, as stated above, rural development has been a major issue in the political agenda in local or national terms, but mainly as being the keystone of territorial balance and future survival of the host communities (Ribeiro and Marques, 2002).

As rural tourism, it can be considered the following: ecotourism, wine tourism, gastronomy tourism and agrotourism. In the literature, it is stated several times the perplexity that exists between the terms of rural tourism and agrotourism. The former though, is an omnibus term, whereas the latter is more targeted to particular activities offered in rural areas by local people. In Romania and in the European Union, in countries such as Greece, France, Italy and Austria, signs of agrotourist activity can be noticed decades ago, displaying a significant evolvement over years. The general belief which lies behind is the promotion of rural areas, the environmental conservation and the familiarization with the nature and animal welfare, all being parts in the concept of sustainable development. Quoting Busby and Rendle (2002), as cited at (Lopez and Garcia, 2006, p. 86): *“Agrotourism is more than just another tourist product – it goes well beyond a mere offer of services in a rural setting”*. Moreover, agrotourism is substantial to vermiculate, convert and meliorate the competitiveness and quality of farms, aiming to enhance the family income, boost rural growth and potentially expand the horizons of tourism industry. It is a total different perception of the one that people have of tourism, a new approach of acknowledging travel which implies an alternative way of life, open to new experiences and challenges out of the usual. Finally, its educational character distinguishes it from other types of tourist activities, making it a focal point for further discussion and research with respect to its social impact and influential power to people with environmental concerns and attitudes.

In the upcoming sections the concept of agrotourism will be described more thoroughly, attempting to give a definition and analyze it in its main components. Additionally, as we dealt the part of tourism with respect to the definition of tourist, the same approach will be followed in the case of agrotourist. Finally, it is essential that the parties involved in agrotourism will be mentioned.

#### **2.4.1 Definition of agrotourism**

Recreation on farms is an activity which has its origins in the long history of towns and populations. Even though, it faced several dynamic changes through years, the main concept stays the same, called “agrotourism”. The difference that can be noticed though, as a result of modernization trends of our era, is that the current type of tourism has been commercialized. In fact, now, agrotourism is a powerful business sector and has flourished in many parts of the world, while in the past it was considered an unprogressive field of activity and thus, lacked funding and dynamism. The academic society has also been interested in this alternative type of tourism and enriched the literature with papers based on that. However, not a unique definition has been given, nor a fundamental understanding of the main characteristics has been fully described, due to the complexity of the nature of agrotourism. Nevertheless, the main definitions which are mostly used in the literature will be presented and managed to be organized into a diaphanous context.

**Table 2** shows different definitions of agrotourism quoting several authors and related labels (as cited at Philip et al., 2010, p. 755):

**Table 2: Definitions and labels of agrotourism**

Agrotourism	<i>“tourism activities which are undertaken in non-urban regions by individuals whose main employment is in the primary or secondary sector of the economy”, (Iakovidou, 1997, p. 44)</i>
	<i>“tourist activities of small-scale, family or co-operative in origin, being developed in rural areas by people employed in agriculture”, (Kizos and Losifides, 2007, p. 63)</i>
	<i>“provision of touristic opportunities on working farms”, (Wall, 2000, p. 14)</i>
Agritourism	<i>“any practice developed on a working farm with the purpose of attracting visitors”, (Barbieri and Mshenga, 2008, p. 168)</i>
	<i>“a specific type of rural tourism in which the hosting house must be integrated into an agricultural estate, inhabited by the proprietor, allowing visitors to take part in agricultural or complementary activities on the property”, (Marques, 2006, p. 151)</i>
Farm Tourism	<i>“rural tourism conducted on working farms where the working environment forms part of the product from the perspective of the consumer”, (Clarke, 1999, p. 27)</i>
	<i>“a part of rural tourism, the location of the accommodation on a part-time or full-time</i>



	<i>farm being the distinguishing criterion”, (Oppermann, 1996, p. 88)</i>
Farm – based Tourism	<i>“phenomenon of attracting people onto agricultural holdings”, (Evans and Ilbery, 1989, p. 257)</i>
	<i>“an alternative farm enterprise” , (Ilbery, Bowler, Clark, Crockett and Shaw, 1998, p. 355)</i>
Vacation Farms	<i>“incorporate both a working farm environment and a commercial tourism component”, (Weaver and Fennell, 1997, p. 357)</i>

As can be noticed from the definitions given in *Table 2*, the terms of agrotourism and agritourism are almost similar, but the general idea is that all descriptions include farms as the main component where agriculture activities are taken place. In tandem with that, rural areas are inextricably linked to the current type of tourism, as they are the host communities of such alternative activities. Agrotourism has multiple facets and encompasses a broad range of relevant topics like: non – urban regions, agriculture, and working farms which are all strongly related to each other. On the contrary, the farm – based definitions which lie under the broad umbrella of the agrotourism concept are more targeted at the farm environment and the jobs occurring there, either by the farmers or the tourists.

Regarding that this study examines the agrotourism concept our focus will be stressed on that, illustrating a broad definition which encapsulates all aspects of the due issue, thus:

*Agrotourism* describes the activity of holidaymaking in rural areas, specifically for those seeking a rural experience, and tourism products which are directly connected with an agrarian environment, farming and food production. Activities can include staying on a farm, educational visits, wine tours, outdoor sports, participation in the rural lifestyle and local community, enjoyment of the natural environment, rural heritage and the opportunity to enjoy truly locally produced food. Agrotourism forms a significant proportion of the tourism sector, and its growth is set to continue in both developed and developing countries. (Sznajder, et. al., 2009).

The aforementioned definition can be further analyzed focusing on two main elements which need to be clarified as well, as they have caught scholars' attention. Hence, the terms of agriculture and working farms will be under analysis.

According to the former, there is a controversy mentioned in the existing literature of what is the actual meaning of agriculture and farm – based activities. As cited at Philip et al., (2010, p. 755): *“agriculture can be defined as the activity of rearing of animals and the production of crop plants through cultivation of the soil for consumption and for sale as food and other commodities”* (Robinson, 2004), whereas the typically based – on – farms activities are considered the horse riding and food processing. Taking into consideration that agricultural activities are practiced in farms, it is of high importance to pinpoint that only working farms can be included in agrotourism concept being the focal describing characteristic as supported by a plethora of authors; Gladstone & Morris, (2000), Iakovidou, (1997), (Kizos and Iosifides, 2007) and Sonnino, (2004). On the other hand, Fleischer and Tchetchik (2005, p. 500) as cited at Philip et al., (2010, p. 756), support that the existence of a working farm is not a precondition for applying agrotourist activities, but agrotourism can be either identified in agricultural heritage or imagery. However, this could be misleading and mix the terms of rural tourism and non - working farm agrotourism. The distinction lies on whether non - working farm agrotourism is linked to any kind of agriculture operations which do not include a working farm position.

Therefore, from this paper derives that the involvement of a farm is an integral part of the agrotourism concept because it acts as the meeting point of both the farmer and the tourist. Furthermore, it is crucial for tourists to feel familiar with the rural way of life and participate in activities that the farmer and his family are active as well. The picturesque landscape and the cultural heritage of each region are supplements which give a boost to the attractiveness of the due form of tourism.

#### **2.4.2 Types of agrotourists**

Globalization is the trend of our days that influenced the most our lives, the way we are thinking, our perception towards several concepts and situations and also our preferences. In fact, this was the case until recently, when people started to be more conscious about social and environmental issues, became more active in matters with respect to humanity

and equity of sexes, and thus, reconsidered at a great extent their priorities and point of view in general. As a result, a significant shift occurred even in tourism where the model of sea – sun and sand left behind. Tourists became more sophisticated and their change in preferences is apparent in their travelling choices, rather, alternative destinations are more and more gaining ground. Holidays in mountains, in rustic villages, or nearby lakes where tourists have the opportunity to come closer to nature and experience a folklore way of life is the new widespread trend.

Although there is no clear definition of what are the distinctive characteristics which illustrate the agrotourist, however, there are some mutual – indicative- ones. The most dominant is that people who prefer agrotourism from mass tourism they do so, because they are looking for calmness and otherness, rather than crowded places which may evoke stress and anxiety. Remote or even secluded destinations seem to attract their interest, maybe because they assume that these locations have qualities incidental of their situation, like graphic landscapes, primitive beauty and a rich cultural heritage (Irvine and Anderson, 2004). Agrotourists are lured by the services that agrotourism offers like, rest on the farm, involvement in the agricultural activities (food production, help with the animals, etc.) and participating in adventurous contents (riding, sports in rivers, lakes, etc.) or even making traditional handmade goods (jewelry, scarfs), (Knezevic, 2011).

In general, what derives from the aforementioned is that tourists interested in agrotourism have adopted an alternative lifestyle, away from crowds and masses that avoid the core activities of other mainstream types of tourism and have the intrinsic need to come closer to nature and play a role to the efforts done for sustainable development. Optimistic attitude towards anything new and unspoilt, awareness for environmental issues, as well as appreciation of natural beauty and willingness to acknowledge the cultural heritage and local traditions in combination to efforts promoting thorough communication with the locals are factors which designate agrotourist's profile (Lopez and Garcia, 2006).

### **2.4.3 Ramifications of agrotourism**

Agrotourism as a subject has been studied and defined by many scientific disciplines because it encompasses a broad range of issues. In the literature, most of the scholars; Calina et al. (2009), Irvine and Anderson (2004) and Knezevic (2011), have concluded to

three main topics of influence, namely: i) economic, ii) social and cultural heritage, iii) environment of the respected regions. Agrotourism activity is supposed to play a significant role in boosting and providing dynamism to all the previous mentioned factors. Rural locations seek to benefit from such initiatives and actions in order to meet growth and development. Basically, this is the main idea behind this particular concept; however, an absurd and irresponsible evolvement could have reverse results like, depersonalization and devalorization of the unique characteristics of the due areas.

As mentioned in a previous part, non – urban areas are strongly related to agrotourism playing the role of the host for these kind of agrotourist activities and initiatives, hence, they need to be specified because as Irvine and Anderson (2004, p. 230) support in their paper: *“rurality is a matter of perception”*. There does exist though, a basis acting as the point of reference which presents some similar characteristics of rural areas. To name a few, peacefulness, weirdness and otherness are indicative of distant regions, and when combined to emblematic representations of the picturesque, unexplored and the traditional, then, these locations become attractive for a number of tourists asking for authenticity and otherness. Thus, maintaining this folklore character and promote the unique and non – industrial principles of each destination, are the key factors which trigger tourists’ interest Irvine and Anderson (2004).

In **Table 3**, they are briefly mentioned not only the positive but also the negative aspects of agrotourism upon rural areas, based on the above – mentioned fragmentation.

**Table 3: Positive and negative aspects of agrotourism**

<i>Agrotourism Impacts</i>	<i>Positive</i>	<i>Negative</i>
<i>Economic</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase in income</li> <li>• Attract funding</li> <li>• Job opportunities</li> <li>• Foreign currency</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased public expenses for services and infrastructure</li> <li>• Rising prices</li> <li>• Degrade or subtract other fields of activity</li> <li>• Loss of foreign currency under certain circumstances</li> </ul>
<i>Social / Cultural</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advances on infrastructure and services for the residents</li> <li>• Synchronicity and evolution</li> <li>• Cultural commutation</li> <li>• Promotion of tranquility and an alternative lifestyle</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shift in the local way of living and the traditional culture</li> <li>• Promotion of leisure and fun as “life’s goals”</li> <li>• Potentially increased feelings of insecurity</li> </ul>
<i>Environment</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preserve the environment</li> <li>• Greater consciousness and awareness on environmental issues</li> <li>• Conservation of natural resources</li> <li>• Stimulate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Traffic, noise, pollution</li> <li>• Endanger the ecosystems and the physical scenery</li> <li>• Shortage of any kind of resources (e. g. energy)</li> <li>• Increase of harmful products</li> </ul>

	environment's maintenance	
--	------------------------------	--

Source: Hernandez Martin, 2004a, 2004b

As can be seen in *Table 3*, agrotourism contributes in regional development through many ways acting as a forceful tool in the regeneration and gentrification of less favored areas. Notwithstanding the profound turnover from the agrotourist activities such as, money earned by staying in farmers' house, selling of food, local products and handicrafts strengthening this way the economy of each region, agrotourism has also many other impacts. To name a few: reimagining of locations by promoting the traditional architecture, cultural and spiritual heritage with respect to particular events, festivals or ethics as well as the appreciation of women's role in society and of farmers in general. There are also negative views of the topic that cannot be overlooked but in the end there are more to gain than to lose. The rustic sector is not only a supplier of touchable goods, but also of untouchable ones, specifically those linked to culture, education, gastronomy, landscape and the environment (Lopez and Garcia, 2006, p. 86). However, what should be emphasized here is that agrotourism is not a spontaneous activity; rather it requires a deep knowledge of all the relevant parameters and techniques, for being successfully and effectively applied.

#### **2.4.4 Actors involved in the organization of agrotourism**

Agrotourism as field of economic activity, under the broader concept of tourism encapsulates several issues regarding its organization and structure. Based on the fact that it does not arise spontaneously, thus, it is considered important for the better understanding of the current study to be described in more depth the fundamental elements of agrotourism. According to Sznajder et al., (2009), agrotourist activity requires great knowledge in many aspects like organization, management, marketing and economics, and only under this condition, this knowledge can be converted into products or services useful to serve tourists' needs. In this part of the study our focus will be on the organization area of knowledge and field of action.

According to evidence presented in the 19<sup>th</sup> Nordic Symposium in Tourism and Hospitality Research (Nielsen et al., 2009), the allocation of providers of agrotourism is highly related to the distribution of income from agrotourist activities of a certain area. In any case, the

interested parties are pretty much the same and can either belong to the public or private sector. More precisely, an indicative categorization of these actors should entail three main fields of interest; according to Nielsen et al. (2009, p.11), these are the tourism sector, public administration and agriculture.

**Table 4** shows the parties involved in each category separately, including: 1) regional tourism development bodies and project managers in municipalities and regions, 2) advisors and strategists at the agricultural organizations and 3) service providers, farmers.

**Table 4: Actors in the organization of agrotourism**

<i>Tourism sector</i>	<i>Public Administration</i>	<i>Agriculture</i>
Research centers, Universities	Departments and ministries	Knowledge Center for Agriculture
Regional Tourism Development bodies	Regions (strategies for trade development)	Agricultural Associations, farmers' unions
Tourist and trade councils, associations	Research centres, Universities	Unions, associations
Business schools	Municipalities: spatial planning, strategies for business, services, settlements, etc.	Advisory centres, consultants
Tourist bureaus	Development consultants	
Entrepreneurs in agrotourism	Business / Industry development offices (including tourism)	
	Local Action Groups (LAG)	
	Agricultural colleges	
	Local (village) councils	

Tourism sector through several actions and initiatives is responsible to disseminate the knowledge to locals with respect to agrotourism and its key elements in order to exploit and further develop it. Keeping in mind that this type of alternative tourism is not yet well

established in many countries, while in others has been flourished, thus, this imbalance requires additional effort from the stakeholders to inculcate and then promote the idea of agrotourism not only locally but in a global extent (Nielsen et al., 2009). In accordance with the latter, finding innovative ways to communicate the advantages of agrotourism to the respected tourists so that they will be challenged to visit the host – places, is the next – major step.

Public administration in turn, lays the foundation needed so that all guidelines from the tourism side will be implemented with regard to infrastructure, relevant regulations and support in general (Lopez and Garcia, 2006). Cooperation between public and private sector may be necessary, as several issues, such as financial, technical, or legislation ones may arise during the process. It should be highlighted here, that in certain cases we see the public sector dominate in such initiatives, whereas in others, it is the private sector which prevails. In the following chapter, the current issue will be thoroughly examined through an extended description of 3 different cases with respect to agrotourism.

Finally, it is an indisputable fact that agriculture plays the role of a catalyst in the organization of agrotourism. All members and unions involved in agriculture try to boost the economic development and attempt to reimagine the rural regions by exploiting the rich natural resources (Nielsen et al., 2009). This way, they present additional options to residents and especially to farmers, to expand their range of activities even further, combined with tourist ones which is the examined case.

As a general conclusion it derives that a plethora of actors is involved in the organization of agrotourism in order for the latter to be successfully implemented and practiced. Tourism industry, public administration and agriculture as already mentioned, play a discriminative role in the development of agrotourism. However, a cooperative behavior among the interested parties may be some times not only desired but imperative.

In Chapter 3, through the analysis of three case - studies; those of Austria, Italy and Sweden, it will be attempted to give answer to the first sub – question. Then, a comparison among the models will take place using a summary table including all key components.

Consequently, similarities and differences will be mentioned, regarding the way agrotourism is applied in each region and the additional services and activities that are being offered.



Furthermore, the type of tourists who prefer this alternative type of tourism, as well as its distinctive characteristics will be identified for each region separately. Finally, the parties involved in the organization of agrotourism and marketing initiatives will also be part of the analysis.

### 3 Agrotourism in Austria, Italy and Sweden

Agrotourism sector meets growth under the broad umbrella of sustainability, rural evolution and tourism development not only in the developed countries but also in those with emerging economies. In Mediterranean countries like, Greece, Italy and Spain, agrotourism is considered as a growing sector with a great potential to contribute positively in regional development (Topcu, 2007). On the other hand, countries like Austria, Germany and England have a long history of more than a hundred years in the field, and especially Austria is the most appropriate place to compare it with others as agrotourism has first flourished there and still is successfully being applied (Breiling, 2005). In Sweden, the presence of agrotourism is rather new but through government's initiatives and actions it has developed rapidly, making it an interesting case to examine. In the current section, they will be presented and compared the cases of Austria, Italy and Sweden as each country separately has practiced agrotourism in a greater or lesser extent. Moreover, the choice of the countries was made in order to show the concept of agrotourism in different parts of Europe; south, central and north.

In tandem with the aforementioned, *Figure 3* shows the countries of interest with their respective regions marked in yellow and subsequently, *Figure 4* presents in a schematic way the sequential order of the countries that will be described in the upcoming sections and the due regions as well. As can be seen from the images, the examined regions show differences in the climate, environment and topography as well.

**Figure 3: Location of the three analyzed regions**



Source: [www.cuponation.com](http://www.cuponation.com), (last access on 20/6/2013)

**Figure 4: Depiction of the three examined regions**



Upcoming, a general overview of agrotourism development in each country will attempt to give an idea of the current issue and then, in a following section, a thorough description of particular areas will highlight the basic aspects and ramifications of the topic. It should be mentioned though, that because of lack in the literature of one specific definition of agrotourism, relevant labels, like “*farm tourism*” will be used as well.

### **3.1 An overview of agrotourism development in Austria**

Austria has a large history in rural tourism, maintaining a proportion of 80% of Austrian national tourism. The folklore environment in many regions is ideal for several activities which take place in mountains or in the lowlands. Rural tourism is characterized by a high level of diversification from intensive forms to extensive ones. Our focus however will be stressed at the second category which encompasses the concept of farm tourism. Farms according to Breiling (2005) were the prerequisite for the existence of rural areas but tourism was the determinant factor for keeping people attached to these places and thus, contributing to their development.

Once the locals got involved in tourism, another issue emerged and this was the stabilization of activities through institutional settings. Selznick, (1992) as quoted in Forbord et al. (2012, p. 896) defines institutionalization as follows: “*institutionalization is the emergence of orderly, stable, socially integrating patterns out of unstable, loosely organized, or narrowly*

*technical activities*". The first farm related organizations were established in the Austrian Alps in 1970, and it was one year later that farmers started their business on farm based tourism and then, in 1972, the first rural farm holiday conjunction was established (Embasser, 1994, as stated in Forbord et al., 2012). Almost two decades after these regional initiatives for organization and collective action, a national organization was settled under finance of the aforementioned provincial associations.

Reaching the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, farm tourism in Austria was extensively developed and as the scholars Busby and Rendle (2000), as stated in Forbord et al., (2012) have noticed, the initial concept was reconsidered. The new form has shifted from "tourism on farms" to "farm tourism", giving emphasis to tourism as an additional commercial activity taking place on farms. In this new framework, the offered product; accommodation on farms became central, however, agriculture remains the main source of income. Locals do take advantage of it and use their products in order to enhance their profits. In tandem with the latter, it is a common phenomenon for farmers to work themselves in the farms instead of hiring other people and provide tourists with supplementary services or offerings for the same goal.

Today, farm tourism in Austria prevails seven profiles; 1) organic farming with cuisine from organic products, 2) wellness and health on farms, 3) care for babies and small children, 4) care for disabled persons, 5) riding farms, 6) cyclist farms and 7) wine farms (Forbord et al., 2012, p.7). In the coming up section, the region of North Tyrol in Austria will be thoroughly examined as it presents the highest involvement in farm – based tourism not only in a European, but in a global level (Embacher, 1994, Gønzc, Remøe, Sæter and Vonlanthen, 1994, as stated at Forbord et al., 2012).

### **3.1.1 Agrotourism development in the North Tyrol region**

North Tyrol (Nordtirol) is the largest part of the federal state Tyrol, located in the west part of Austria. It is divided into nine (9) districts with a total population of approximately 630.000 residents and a geographical extension of around 10.000 thousand square kilometer.

**Figure 5: Map of Tyrol**



Source: de.wikipedia.org (last access on 20/6/2013)

The region of North Tyrol from the early beginnings, somewhere around the 60's, was known to offer cheap accommodation on farms. Through the years, farm tourism in the area deployed significantly, being a separate sector on its own. Indicatively reported that in 2008 the total number of tourists in the region climbed up to 9 million, of which 100 thousand were farm – tourists translated into approximately 660 thousand overnight stays. In comparison to the total population of the area, these numbers are quite impressive and demonstrate the abovementioned upward trend (Forbord et al., 2012).

#### Definition of agrotourism / Types of agrotourists

Agrotourism in North Tyrol is identified as “Bed & Breakfast” or provision of self – contained apartments. With reference to the first case, where breakfast is included, the products that are being used are mainly from the farm and there is also the chance for the people staying there to buy these farm products (Forbord et al., 2012). Furthermore, from the supply side, several additional services and activities are provided to tourists with respect to the due region, hence, according to the farm tourism organization (Urlaub am Bauernhof in Österreich, 2009a, as stated in Forbord et al., 2012, p. 899), in North Tyrol one can experience *visits to alpine summer farms, tobogganing in winter, and courses in handicrafts such as making candles or felting with sheep's wool*. The main idea which lies behind is the creation of an authentic rustic environment where people can feel like being part of a typical

farm family as well as familiarize themselves with the customs and acknowledge the history of the area. The provision of these extra activities strengthens tourists' embeddedness in the agrotourism concept, and thus, contributes to the attractiveness of the farm. It should be mentioned that in the existing literature no much are known about the type of people visiting the region of North Tyrol, but what is mentioned is that the farms are mostly visited by families and by people with environmental consciousness.

### Ramifications of agrotourism

The ramifications of agrotourism in the North Tyrol region, as mentioned in a previous section of this study, cannot be clearly identified based on the relevant literature. However, as the authors support in their paper (Forbord et al., 2012), the social impacts of agrotourism may be positive and obvious (increased number of overnight stays), but attention should be paid at the economic and commercial aspects of the issue. More precisely, the latter has a twofold meaning: 1) farm tourism as a supplement to annual income and 2) the role of women in non – urban areas and their contribution to development through their participation in relevant activities. Conservation of environment is an integral part of the life of the farm – entrepreneurs as they recognize its significance for their farms' sustainability. It is also the main reason for tourists seeking for peace and calmness to visit the place.

### Organization of agrotourism

Another important aspect of the topic which should be analyzed here are the parties involved in agrotourism and their particular role. Based on the paper of Forbord et al., (2012), farm tourism in Austria is managed by a national farm organization "Urlaub am Bauernhof" ("Holidays on the farm") which has divisions in each province, thus, in North Tyrol as well. The specific goals of the association are: marketing, service quality, competence and lastly, price setting (Forbord et al., 2012, p. 904). At the provincial level, the association cooperates well with the Chamber of Agriculture addressing issues of marketing / advertisement through actions such as: Internet, direct marketing, media contacts, fairs, and catalogues, professional advices and knowledge transfer (e.g. use of computers). At the national level, the association is strongly connected to the federal Ministry of Agriculture and appears to have a more managerial role trying to promote each region by organizing

excursions or enhance the image of these regions pinpointing their distinct characteristics or strengthening the farm organization's brand. Generally, it could be assumed that the organizational structure of farm tourism in the area is based on both regional and national level characterized by a high degree of cooperation among the parties. With respect to the aforementioned, other forms of cooperative relationships that could be mentioned concern the ones of the farm tourism sector with the provincial tourism marketing board and also sharing of the farm tourism associations with some specialist advisors, a common logo and Internet appearance (Forbord et al., 2012, p. 899).

### **3.2 An overview of agrotourism development in Italy**

Italy is the country with the most powerful agricultural economy in the world. The locals having realized that from the early years, moved a step further and combined the agricultural activities with tourism ones. Nowadays, agrotourism in Italy is one of the most highly developing forms of alternative tourism (Veer and Tuunter, 2005, as stated in Topcu, 2007).

Agrotourism in Italy did not arise spontaneously, but it was rather a well applied legislation and initiative by the European Union. The reformed Common Agricultural Policies (CAP) played a dominant role to the exploitation of Italian agriculture as well as to food and wine production (Topcu, 2007). The aforementioned factors on the one hand, and the unique experiences and attractions that the country has to offer, on the other, were the key factors for alternative forms of tourism to develop. It should not be overlooked that Italy combines perfectly history, culture, natural beauty and modernism at the same time. Outstanding monuments and buildings, miscellaneous local cultures and dialects, fashion and luxury are all harmonized in an ideal natural milieu consisting of beautiful coasts, alpine lakes and mountains.

The deployment of agrotourism in the non – urban areas, in the way that it is currently known, was a result not only of the EU financial supports but also of the regional and national administrations. Moreover, the national law for agrotourism in Italy is the main instrument in which all agrotourism – relevant issues are coming under. More precisely, an incremental characteristic of Italian agrotourism concept is its agricultural based divergence, which suggests that agrotourism is more than a tourism / commercial activity rather it is an

agricultural occurrence attempting to preserve the lands and the natural environment (Topcu, 2007).

Today, Italy, according to OECD (2005b, as stated in Topcu, 2007, p. 69), practices agrotourism by providing accommodation in farms in combination with several other tourism offerings such as restaurants, camping facilities and units of horse riding. Manufacturing of regional products and agro – pastoral activities are also part of it. In the following section, the interest will be stressed at the Tuscany region as it is one of the most active areas on agrotourism prevailing also a healthy and strong economy, making it interesting for further examination. The world – wide famous wines, the delicious cuisine and the strong ties to tradition are tools that enhance the regional development. The exploitation of the aforementioned through agrotourism meliorates also the perception of farmers towards it from an economic, cultural and environmental aspect.

### 3.2.1 Agrotourism development in the Tuscany region

Tuscany is located in Central Italy with a population of three and half million residents. The geographical extension counts for about 23 thousand square kilometer, with a density of about 155 inhabitants per square kilometer (Topcu, 2007, p.69).

**Figure 6: Map of Tuscany**



Source: [www.rippledesignstudio.com](http://www.rippledesignstudio.com), (last access on 22/6/2013)



Tuscany does not appear to have the same morphology in every part, rather it is naturally diversified. Hence, the south is characterized by hills and uplands, the central – western part by lowlands and the north is mainly mountainous, creating different conditions for the development of agriculture and tourism as well. However, the unique natural beauty which is apparent through the hills, meadows and alleys; all covered by a green veil, enhance the deployment of agrotourism (Gurgul, 2005).

Agrotourism in Tuscany counts for almost half a century; it was in 1960 when the first signs were registered. Five years later, a National Association of Agriculture and Tourism; which in 1978 was renamed to Agriturist, was established, giving boost to the sector. However, it took more than a decade for agrotourism to meet development and growth. It is important to be mentioned that practicing agrotourism was more a complementarity activity in which women had the first role, and not a leading one compared to agriculture where men dominated. In other words, both income and time spent to the former should be less than those devoted to the latter. With reference to agriculture, it is strongly linked to animal breeding, tillable farming of typical Mediterranean products e.g. grapes, olives, vegetables and fruit (Gurgul, 2005).

#### Definition of agrotourism

From the early symptoms until today, this form of tourism is perceived as accommodation in farms under payment with the offer of supplement agrotourist activities such as food services, as well as recreational and cultural activities. It should be mentioned that these activities developed in a first stage as a result of the demand of the non – Italian visitors to the Tuscan areas. Thus, the provision of angling, hunting and horse riding were included in the concept of agrotourism but they were not always that common, as looking at the farm work or helping to the manufacture of handicrafts. Another way that agrotourism is practiced in Tuscany is in open spaces; agrocampings. This form developed mainly in maritime and mountainous areas because farm involvement was difficult to occur. Lastly, Tuscany's case is an interesting one, because wine tourism is also practiced there as a complement to agrotourist activities. The well – known “Wine Roads” were established along with the provision of staying in farms and of tasting the wines of the due region. As a result, agrotourism could develop easier based on this existing type of tourism (Gurgul, 2005).

### Types of agrotourists

In combination to the favorable climate, the magnificent landscape and the delightful cuisine due to local fresh ingredients, Tuscan region became a unique destination not only for Italian but also for foreign tourists who seek authenticity, natural beauty and peacefulness. In addition to the aforementioned, because the due region is rich of houses or palazzos characterized by an exceptional architecture and historical value, these factors have added more to the allurement of the area. Not only that, as a result of the evolvement of agrotourism in Tuscan villages many houses which were not of use, had the possibility to be renovated. Enhancing the image of Tuscany was a catalyst for visitors to go there, experience agrotourism and get to know to the region, influencing in a great extent its economy and social upgrade. Around the 90's almost 2/3 of tourists were alien, whereas today the proportion of tourists is almost equal. However, not every region met the same growth with the region of Siena being the dominant one with 265 thousand tourists in comparison to Arezzo, Grosseto and Pisa with the number of tourists ranging between 66 and 83 thousand (Gurgul, 2005).

### Organization of agrotourism

Agrotourism development process though was sustained and closely monitored by national, regional and local units. From the beginning, the competent authorities have recognized the need for clear legislative and monitoring mechanisms with a particular role. Moreover, they have contributed to the promotion and marketing of the rural areas, which was a priority in the list of actions. Political mechanisms involved are (as stated in Topcu, 2007, p. 72): EU – LEADER Program, Italian National Law, and Framework Law No 730 of 5 December 1985. Finally, the financial support mechanism is the EU – LEADER Program, attempting to financially enhance the local initiatives and projects, and lead the peripheral administration on how to divide properly the financial resources (Topcu, 2007). At this point it should be highlighted that all parties involved seek for collaboration and greater involvement of the private sector under the umbrella of common goals and benefits.

### Ramifications of agrotourism

Agrotourism can be the core stone for sustainable development in any aspect. Conservation of environment, social integration and economic growth as a result of the multiple activities occurring in the rural areas are some to be mentioned. Especially in the Tuscany region, with

the picturesque landscape, the plurality of traditions and ethics mixed with its long history; expressed by the warmth and hospitality of the locals, are an explosive combination for agrotourism to flourish (Sonnino, 2004).

### **3.3 An overview of agrotourism development in Sweden**

Sweden can be perceived as a new entry in the field of agrotourism which came as a result of the need to revive and strengthen the rural areas. The effects of industrialization and commercialization of agricultural activities, and the new way of life of the modern era have been made against the peripheral areas which have met a downturn the last 60 years. The most serious impact according to Gossling and Mattsson (2002), was people's migration especially that of the younger ones.

Thus, it was a priority in the political agenda to vermiculate the economic base of rural areas. The aforementioned achieved by developing farm tourism, considered as "alternative farm enterprise" (Ilbery et al., 1998, as stated in Gossling and Mattsson, 2002, p.18). The aforementioned consists of the following types of accommodation: bed and breakfast; the dominant one, self – catering accommodation and lastly, camping. The due farms are of small – scale activity and any change in the number of rooms or beds has to be stated.

Farms in Sweden are organized by a non – profit organization called Bo pa Lantgard. The latter was a specific project applied in Skane in 1989, under the support of the National Agency for Agriculture and the farmers' union. Generally, the structural framework includes one national and 20 regional offices. The former *"is responsible for the organization of the national and international marketing, the collection of statistics, the delivery of information and the co – operation with authorities and other organizations. The regional offices are independent and support, visit, and control the farms within each region"* (Gossling and Mattsson, 2002, pp. 19 - 20).

From the beginning, the goal of Bo pa Lantgard was the smooth introduction and involvement of farmers in tourism industry. In order to achieve its aim, its members had to inform the interested parties about certain issues for starting up a tourist business such as: quality standards, legal status, insurance and marketing (Gossling and Mattsson, 2002, pp. 20). However, it should be mentioned that special attention and effort has been paid to marketing and advertisement of this initiative. Successful promotion achieved through *local*

and national newspapers, special interest media, on the package of certain products and by collaboration with tourist offices; mainly in a local level (Gossling and Mattsson, 2002, pp. 20). It should not be overlooked though that in closed societies and peripheral areas, the power of word – of – mouth as a promotion tool is also a powerful one.

Sweden may have not developed agrotourism as early as Austria, England or Germany had, but it met fast growth only in a few years. The initial project which occurred in Scane in 1989 was the first attempt and thus, it will be subjected to further analysis in the next section.

### 3.3.1 Agrotourism development in the Scane region

Scane is the southernmost county of Sweden with a population of 1.250.000 residents and a geographical extension of about 11 thousand square kilometer, with a population density of 110 inhabitants per square kilometer.

**Figure 7: Map of Scane**



*Source:* [www.map-of-sweden.co.uk](http://www.map-of-sweden.co.uk), (last access on 22/6/2013)

Scane case presents special interest because it is supposed to be the most productive region among all in Sweden, mainly in the production of wheat and also, because a respected

number of farms can be reported there. Farm tourism in the area developed and met growth under a variety of circumstances. More characteristically, the region of Scane for the period of 1997 to 2000 with respect to overnight stays on farms grew by 21%, according to data derived from Bo pa Lantgard (2001, as stated in Gossling and Mattsson, 2002). The existence of manifold empty buildings or rooms on the farms was undoubtedly a strong incentive for starting tourist operations. However, the most important reason as mentioned in the paper of Gossling and Mattsson, (2002), was the social contacts between the farmers and the tourists. Human interaction is of major significance because farmers due to crops and animal's breeding do not have the chance to leave the place so through visitors they have the opportunity to meet different cultures, ethics and lifestyles. Another ramification of the social impact of the certain type of tourism is the reconsideration of women's position in the family and in society and generally the status of farmers in the community. On the other side, it is quite impressive that farmers in the region of Scane did not have as main motive financial reasons, which can be ascertained by comparing both the income from tourism and agricultural activities.

#### *Definition of agrotourism / Types of agrotourists*

Farm tourism in the Scane region as mentioned in the previous part is practiced as accommodation on farm properties. Additionally, several other activities are being offered concerning a closer relationship to animals; watching, feeding and maybe milking them. Furthermore, beside the activities offered at farms, the rural areas of the due region are famous for the beaches and the golf courses, as well as for its historical churches and castles which act as attractors for visitors to go there and experience not only a rustic lifestyle but also enjoy a magnificent landscape full of surprises. Visitors value highly the natural environment and its calmness which apparently come in contrast to the rapid rhythms of the modern, urban life. This explains in a great extent the type of tourists who prefer farm tourism; they are mostly families, people of older age or even workmen looking for a non – expensive accommodation (Gossling and Mattsson, 2002).

#### *Organization / Ramifications of agrotourism*

Advertisement and marketing are thus trying to emphasize to these aspects of rural life which are the most attractive to the potential visitors and are in contradiction to the superficial character of urban areas. The organization Bo pa Langard through its actions aims to display an ideal image of rural life and especially of doing holidays in a farm, where

peacefulness, unspoiled nature, human relationships and savor cuisine prevail. Quality of life, social interaction and cultural exchange are some of the advantages of farm tourism in the Scane region. From an economic point of view, even if it is not of major importance, hence, alternative forms of tourism are capable to mobilize local financial resources which in turn can trigger regional economic growth. As a last point, it should be pinpointed that the environmental aspects of the issue are more linked to the conservation of the natural scene and the preservation of the small – scale farms. From this perspective, women’s involvement in rural tourism operations is catalytic because as Garcia – Ramon et al., (1995, as stated in Gossling and Mattsson, 2002, p. 27): *“women would become active agents in the conservation of the traditional, agricultural, and scenic landscape through tourism.*

### **3.4 Comparative analysis among the three case – studies (North Tyrol, Tuscany, Scane)**

In compliance with the respective sections; 3.1.1, 3.2.1, 3.3.1, it is at this point where a comparative analysis should take place including the most important elements identified in agrotourism in each case / region, pinpointing similarities and differences.

**Table 5: Definition of agrotourism / Types of agrotourists**

<b>Criteria:</b>	<b>North Tyrol / Austria</b>	<b>Tuscany / Italy</b>	<b>Scane / Sweden</b>
<b>Similarities and Differences</b>			
<b>Definition of agrotourism</b> <i>(Type of accommodation)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bed &amp; breakfast</li> <li>• Self - contained apartments.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accommodation in farms under payment</li> <li>• Agro camping</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bed and breakfast</li> <li>• self – catering accommodation</li> <li>• camping</li> </ul>
<b>Additional activities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visits to alpine summer farms</li> <li>• Tobogganing in winter</li> <li>• Courses in handicrafts; making candles or felting with sheep’s wool</li> <li>• Tourists live like being part of a typical farm family</li> <li>• Familiarize themselves with the customs and acknowledge the history of the area</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Restaurants</li> <li>• Camping facilities</li> <li>• Units of horse riding</li> <li>• Manufacturing of regional products</li> <li>• agro – pastoral activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Closer relationship to animals; watching, feeding and milking them</li> </ul>
<b>Types of agrotourists</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Families</li> <li>• People with environmental consciousness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Foreign (50%) and</li> <li>• Local (50%)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Families</li> <li>• people of older age</li> <li>• Workmen looking for a non – expensive accommodation</li> </ul>

In synopsis, *Table 5* provides us with relevant information regarding the way agrotourism is practiced in the three case studies and how agrotourist is defined in the respective regions. In Austria and Sweden, Bed and Breakfast “B&B” is more common while in Italy the concept of agrotourism is consistent with the literature, as accommodation in farms is the most widespread type of accommodation with “camping” or “self – contained apartments” coming after. In all regions it has been noticed that additional activities are offered to tourists beside the accommodation itself; all having in common activities where animals are involved from vital activities like feeding and looking after them to horse riding. It should be highlighted though that because of differences in the morphology and climate of each region, recreational activities may vary as well. Tourists who seek for alternative type of holidays are mostly families and people of older age who pay special attention to tranquility and to the contact with nature. In Austria, agrotourists are more environmental conscious than in the other countries, and only for the Tuscany region in Italy, there is statistical data which show that the percentage of foreign and local tourists is equal, about 50% each category each year.



**Table 6: Ramifications of agrotourism**

<b>Criteria:</b>	<b>North Tyrol / Austria</b>	<b>Tuscany / Italy</b>	<b>Scane / Sweden</b>
<b>Similarities and Differences</b>			
<b>Ramifications of agrotourism I (Economic)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supplement to annual income</li> <li>• Reconsideration of role of women</li> <li>• Supports the local and national economy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Role of women</li> <li>• Complementary income</li> <li>• Enhance the regional development</li> </ul>	<p><i>Minor importance for the farmers but:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diversifies the economic base of the rural areas</li> <li>• Mobilizes local financial resources</li> <li>• Job opportunities</li> <li>• Women in the workforce</li> <li>• Supports the national economy</li> </ul>
<b>Ramifications of agrotourism II (Social / Cultural)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Role of women in non – urban areas</li> <li>• Farm succession</li> <li>• History and ethics / customs, traditions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social integration</li> <li>• Consolidation of local people</li> <li>• History and ethics / customs, traditions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lower rates of migration</li> <li>• Transfer of knowledge with regard to food production</li> <li>• Enhance social contacts and cultural exchange</li> <li>• Higher interaction of human –</li> </ul>

			especially children- with animals <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Better quality of life</li> <li>• Review of women’s role</li> <li>• History and ethics / customs, traditions</li> </ul>
<b>Ramifications of agrotourism III</b> <i>(Environmental)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conservation of environment</li> <li>• Sustainable development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sustainable development</li> <li>• Conservation of environment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conservation of the traditional, agricultural, and scenic landscape</li> <li>• Sustainable food production</li> <li>• Sustainable development</li> </ul>

Table 6 includes in brief the ramifications of agrotourism for each region with respect to: economic, socio – cultural and environmental ones respectively. According to the former, it is a common belief that through agrotourism, the regional and thus, the national economy will be enhanced. Farm tourism is supposed to be a strong instrument for rural growth, as more job opportunities will arise. A major difference in this case is that the aforementioned count less for the Scane region in Sweden, where the current alternative type of tourism is not considered to be a significant source of revenue. Concerning the socio – cultural bifurcations, in all examined cases the involved parties are interested in keeping traditions and the history of the respective region alive either by organizing traditional events where tourists can participate and learn the ethics and customs or through the local kitchen and gastronomy. Additionally, the role of women and their social status has upgraded over the

years significantly. It is of high interest to mention that Scane is among the other regions that value social cohesion and social contacts that much with Tuscany region to follow. More specifically, in Scane, interaction with people or even interaction between children and animals are issues which matter a lot in order to maintain a quality of life in high levels. Not only that, by developing additional activities on farms and exploiting their potential, job opportunities arise –as mentioned before- , thus, residents’ migration is reduced contributing again to social coherence. Taking into consideration the environmental aspects of agrotourism, all actors in the due regions seek for conservation and protection of environment in the context of sustainable development.

**Table 7: Organization of agrotourism**

<b>Criteria:</b>	<b>North Tyrol / Austria</b>	<b>Tuscany / Italy</b>	<b>Scane / Sweden</b>
<b>Similarities and Differences</b>			
<b>Marketing / Advertising</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chamber of Agriculture addressing issues of marketing / advertisement</li> <li>• Provincial tourism marketing board</li> <li>• Farm organization’s brand</li> <li>• Internet appearance</li> <li>• Common logo</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promotion and marketing of the rural areas →a priority in the list of actions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Local and national newspapers</i></li> <li>• <i>Special interest media</i></li> <li>• <i>On the package of certain products</i></li> <li>• <i>Collaboration with tourist offices</i></li> <li>• <i>Word – of - mouth</i></li> </ul>

<p><b>Actors involved in the organization of agrotourism (Legislative / Structural settings)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National Farm tourism organization “<i>Urlaub am Bauernhof</i>” marketing, service quality, competence and lastly, price setting</li> </ul> <p><u>Cooperation with:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Chamber of Agriculture addressing issues of marketing / advertisement (at the provincial level)</li> <li>➤ Federal Ministry of Agriculture → managerial role (at the national level)</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Specialist advisors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National, regional and local units</li> <li>• National Association of Agriculture and Tourism → <i>Agriturismo</i></li> <li>• <u>Political mechanisms:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ EU – LEADER Program</li> <li>➤ Italian National Law</li> <li>➤ Framework Law No 730 of 5 December 1985</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <u>Financial support mechanism:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ EU – LEADER Program</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Non – profit organization <i>Bo pa Lantgard</i></li> <li>• National Agency for Agriculture</li> <li>• Farmers’ union</li> </ul>
--	---	--	--

Finally, *Table 7* gives information about the marketing of agrotourist activities and the organization of agrotourism with respect to legislative and structural settings. In reference to the former, all regions are well organized in advertising and promoting their products through several ways. In North Tyrol, the Chamber of Agriculture is addressing these issues while activities like internet – based advertisements or a unique logo come to supplement the abovementioned. In Scane from the other hand, initiatives are less driven from a public

authority, hence, private initiatives prevail and co - operations with travel agencies are apparent. Lastly, it can be assumed that national organizations, units and associations are highly involved in the organization of agrotourism, and should be pointed out that public intervention is crucial. However, in North Tyrol, a strong emphasis in cooperation among public and private actors is observed, while in Tuscany region, the vast majority of actions are launched and implemented by public parties. Financial support from European programs, as well as national associations and the Italian National Law compose a very strong institutional framework.

## 4 Methodology

### 4.1 Introduction

In this study the term of agrotourism is used as a subset of rural tourism, and it is examined in order to give an insight of the topic, but also to provide useful remarks and recommendations which are expected to derive from the in – depth analysis. Taking into consideration the exploratory nature of the study, a qualitative method is considered more suitable. Thus, structured face – to - face interviews encompassing open – ended and closed questions will be used targeted at people working in the tourism sector, public administration and agriculture. The aim is to recognize if the aforementioned organizations foresee chances for development with regard to agrotourism, which is their contribution in promoting innovativeness and a more entrepreneurial spirit in order to motivate the locals, and what is their attitude towards this alternative type of tourism. The current situation and any running projects in the region of interest will be part of the questions as well (Nielsen et al., 2010, p. 12). According to the latter, our focus will be in Greece in general, and more specifically, on the county of Messenia, which is on the south - west part of Greece, and its respected municipalities. By doing so, we hope to ensure a relative broad coverage, from a geographical and an organizational point of view. The selected region is characterized mostly by high rates of people who are engaged to agriculture, tourism plays an important role in the economic growth of the specific areas, and lastly, the due prefecture has distinctive and picturesque sites. At this point, it should be mentioned that for the case of Messenia, besides interviews, there will be use of secondary data like sources from Internet or policy reports, due to lack of literature on the respective subject.

As mentioned in the beginning, this study is not a quantitative one, thus, there is no need for a statistically representative sample. Cases of agrotourism development in other countries will also be part of the current methodology. The purpose is to compare the models in countries where agrotourism has flourished, like in Austria, Italy and Sweden, with that of Greece.

## 4.2 Introduction to the qualitative research and derived benefits

A qualitative research can be conducted by anyone who is interested in giving answers to questions starting with “why” or “how” (Abawi, 2008). This kind of research is centered at descriptions of attitude and motivations and entails also, observations and notes kept by the interviewer. The main purpose is to understand human behavior or a social event / situation by different aspects. It takes into consideration personal opinions and interviewees’ beliefs, thus, its results cannot be interpreted by numbers or statistical data. A qualitative research can be applied using four different methods<sup>3</sup> such as:

1. **Interviews**, a list of open - ended and closed questions
2. **Focus groups**, observation of groups of people sharing alike attitudes / characteristics
3. **Reviews**, presentation of a theory / attitude as described in the literature or published papers
4. **Observation**, watching informants in their daily life and keeping notes about it

In the current study, face – to – face interviews (FtF interviews) will be conducted as a tool to collect information about agrotourism in Messenia, Greece. Its development and contribution to regional growth will be thoroughly examined and analyzed according to the answers of the informants. Quoting Opdenakker (2006, p. 2): “*FtF interviews are characterized by synchronous communication in time and place*”, meaning that the questions and accordingly the responses are made / given in a real time and place respectively, because of the simultaneous presence of the participants. The advantages of the due method are multiple and will be briefly mentioned. First of all, from a personal contact more information –others than the asked ones- can be derived due to social hints, like, accentuation and body language. The interviewer has the possibility to create a friendly environment in order to make the interviewee to feel more comfortable and have a smooth discussion. As a last point, it can be referred that because of the physical presence of both participants, there is no time lag between questions and answers, hence, the replies are more spontaneous and the interviewer can be creative if needed (Opdenakker , 2006).

---

<sup>3</sup> “Qualitative vs. Quantitative research”, 2012, American Intercontinental University, available on: <http://www.aiuniv.edu/Student-Life/Blog/October-2012/Qualitative-Vs-Quantitative-Research>, last visit on 3/6/2013

Generally, a qualitative research provides information about the subject of interest regarding the informants' perceptions and experiences. Evaluators seek to comprehend the deeper meanings and reasons that lie behind and thus, establishing a perplexed and holistic image of the examined topic. In contrast, a quantitative research is focused more on proving whether a theory holds true based on statistics and relevant variables. This method seeks to answer type questions of: "How much?", "To what extent?" and it is by nature objective and not biased by researcher's attitude or opinion (Abawi, 2008).

As the current study deals with a qualitative research, the advantages of it should be pinpointed. According to Weiss (1998, as stated in Bober, 2000) the positive aspects of the aforementioned are the following:

1. Better consciousness of the expectations of the participants
2. Ability to realize instantly the evolvement procedure of the research
3. Cognition of time
4. Capability to understand a situation even from social cues
5. Promptitude to unprogrammed occurrences
6. Greater interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee

### **4.3 Selection of the sample**

According to section 2.4.4 (*"Actors involved in the organization of agrotourism"*), the choice of the participants was made in tandem with the aforementioned division. Thus, five categories were created; 1) individuals from the tourism industry, 2) public administration, 3) agriculture, as well as from 4) agrotourism and 5) education, in order to cover the agrotourism concept from every standpoint. In total, 15 interviews were conducted; more precisely, one (1) interview was from the first category, and respectively, four (4), six (6), two (2) and one (1) from the others. Three of the respondents are women and the others are men (12), with an average age of 40 years old. Each category plays a distinct role; therefore, the questions were separated so that they could be relevant to the examined case each time. Hence, in accordance with the theoretical framework of agrotourism, the following main issues were examined in the interviews, as shown in the relevant chapter, that of *Appendix*. Thus,



1. The concept of agrotourism and the perception of locals towards it
2. Locals' interest in farm diversification
3. Actions and initiatives taken for the proper implementation of agrotourism
4. Determinants for a successful implementation of agrotourist activities and probable bottlenecks
5. Contribution to regional development

Consequently, they all tested the same phenomenon, that of agrotourism development in Messenia, with some of them being adapted to the field of interest of the informant.

The average time spent for the interviews was estimated to be about 30 minutes to more than an hour, mostly depending on the job and position of the person being interviewed. Furthermore, for practical reasons and for higher accuracy, a tape recorder has been used, only after the permission of the informant. However, this way proved to be time consuming with reference to the transcription. Thus, in most of the interviews, notes were taken in order to assure that all questions have been answered, and because keeping notes enabled to create a friendlier ambience.

#### **4.4 Critical thought**

The challenge of the research is not so much to give an insight of the agrotourism concept in Messenia region, but rather, to investigate the reasons for its late development and present what is being done instead. In accordance to the latter, the interviews were designed and the sample was selected in such way, so that every party involved in the organization of agrotourism, or actors that may have an influential power towards it, would be included. Making use of the experiential approach in the current study allows forming a spherical opinion of the examined case and having a closer look to its distinctive characteristics. The interview ambience from the interaction between the interviewer and the informant combined with the logical dimension will provide relevant information not only for the tangible, but also for the intangible aspects of agrotourism concept (Doyon et al., 2006).

## **5 Agrotourism development in Greece**

### **5.1 Introduction**

Agrotourism in Greece developed as a result of the socio – economic and cultural changes which occurred gradually in the Mediterranean the last decades (Gousiou et al., 2001). Phenomena like, urbanization, shift from the agricultural sector to the service one and emphasis on mass tourism altered the image of Greece and influenced significantly the rural areas. European funds and subsidies enabled the deployment of agrotourism in non – urban areas in an effort to revitalize and regenerate mainly the less favored regions. From that point; in the beginning of the 1980's, the first signs of the sector's evolution circuit can be officially recorded (Kizos and Iosifides, 2007).

In the current chapter the concept of agrotourism and its evolution will be examined in a national level. Special reference to the institutional framework and community initiatives is imperative, highlighting the critical time periods of changes as well as the major determinants or inconveniences in the implementation process (Section 5.3). Then, the focus will be stressed in the selected examined area, the county of Messenia (Section 5.4), according to the theoretical framework of agrotourism as analyzed in chapter 2 and in line with the case studies' description in chapter 3.

### **5.2 An overview of agrotourism development in Greece**

Agrotourism in Greece revealed quite late as an alternative type of tourism aiming to enhance the mountainous and less favored areas. According to Kazakopoulos and Gidarakou, (2003), the early symptoms of agrotouristic activities are noticed in the 1960's. They are lying though under the shade of mass tourism and lacking any guideline or support from regional or local actors. However, as many authors agree, namely; Gousiou et al., (2001), Kizos and Iosifides, (2007) and Koutsou et al., (2003), the focal point is met in the decade of 1980's when two major events marked a new beginning. The first one is related to the entrance of Greece in the European Economic Community in 1981, followed by a series of programs and local initiatives and the other dates two years later, in 1983, with the establishment of women's cooperatives supported by the General Secretariat for Gender

Equality of the Ministry of Development in order to be redefined the role of women in rural areas (Kizos and Iosifides, (2007).

In fact, agrotourism in Greece is inextricably linked to women's cooperatives which, according to Koutsou et al., (2003, p. 47): "*Women's cooperatives are the most original type of cooperatives in Greece in terms of planning, organization and management*". The involvement of farm – women in activities other than their regular and ordinary ones with respect to house / family duties, upgraded their social status and they also contributed to the family income as well. Concerning the latter, the Directorate of Home Economics of the Ministry of Agriculture played the role of a catalyst in mobilizing and in the vocational training of women. As a result, not only cooperatives were created but private initiatives were launched as well, although in a small – scale. The main activities of the cooperatives were the production of home handicraft products, like, jams, preserves and traditional delights, as well as handicrafts like, jewelry or even carpets. Other forms which are popular, according to evidence from the study of Kazakopoulos and Gidarakou (2003, p. 31), are:

- *Rooms to let*
- *Processing of farm products*
- *Catering*
- *Rooms to rent combined with the provision of other products*
- *Popular art and other products*
- *Catering along with some other activity*

As mentioned in the introduction, the same decade another initiative of the same area of interest took place, concerning the implementation of agrotourism in Greece. Thus, the Greek Ministry for Agriculture introduced a development plan in an effort to boost the declining economies of disadvantaged or peripheral areas (Kizos and Iosifides, 2007). The aim was to exploit the natural resources and the local products and expand their potentials to integrate agriculture and tourism activities. The program was expected to bring multiple benefits not only to the due regions, but also, to the locals. Examples include the following (Gousiou, 2001):

- Melioration of rural income
- Expand the scope of activities in the periphery
- Pluriactivity and income generation from non – agricultural activities
- Enhance farmers’ status in the society
- Improvement of quality of life and better working conditions for local residents
- Decline of people’s migration
- Redefinition of women’s role / Contribution to family income / Promotion of local products
- Environmental conservation
- Maintenance, defense and promotion of cultural and architectural heritage

However, the lack of a clear institutional framework in combination to the non – existence of a national or regional strategy, rescinded the whole project. As a consequence, there was a confusion and misunderstanding from the side of farmers on how to manage and further develop their units in compliance to other cases in Europe. Data from the Greek Ministry for Agriculture, 2000 (as stated in Gousiou, 2001, p. 12), confirm the aforementioned assumption. More precisely, in Greece, 891 agrotourist holdings were created which offered mainly: accommodation (35.7%), accommodation with breakfast (46.2%), accommodation with breakfast and lunch (6.7%) and rooms to rent with shared kitchen (11.4%). Looking even deeper to the data, it derives that: *“at prefecture level (NUTS 3) the average value of agrotourist farms is 2.04 agrotourism holdings per 1,000 farms, with a maximum value of eight holdings, while in 20 prefectures there are no holdings”* (Kizos and Iosifides, 2007, p. 64).

By conception, agrotourism in Greece does not comply with the theoretical framework defining agrotourism as farm accommodation, nor has integrated in the Greek lifestyle or entrepreneurial attitude (Kizos and Iosifides, 2007). In a Mediterranean country like Greece, where both agriculture and tourism are economic driving forces, it is quite challenging to examine why the combination of those two fields remains in an embryonic stage. The following section will shed light in the initiatives taken for introducing and deploying agrotourism in Greece, but will also pinpoint the misguided actions in the implementation procedure.

### 5.3 Institutional framework and legislative mechanisms

According to Arabatzis et al., (2010, p. 302): “*Rural areas are promoted as areas where the natural environment, cultural values, and quality of life need to be conserved, protected and enhanced*”. In line with that, in the mid – 1980’s, the Greek Ministry of Agriculture launched a complete agrotourism plan mainly targeted at mountainous and insular areas with declining economies and developmental difficulties (Kizos and Iosifides, 2007). The main issues seeking attention were namely; sustainable ways and overall changes in the production system, reduction of peripheral disparities, pluriactivity in the agricultural sector and generally in non – urban areas.

A plethora of organizations is identified in the stimulation and implementation process of the agrotourist project in Greece. The Ministry of Agriculture, National Tourism Organization, Rural Bank of Greece, as well as the Mediterranean Integrated Programs (Reg. 2088/85) are some to be mentioned. Financial aid was provided through the Regulation 797/85 to local active groups (LAGs) for the amelioration of farm constructions. Concerning the latter, further relevant Regulations were promoted: 2328/91, 950/97 and 1257/99. The national law 2520/97 was focalized in the new generation of farmers (Kazakopoulos and Gidarakou, 2003). However, determinant role in the integration process of rural development has played the so – called “Community Initiatives” and more specifically, the LEADER Community Initiative (Liaison Entre Actions de Développement de l’ Economie Rurale) (CI).

#### The LEADER Community Initiative

The LEADER CI was introduced as a guide execution aiming to create the conditions for cooperation among the relevant parties with respect to projects and innovative ideas in a regional level. Ultimately, it turned out to be an extremely useful tool in exploiting the natural and human resources of the agricultural areas. LEADER I CI was first applied in 1991 until 1993, setting the foundation for a new era in tourism policy in Greece, favoring the rural districts through subsidies given to farm – heads in order to invest in agricultural holdings (Kizos and Iosifides, 2007). LEADER II CI followed the previous one for the years 1994 – 1999 stretching the attention to more creative ideas and actions. More recently, it was implemented the LEADER PLUS CI or (LEADER + CI) 2000 – 2006, slightly different from the other two with the exception that this was applicable to all European rural areas

(Arabatzis et al., 2010). LEADER + had to comply with the principles of Regulation 1260/99 of the European Council with respect to management and funding of rural areas, and additionally, follow the managerial framework of Local Action Groups (LAGs). Specifically in Greece, LEADER + CI was launched in less favored areas and benefited almost 2.2 million people, otherwise, the 20% of the total population. The due program encompasses four (4) priority axes as mentioned in (Arabatzis et al., 2010, p. 303):

1. *Integrated pilot strategies for rural development*
2. *Support for cooperation among rural areas*
3. *Cluster*
4. *Management, monitoring, evaluation of the program*

It should be highlighted at this point that the accurate and smooth implementation of LEADER + CI is controlled by the following parties: Ministry of Rural Development and Food, Special Management Authority, Special Secretariat for Planning and Implementation of the 3rd Community Supporting Framework (Arabatzis et al., 2010). In a national level, LEADER + CI was controlled and performed by 40 Local Action Groups (LAGs).

#### Local Action Groups (LAGs)

In Greece, as Local Action Groups (LAGs) are considered all public and private parties, such as, chambers of commerce, cooperatives, local authorities, non – profitable organizations and private existences (Arabatzis et al., 2010). The main priority in their agenda is the planning of a common project which should meet certain criteria related to innovativeness in the agricultural sector, in order to enhance rural development. The role of LAGs is undeniably critical for the agrotourism evolution trajectory, taking into consideration that they are responsible for bringing together all relevant partners – parties, designing strategies, taking initiatives, controlling and managing the several projects and trying to integrate in different sectoral approaches (Arabatzis et al., 2010).

Generally, from all the aforementioned derives that, European Union funding and support through Regulations and the LEADER CI contributed significantly to set the foundation for agrotourism development in Greece. In turn, the Greek Ministry of Agriculture promoted a

thorough program with regard to agrotourism in disadvantaged regions in an attempt to exploit the natural, human and economic resources of the rural areas aiming to: meet economic growth, reverse people's migration to urban centers and enhance the multi – functionality of agricultural activities (Kizos and Iosifides, 2007). However, the lack of an assisting body proved to be an important impediment in the implementation of those ambitious strategies and projects. Farmers or locals who were unfamiliar with entrepreneurial activities met themselves in a deadlock without any guidance from competent authorities. Hence, it can be assumed that the way that agrotourism is applied even today in Greece; private enterprises like, rooms to let, accommodation with or without breakfast / lunch, etc., has been shaped as a result of the aforementioned factors and the absence of a concrete pilot by EU to secure the viability and appropriate prosecution of the program.

#### 5.4 Agrotourism development in the Messenia region

The regional unit of Messenia is located in the southwestern part of Peloponnese. It is administratively distinguished into 6 municipalities with a total population of 159.954 residents. The geographical extension counts for about 3 thousand square kilometers, with a density of about 59 inhabitants per square kilometer.

**Figure 8: Map of Messenia**



Source: [www.roomrates.gr](http://www.roomrates.gr), (last access on 08/07/2013)

Messenia appears to have a multifaceted morphology combining perfectly mountains and sea. More precisely, turfy and prolific valleys, sandy coasts and high mountains are its unique natural characteristics and the main attractors for visitors and tourists during all seasons of the year<sup>4</sup>.

Messenia is undoubtedly a blessed place, with a climate temperate to subtropical and the most fertile land across the Peloponnese. Furthermore, the most famous destinations in the world would envy its natural beauties. Landscapes can attract tourists and the fertile land donates agricultural products of outstanding quality, such as oil, olives, citrus and grapes. In general, Messenia is a pure Greek region where anyone can enjoy both peaceful and lively vacations. It is able to satisfy all preferences and needs as it exploits alternative types of tourism beside mass tourism, like agrotourism, sports, cultural, marine tourism, etc., while in the same time it is famous for hosting conferences and seminars<sup>5</sup>.

Definition of agrotourism

**Table 8: Definition of agrotourism**

<p><b>Definition of agrotourism (Type of accommodation)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accommodation in small – sized hotels</li> <li>• Rooms to rent</li> <li>• Self – contained apartments</li> </ul>
<p><b>Additional activities</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plants’ cultivation</li> <li>• Animals’ breeding</li> <li>• Participation to folklore events</li> <li>• Farm visits &amp; participation in respective</li> </ul>

<sup>4</sup> Messenia, Greece, 2013, available on: <http://www.greek-hotels.com/Messenia-info.php>, last visit on 08/07/2013

<sup>5</sup> Messenia and the City of Kalamata, 2013, available on: [http://www.kalamatacvb.gr/Messenia\\_kalamata.php](http://www.kalamatacvb.gr/Messenia_kalamata.php), last visit on 08/07/2013



	<p>activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visits to units of production / participate / taste</li> <li>• Restaurants</li> <li>• Camping facilities</li> </ul>
--	--

Agrotourism in Messenia has not developed yet in the extent of the other regions (North Tyrol, Tuscany, Scane), as described in a previous chapter. Although some individual efforts can be noticed, though, it is still a new type of tourism which needs to be communicated more. It is indicative that only 2 of the interviewees are actually practicing agrotourism having a farm involved and additional offered activities. Hence, they both have farms where tourists can participate in several activities from plants' cultivation, animals' breeding, or even folklore events in order to acknowledge the culture and history of the region.

However, what is perceived and practiced as agrotourism in the region of Messenia is the provision of accommodation in small sized hotels, usually called as "rooms to rent" including breakfast or lunch, or apartments, as well as, the production, selling and promotion of local and traditional products not only in local but also in foreign markets. In the last few years it has also become popular to visit farms and participate in certain activities, mostly organized by travel agents in coordination with farm owners. In accordance to the latter, one of the respondents who owns a travel agency has promoted a tourist - package called "*Liomazoma<sup>6</sup> in Messenia*". It is a program running with success the last 4 years in which tourists (mainly Danish so far), participate in the collection and procession of olives, and then, they taste the oil with other local delights, which they can buy as well. This way, they become part of the whole procedure of the production of olive oil and familiarize themselves with agricultural activities and with the rural lifestyle. Another initiative which should be mentioned here is the visits to units of production, organized by the representatives for the major clients only. One third of the interviewees actually are involved to this kind of activities; to name a few, these are a winery, a farmer's association and a company producing traditional delight goods. The visitors - clients have the opportunity to watch the production of the products or even to participate in this procedure, and then taste it, like happening in the case of olive oil, wine and pasteli.

---

<sup>6</sup> Liomazoma: Greek word meaning the collection of olives from trees

## Types of agrotourists

**Table 9: Types of agrotourists**

<b>Types of agrotourists</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Foreigners</li><li>• Older people of higher education</li><li>• Families</li><li>• People with environmental consciousness</li></ul>
------------------------------	--

Messenia is a predominantly agricultural area famous for its olives and oil of high quality, its distinguished local products and definitely for the unparalleled natural beauties. In combination to the hospitality of locals, even the more skeptics will be triggered to visit this place. It is a quite attractive destination not only because of the magnificent landscapes, the beaches with the crystal waters, or the Mediterranean kitchen, but also because while walking in the little streets anyone can feel the history and culture of this land to conquer his soul.

As unanimously witnessed all respondents, tourists who come in Messenia are of two types: 1) the ones who are attracted by the “sea, sun and sand” tourism and 2) those who are seeking to explore the villages and experience a rustic lifestyle by actively participating in farm activities and local events. The vast majority of tourists are in both cases foreigners, as people from other Greek cities only spend the weekends and yearly holidays like Christmas and Easter. Moreover, it is quite unusual for locals to go for vacations in the countryside, and especially to choose agrotourism, as they are more or less familiar with the rural way of living. The second category, which is of interest in the current section, consists of people with almost similar characteristics. Quoting one of the interviewees who is practicing agrotourism: *“Agrotourists are people curious, thirsty to experience something unprecedented, but in the same time, modest in their needs and demands”*.

More precisely, agrotourists are mostly older people of higher education or families who are looking for peaceful vacations beyond the beaten track. Authenticity, tranquility and contact with nature are elements which value the most. Sometimes the need to know from where the food comes is the main driving force. Additionally, environmental consciousness is another distinct characteristic as the concept of agrotourism comes in accordance with

sustainability issues. Preservation and conservation of the surrounded environment are priorities for both the farmers aiming to maintain the beauty of the region, and the tourists as well, as they are lured by pristine locations and sites.

Ramifications of agrotourism

**Table 10: Ramifications of agrotourism**

<b>Socio / Cultural</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Role of women in non – urban areas</li> <li>• Reduction of peoples’ migration</li> <li>• Climate of cooperation</li> </ul>
<b>Economic</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhances and promotes the exports of local products</li> <li>• Supports the local and national economy</li> <li>• Multi - functionality of rural areas and farms</li> <li>• Job opportunities. Not that significant for family income but for general upward trend</li> </ul>
<b>Environmental</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conservation of environment</li> <li>• Sustainable development</li> <li>• Offset emissions of carbon or greenhouse gases</li> <li>• Water recycling</li> </ul>

Messenia is one of the most promising tourist – destinations satisfying even the most demanding visitors. Beside the typical characteristics of the Greek countryside, what makes it unique is the combination of natural beauties along with its long history. Messenians from ancient years have been revolutionists and never surrendered or accepted their fate passively. Over the years they moved forward, evolved but they did not forget from where they began, so they continued living along with their history and ethics and tried to keep them alive. In accordance with that, agriculture is considered to be part of their history,

linked to their survival over decades and tourism is connected to their further development, thus, both are integral parts of Messenia's cultural heritage which through agrotourism it will be intensified and promoted to (agro) tourists. One of the respondents practicing agrotourism specifically said: *"Tourists who come here are lured by the local kitchen, the hospitality of locals and the magnificent landscapes. However, they come back because they are attached to this veil of history, tradition and powerful feelings which kept alive through centuries and so, they seek to experience this feeling again"*. Besides the pure socio – cultural effects, agrotourism so far through women's cooperatives has enhanced the role of women in rural areas as they became more independent; personally and economically. It is also supported that because of the multi - functionality of rural areas and farms young people will not leave to the urban centers and cooperation will be easier to be achieved as a result of an organized collective action for regional growth from open – minded people.

From an *economical* perspective, agrotourism in the way it is practiced in Messenia it enhances and promotes the exports of local products contributing significantly not only to regional but also to national economy. In addition, due to the multi - functionality of rural areas and farms there are more job opportunities and thus, possibilities for the family income to increase. It should be pointed here though, that the majority of the interviewees when asked agreed that they do not see an important increase in income just from pure agrotourism directly, but they foresee a general upward trend. The implication of this is that besides revenue from accommodation, other sources can be identified by selling to tourists local products, organic food or even handicrafts. The most important though is that through agrotourism, mobilization of local financial resources is achieved, investments to agriculture for more advanced equipment are ensured or even investments are realized for renovating old buildings in order to preserve the traditional elements of the region.

Another extension of the current topic that needs to be described is the *environmental* one. In a region like Messenia where the natural milieu is so unique and diversified in the same time, conservation and protection of environment are of highly importance and relevance. According to two farm owners, maintenance of environment is from the one hand, vital for themselves and for their "business" as it consists one of their successful factors, and from the other, it is the main attractor for tourists to visit and stay in the area. Agrotourism may also enhance the better exploitation of natural resources and brings to the surface issues like sustainable development. In this context two initiatives can be mentioned implemented

by: 1) farmers' association, and 2) farm owner. According to the former, through the program "Regulation 867/2008" which is co-funded by the European Union and the Greek state, the production of oil will be climate neutral, as the aforementioned regulations and institutions will deal with the offset emissions of carbon or greenhouse gases which are produced during the function or even in the manufacturing process. Another initiative which is still in the process of implementation is water recycling by collecting the rainwater and then using it for watering the crops in a farm.

According to the aforementioned, tourism and agriculture are two areas which should be set as main pillars of a strategic plan aiming to enable the prospect of growth and prosperity in the region's population. The utilization of agricultural wealth and the development of tourism are the main areas that can be developed rapidly. However, the management and planning of this perspective from all stakeholders will play a crucial role in this initiative. Thus, an industry that combines tourism and promotes agricultural products, would give opportunities for the development of rural economy and the manufacturing sector of the respective region. Messenia is heading to this destination by developing in the short term, alternative tourism visits - tours to farms and plants products (oil, olives, figs, wine, etc.), in order to provide an additional tool for tour operators and hotels to attract tourists. In the long-term the goal to be achieved is to earn potential guests or even ambassadors of the local products in their countries, while increasing region's exports.

Organization of agrotourism

**Table 11: Legislative / Structural settings**

<p><b>Organization of agrotourism (Legislative / Structural settings)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Greek Ministry of Agriculture</li> <li>• National Tourism Organization</li> <li>• Rural Bank of Greece</li> <li>• Farmers' union</li> <li>• Mediterranean Integrated Programs (Reg. 2088/85)</li> <li>• Other Regulations: 2328/91, 950/97 and 1257/99</li> </ul>
---	--

- National law 2520/97
- Local active groups (LAGs)
- “Community Initiatives” : The LEADER Community Initiative

Financial aid:

- Regulation 797/85
- EU – LEADER Program

Due to the fact that the organization of agrotourism with respect to regulations and governmental support was extensively analyzed in the previous section (5.3 / “*Institutional framework and legislative mechanism*”), only a brief reference to the main points will be done here. Thus, European Union funding and support through Regulations and the LEADER CI contributed significantly to set the foundation for agrotourism development in Greece and as a consequence in the Messenia region. The Local Action Groups (LAGs) enabled the implementation of regional and national policies concerning a full agrotourism plan launched by the Greek Ministry of Agriculture (Kizos and Iosifides, 2007) and, the LEADER Community Initiative in order to favor all European rural areas (Arabatzis et al., 2010). Nowadays though, these programs have stopped running because of the financial crisis, however, there are still some which are addressed to younger farmers with innovative ideas.

**Table 12: Marketing / Advertising**

<p><b>Organization of agrotourism (Marketing / Advertising)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chamber of Commerce</li> <li>• Farmers’ associations</li> <li>• Private initiatives</li> <li>• Poor Cooperation</li> <li>• Supply with local products restaurants and hotels</li> <li>• Exhibitions abroad</li> <li>• Mobile application “<i>e – farmer</i>”</li> <li>• Word – of - mouth</li> </ul>
---	---

*Marketing* is not practiced in an efficient level and thus, agrotourism is communicated only by certain projects driven by the Chamber of Commerce and respective associations, and from several actions by the side of entrepreneurs. According to the respondents, private initiatives prevail because of lack of coordination between the involved parties. As a matter of fact, only one out of 15 interviewees who is involved in agrotourism claimed that he is collaborating with a travel agency in order to bring the tourists who are in cruise, to spend the day in the respective farm. Cooperation is poor by means that producers of local products (e.g. olive, oil, wine) supply the restaurants or hotels of the region which in turn advertise and offer them to a larger scale of clients. One young entrepreneur claimed that the majority rests in exhibitions abroad to advertise their products and so, aiming to increase their exports, but this is not the only way. He supports that one has to struggle to capture a foreign market individually and without further actions of promotion. He, in turn, is organizing visits for his major clients to his winery and trips to the surrounding areas. He strongly believes that local growth and development as well as advertising the vantage points of a region, will someone achieve growth in an individual level. The same strategy is followed by another entrepreneur, owner of the pasteli<sup>7</sup> – making company in Zevgolatio – Messenia and farmers' associations related to olives and oil. According to the latter, they have launched an application called "*e – farmer*" where the producer is directly connected in real time to a central database (via 3G, GPRS or Wi-Fi), where all data are recorded and are immediately available for review and processing by agronomists. It is an innovative idea showing that organized actions are already implemented, which are more sophisticated and focused.

---

<sup>7</sup> Pasteli: traditional Greek delight, especially in the Messenia region. Main ingredients are sesame and honey.

## 6 Results and Discussion

### 6.1 Similarities and Points of Difference between the literature and the findings for Greece

According to the literature, agrotourism in Greece was first met in the 60's, but it was in the decade of 80's when its signs became apparent as a result of several socio – economic and structural changes, Kazakopoulos and Gidarakou, (2003). Tourism and agricultural activities are considered to be the two major driving forces of Greek economy; the level of development depends highly on the geographical area and territory. Hence, efforts to enhance the economy of the mountainous and less favored areas were a priority in the political agenda, as these regions were to suffer the most. Taking into consideration the large spectrum of rural resources like traditional products, cultural and historical ones, thus, special attention was paid at organizational and institutional issues. The intervention of the Greek Ministry of Agriculture and the LEADER Community Initiative (LEADER CI) was crucial as they promoted and established a full agrotourism program aiming to revitalize the declining economies of certain regions and make a better use of the natural and human resources.

More precisely, the aforementioned plan was launched as agrotourism seeks to create positive social, cultural and environmental impacts and meets the need of farmers to gain additional income by working in the service sector and the need of urban dwellers to return to nature. From a regional perspective, it develops local society, contributes to continuity of production of traditional products, maintains arts which otherwise would disappear, and contributes to the revival of customs and traditional events. Preservation of architectural heritage is a way of communicating remote areas to large urban centers, but also offers new perspectives of life for young people in those areas. Consequently, it can be assumed that this alternative type of tourism enables the display of the cultural heritage and the uniqueness of each area. Visitors in turn, through agrotourism, have the opportunity to experience the rural areas and activities, the local products and the traditional cuisine. Over and above, they get involved in the daily lives of residents and familiarize themselves with the cultural heritage of each region with respect to environment and tradition.

The benefits of agrotourism which derive from the description above are the following:

- Improve and supplement rural income
- improve the quality of life and work of the rural population



- retaining the rural population in the place of residence
- improvement and availability of local agricultural and craft products
- environmental
- preservation, promotion and development of architectural and cultural heritage
- meliorate the attractiveness of rural areas
- enhance entrepreneurship

It is a fact that literature for agrotourism as an alternative type of tourism responding to Greece is not efficient due to its late and limited development. However, it is important for the current study to examine whether the findings from the interviews with respect to Messenia region correspond to the literature based on agrotourism; definitions, advantages and general characteristics. It should be stressed out that in the following comparative analysis conclusions will be generalized referring to Greece with the Messenia region as a baseline.

With reference to the definition of *agrotourism* and *agrotourist*, no specific differences can be mentioned, only the fact that agrotourism in Greece as farm accommodation with additional offered services and activities is practiced in a very small scale. In fact, the most common agrotouristic activities which are identified in the Greek territory are: Bed and Breakfast (B&B), farm visits or in – farm selling of food and handicrafts. *Socio – cultural* dimensions and effects of the examined case are in line with the existing literature, based on the responses of the interviewees, who support that through agrotourism, the cultural and historical heritage of a region is preserved and promoted. Ethics, customs and folklore events are integral part of the rural way of living, which can be communicated to tourists only by being part of this lifestyle. Discrepancies between the current research findings and the other scholars can be seen in the *economic* aspects of the topic. Thus, the perception that agrotouristic activities enhance the family income does not seem to hold in the examined case or at least does not have a significant impact yet. Probably, this could be explained by the fact that people living in the periphery and non – urban areas are autarkic and seek for a peaceful life. Furthermore, they are so strongly connected to nature, so their motivation is not that economical but rather it is an innate need to disseminate this passion and knowledge to anyone sharing the same passion. Moreover, migration of population in urban centres has not reduced as a result of people willingness to get involved in the service sector and experience a modern lifestyle. However, recent evidence shows that this urbanization trend has started to reverse. According to a poll of 2013, 68.2% of the

respondents would think to move to the countryside, while a 19.3% has done a complete life plan of de – urbanization. Quite impressive is the fact that the percentages among young and well – educated individuals are high enough, between 25.4% and 43.5% (Re – inventing Greece, 2013)<sup>8</sup>. These facts should be set under question though, regarding the incentive of going rural. Due to the fact that Greece faces a financial crisis the last 6 years, de – urbanization and development of agrotourism in rural areas might be a result of this unfavorable situation and not a motivation for staying in a region per se. This is probably the reason why no conclusions can be derived concerning increases in job opportunities. From the interviews it is apparent though that young people nowadays are getting involved in the agricultural sector with more innovative ideas, which is confirmed from the statistics given above. Multi – functionality of rural areas and farms inspire young entrepreneurs to expand their activities by adding value to their current business and seek for product differentiation.

In general, derives that the results of this study comply with the existing literature in most of the aspects that agrotourism concept entails. The main point of differentiation is the economic one which can be partly explained due to social structures, the present volatile economic situation or even lack of knowledge of the derived benefits.

## **6.2 Comparative analysis between the three cases – studies (North Tyrol, Tuscany, Scane) and Messenia**

After having tested whether our research findings regarding agrotourism development in Greece come in accordance to the literature, it is at this point that a closer look at the examined case – studies need to be done. In line with the section 3.4, a comparative analysis will shed light to the main similarities and differences between the three cases (North Tyrol, Tuscany, Scane) and the one of the Messenia region, enabling to give full answer to the second and third sub – question of this study.

Hence, following the theoretical framework, the summary *Tables 13, 14 and 15*, will contain the most important elements identified in agrotourism in each case / region as described in the relevant parts, including the Messenia region as well.

---

<sup>8</sup> Re – inventing Greece, available on: <https://www.hellenext.org/reinventing-greece/2012/07/as-greeks-leave-cities-and-return-to-rural-areas-one-group-is-building-a-new-sustainable-community/>, last visit on 11/7/2013

**Table 13: Definition of agrotourism / Types of agrotourists**

<b>Criteria:</b>	<b>North Tyrol / Austria</b>	<b>Tuscany / Italy</b>	<b>Scane / Sweden</b>	<b>Messenia / Greece</b>
<b>Similarities and Differences</b>				
<b>Definition of agrotourism</b> (Type of accommodation)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bed &amp; breakfast</li> <li>• Self - contained apartments.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accommodation in farms under payment</li> <li>• Agro camping</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bed and breakfast</li> <li>• self – catering accommodation</li> <li>• camping</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accommodation in small – sized hotels</li> <li>• Rooms to rent</li> <li>• Self – contained apartments</li> </ul>
<b>Additional activities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visits to alpine summer farms</li> <li>• Tobogganing in winter</li> <li>• Courses in handicrafts; making candles or felting with sheep’s wool</li> <li>• Tourists live like being part of a typical farm family</li> <li>• Familiarize themselves with the customs and acknowledge the history of the area</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Restaurants</li> <li>• Camping facilities</li> <li>• Units of horse riding</li> <li>• Manufacturing of regional products</li> <li>• agro – pastoral activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Closer relationship to animals; watching, feeding and milking them</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plants’ cultivation</li> <li>• Animals’ breeding</li> <li>• Participation to folklore events</li> <li>• Farm visits &amp; participation in respective activities</li> <li>• Visits to units of production / participate / taste</li> <li>• Restaurants</li> <li>• Camping facilities</li> </ul>
<b>Types of agrotourists</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Families</li> <li>• People with environmental consciousness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Foreign (50%) and</li> <li>• Local (50%)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Families</li> <li>• people of older age</li> <li>• Workmen</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Foreigners</li> <li>• Older people of higher education</li> </ul>

			looking for a non – expensive accommodation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Families</li> <li>• People with environmental consciousness</li> </ul>
--	--	--	---	---

Contrary to the expectations, *Table 13* indicates that Messenia is closer to North Tyrol and Scane than to Tuscany region, in the way *agrotourism* is applied. This is quite impressive to notice as both Messenia and Tuscany belong to the Mediterranean area and have approximately the same climate and morphology. Taking also into consideration the institutional framework of the due regions, which consists of the same supporting actors and mechanisms, it can be estimated that the difference lies on the degree of involvement of these actors in the implementation procedure or in social structures. The additional activities depend on the physical environment of each region (e.g. morphology, ground, climate), as mentioned in the respective part (section 3.4 / Table 5), and so, in Messenia tourists help to animals' breeding, make handicrafts or visit farms while participating to agricultural activities. It should be pinpointed though that *agrotourists* are in their vast majority foreigners and a small percentage is consisted of locals.

**Table 14: Ramifications of agrotourism**

<b>Criteria:</b>	<b>North Tyrol / Austria</b>	<b>Tuscany / Italy</b>	<b>Scane / Sweden</b>	<b>Messenia / Greece</b>
<b>Similarities and Differences</b>				
<b>Ramifications of agrotourism I (Economic)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supplement to annual income</li> <li>• Reconsideration of role of women</li> <li>• Supports the local and national economy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Role of women</li> <li>• Complementary income</li> <li>• Enhance the regional development</li> </ul>	<p><i>Minor importance for the farmers but:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diversifies the economic base of the rural areas</li> <li>• Mobilizes local financial resources</li> <li>• Job opportunities</li> <li>• Women in the workforce</li> <li>• Supports the national economy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhances and promotes the exports of local products</li> <li>• Supports the local and national economy</li> <li>• Multi - functionality of rural areas and farms</li> <li>• Job opportunities</li> <li>• Not that significant for family income but for general upward trend</li> </ul>
<b>Ramifications of agrotourism II (Social / Cultural)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Role of women in non – urban areas</li> <li>• Farm succession</li> <li>• History and ethics / customs, traditions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social integration</li> <li>• Consolidation of local people</li> <li>• History and ethics / customs, traditions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lower rates of migration</li> <li>• Transfer of knowledge with regard to food production</li> <li>• Enhance social contacts and cultural</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Role of women in non – urban areas</li> <li>• Reduction of peoples’ migration</li> <li>• Climate of cooperation</li> </ul>

			exchange <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Higher interaction of human – especially children- with animals</li> <li>• Better quality of life</li> <li>• Review of women’s role</li> <li>• History and ethics / customs, traditions</li> </ul>	
<b>Ramifications of agrotourism III</b> <i>(Environmental)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conservation of environment</li> <li>• Sustainable development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sustainable development</li> <li>• Conservation of environment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conservation of the traditional, agricultural, and scenic landscape</li> <li>• Sustainable food production</li> <li>• Sustainable development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conservation of environment</li> <li>• Sustainable development</li> <li>• Offset emissions of carbon or greenhouse gases</li> <li>• Water recycling</li> </ul>

The ramifications of agrotourism are displayed in *Table 14*. Starting with the *economic* ones, it can be concluded that by combining agriculture and tourism, regional and national prosperity is to be achieved, with respect to all regions. Tourists who visit these places spend money for food, clothing, they go to museums and thus, enhance the local economy. However, as thoroughly analyzed in the previous section of this chapter (6.1), economic effects are not that strong, which is the case in Scane region as well, and residents of rural

areas are in a great extent, not motivated by these kinds of incentives. Residents in the non – urban areas in Messenia feel so close to nature and they are passionate with their land and the products they produce, so, they give more value to the quality of the goods and especially to the transfer of this knowledge and love to next generations. In this case, it can be assumed that economic effects are partly explained by *social* issues. According to the latter, no difference can be mentioned between the selected regions, as they all seek for maintaining and promoting events and customs which are integral elements of their history and culture. Furthermore, agrotourism in rural areas is a means for keeping people to their place of residence and continue the farm – work. For young entrepreneurs this acts more like a challenge to be innovative or use state – of – the art technology in an effort to upgrade and modernize the current units or systems. From the other side, it should be highlighted that agrotourism is not always the main reason which prevents peoples’ migration, but rather the cause, keeping in mind the strong family – relations that are evident in Greece. Concluding with the environmental aspects of agrotouristic activities, we see that protection of environment is again a priority for the locals, which is apparent from the two initiatives, mentioned in *Table 14*; 1) counterbalance the emissions of gases and 2) water recycling.

**Table 15: Organization of agrotourism**

<b>Criteria:</b>	<b>North Tyrol / Austria</b>	<b>Tuscany / Italy</b>	<b>Scane / Sweden</b>	<b>Messenia / Greece</b>
<b>Similarities and Differences</b>				
<b>Marketing / Advertising</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chamber of Agriculture addressing issues of marketing / advertisement</li> <li>• Provincial tourism marketing board</li> <li>• Farm organization's brand</li> <li>• Internet appearance</li> <li>• Common logo</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promotion and marketing of the rural areas →a priority in the list of actions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Local and national newspapers</i></li> <li>• <i>Special interest media</i></li> <li>• <i>On the package of certain products</i></li> <li>• <i>Collaboration with tourist offices</i></li> <li>• Word – of - mouth</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chamber of Commerce</li> <li>• Farmers' associations</li> <li>• Private initiatives</li> <li>• Poor Cooperation</li> <li>• Supply with local products restaurants and hotels</li> <li>• Exhibitions abroad</li> <li>• Mobile application “e – farmer”</li> <li>• Word – of - mouth</li> </ul>



<p><b>Actors involved in the organization of agrotourism (Legislative / Structural settings)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National Farm tourism organization “<i>Urlaub am Bauernhof</i>” marketing, service quality, competence and lastly, price setting</li> </ul> <p><u>Cooperation with:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Chamber of Agriculture addressing issues of marketing / advertisement (at the provincial level)</li> <li>➤ Federal Ministry of Agriculture → managerial role (at the national level)</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Specialist advisors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National, regional and local units</li> <li>• National Association of Agriculture and Tourism → <i>Agriturist</i></li> <li>• <u>Political mechanisms:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ EU – LEADER Program</li> <li>➤ Italian National Law</li> <li>➤ Framework Law No 730 of 5 December 1985</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <u>Financial support mechanism:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ EU – LEADER Program</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Non – profit organization <i>Bo pa Lantgard</i></li> <li>• National Agency for Agriculture</li> <li>• Farmers’ union</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Greek Ministry of Agriculture</li> <li>• National Tourism Organization</li> <li>• Rural Bank of Greece</li> <li>• Farmers’ union</li> <li>• Mediterranean Integrated Programs (Reg. 2088/85)</li> <li>• Other Regulations: 2328/91, 950/97 and 1257/99</li> <li>• National law 2520/97</li> <li>• Local active groups (LAGs)</li> <li>• “Community Initiatives” : The LEADER Community Initiative</li> </ul> <p><u>Financial aid:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regulation 797/85</li> <li>• EU – LEADER Program</li> </ul>
--	---	---	--	---

Accordingly to *Table 7* regarding the *marketing* and *organization* of agrotourism, in *Table 15*, Messenia region is also included as well. As derived from the interviews, marketing efforts are not strong enough and sometimes they are even perceived as pointless. Entrepreneurs who manage local units rely - in a great extent- on exhibitions abroad for advertising their products, lacking though the knowledge of how to benefit from such events. Marketing in Messenia, in contrast to the other three cases, takes the form of exhibitions, sponsorships and “word – of – mouth”. Moreover, the absence of cooperation between the producers and entrepreneurs is an obstacle in the whole procedure of communicating the agrotourism concept not only to locals but to tourists – visitors as well. The intervention of public organizations and associations is apparent in all examined cases; however, in Greece, public organizations and associations despite having launched several programs, with respect to agrotouristic development in less favored areas, they failed to give a guideline to residents about their proper implementation. Consequently, all efforts resulted in a deadlock, with agrotourism having the form of “rooms – to rent” and apartments without a farm being involved. Additionally, according to a farmer practicing agrotourism in the prefecture of Messenia, lack of specific regulation for farm accommodation by means of overnight stay is lacking, despite the efforts of unions for the contrary; which is definitely an additional barrier to the development of this alternative tourism type.

The second part of *Table 15* is referred to the actors involved in the organization of agrotourism in the context of institutional frameworks and regulations. Even though all regions present strong legislative structures, the level of public and private intervention is not the same in each one. Messenia, similarly to Tuscany, has a strong public presence and involvement, which are identified at the multiple unions, associations and organizations. Financial support from European programs and respective regulations are also in common. Public interference and national associations in general are apparent in the Scane region, while only North Tyrol demonstrates a strong emphasis in cooperation and coordination of actions among the relevant parties. At this point it should be stressed out that this is the main difference between Messenia and North Tyrol, as will be explained in the following section.

From the above analysis and the respective tables, derives that the cases differ on certain features and are alike on others. Furthermore, in some cases where similarities do exist, we observed that the effect was not the same for each region, thus, we conclude in two main considerations; 1) *market* and 2) *character of location*, (as stated in Forbord et al., 2012, p.

906). As many authors agree, namely; Cawley, Gaffey, & Gillmor, 2002 and Sharpley & Vass, 2006, the significance of markets is a determinant factor on farm tourism development. The size of the market in combination to the consuming power of the people, as well as their culture influence the agrotourism sector with respect to product development, availability of resources or even affect the interest for certain institutions to regulate. Additionally, not all rural areas are suitable or attractive for rural tourism. The reasons may vary, from quality of infrastructure, to additional offered services, climate, environment and social and cultural issues.

### 6.3 Factors of Success and Barriers in the implementation of Agrotourism

Agrotourism development in Messenia was extensively presented in section 5.4 (*“Agrotourism development in the Messenia region”*), and it was compared to the other three: North Tyrol, Tuscany and Scane, respectively, in section 6.2. In the current part, a brief reference to the other three regions will be done; however, the emphasis will be shifted at the strengths and weaknesses of Messenia as it is of main interest of the present study.

**Table 16: Factors of Success**

<i>North Tyrol</i>	<i>Tuscany</i>	<i>Scane</i>	<i>Messenia</i>
Regional alliances	Strong regional image	Unique landscape & Small number of farms	Passion for nature and agriculture
Organized farm activities	Product differentiation	Agricultural diversification	Importance for business units to be located in the regions of production and not to industrial areas

Health Services (healthy food, use of herbs)	Long history & knowledge of agrotouristic activities	Access to important markets (e.g. Germany, Denmark)	Climate & Morphology
Strong Marketing	Strong Marketing	Sophisticated Marketing & Advertising	Landscape, Natural Resources & Environment
Branch Association: Educative & Innovative milieu		Availability of unoccupied buildings & rooms	Hospitality & Culture
Emphasis on social interaction			

From *Table 16* and according to the findings of our research, results that Messenia compared to the other regions is lacking a collective and organized plan in order to practice efficiently agrotourism. While the other examined cases seem to have strong organizational structures, sophisticated marketing and advertising, and generally, a forceful background to develop tourism and agriculture together, Messenia, stands a lot steps behind. Nevertheless, the latter is distinguished by these characteristics not easy to found anywhere else. The Mediterranean climate in combination to unsullied nature, magnificent landscapes and a long history and culture cannot leave the tourist unmoved. Besides, the aforementioned elements are the main reasons for someone who is attracted from alternative forms of tourism seeking for authenticity, calmness and contact with nature. Additionally, the passion that locals share with tourists about their products, their land and their efforts to maintain all these factors which constitute their cultural heritage are substantial, when it comes to agrotourism. Furthermore, Greek hospitality is incomparable and the most important, selfless. Thus, it can be considered that while the regions of North Tyrol, Tuscany and Scane base their success mostly in organizational issues, Messenia from the other side, attributes its success and justifies the reasons for investing in agrotourism in socio – cultural and environmental aspects. Which one outweighs the other it is not the subject of interest of the present study.

Similarly, in *Table 17*, most of the attention will be paid at the region of Messenia in order to analyze a bit further the barriers and the constraints in the implementation procedure with respect to agrotourism development.

**Table 17: Barriers and Constraints**

<i>North Tyrol</i>	<i>Tuscany</i>	<i>Scane</i>	<i>Messenia</i>
Active farmers count for 2.3% comparing to all inhabitants	Mountainous area counts for 25.1% of the land area	Not found	Lack of Cooperation / Strong Competition
No specific law / General Regulations	Vast majority of farms located in hills		No clear institutional framework: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>Lack of guidance</i></li> <li>○ <i>“Syndrome of Subsidy”</i></li> </ul>
	Shallow & unprivileged soil in hills		Inefficient information & education
	Less favored areas; far from urban centers		Poor Marketing & Advertisement
	High rate of farms’ dereliction		

The mountainous and less - favored areas in Greece cannot compete with the regions meeting high productivity rates. Lack of financial support, land abasement and soil corrosion contribute significantly to their social and economic marginalization (Briassoulis and Straaten, 2000). However, availability of natural resources, indicate that maybe the bottlenecks appear in organizational issues. With regard to the latter, inadequate guidance from the side of public actors who launched agrotourism programs was the main reason that the whole plan failed, according to the existing literature; Kazakopoulos and Gidarakou, (2003), Koutsou et al., (2003), etc., and the vast majority of respondents. A small number of them addressed the issue from another –financial- perspective, specifically as: *“The syndrome of subsidy”*, implying that locals were interested only in taking the subsidies and they did not aim to deploy agrotouristic activities with those money. Thus, lack of knowledge from the side of the residents of rural areas in combination with the absence of proper leading and monitoring mechanisms, resulted in a distorted image of the agrotourism concept. In line with the findings of the interviews, strong competition and lack of a co – operative climate, is the present case in Messenia which definitely impedes development and growth. As a matter of fact, everybody from the sample of interviewees advocated that

this is one of the major obstacles and the one that they do not foresee to change in the near future. Secondary reasons that can be mentioned are the poor marketing and advertising of products which can be assumed to come in accordance with the previous factor. Private initiatives do take place, however, there is still enough to be done in order to communicate such alternative types of tourism to locals in a way that they realize the importance of it in many aspects, such as: economic growth, job opportunities, securing socio – economic deployment, maintaining cultural and historical heritage, but mainly, ensuring the well – being of farmers.

Looking at the first columns of the table, represented by the other three regions, it can be claimed that there are huge differences and a lot of impediments to overcome with respect to Messenia region. For the region of Scane no evident could be found relevant to difficulties faced in the development process of agrotourism, even though it is quite a new field. Contrariwise, the literature mentions that among countries which have developed agrotourism, Sweden is the one that made big and successful steps in a very short time period. Within Austria, North Tyrol, similarly to Scane, does not appear to face great difficulties, only some regulation issues are to be noticed but they are of minor importance. Lastly, in Tuscany region, its unique and unparalleled landscape seems to be a burden because of land inappropriateness and soil's degradation for cultivation and other activities.

## 7 Conclusions, Policy Recommendations and Implications for Further Research

### 7.1 Conclusions

Structural changes in the European territory which occurred the last decades resulted in a new era of reconsideration and reconstruction of fundamental fields of economy. Especially the rural areas had to adapt to the post – productive situation by diversifying their economic activity. Terms like: farm diversification, product differentiation, multi - functionality of land use were introduced and tourism was considered to be a tool for development and a means for regeneration of the disadvantaged regions.

Accordingly, agrotourism was launched as an alternative to conventional tourism and as the most suitable form to be applied in non – urban areas combining traditional agrarian activities with recreational ones, with respect to the surrounded environment and the cultural / historical heritage. Under this perspective, agrotourism was promoted in the mountainous and less – favored areas in Greece as an engine of growth and development in an attempt to mobilize human, social and financial resources. Hence, the aim of the current thesis was to examine whether agrotourism could be an instrument for regional development, to identify the derived benefits and drawbacks, but also to recognize the success factors and the barriers in the implementation process. Based on an extensive theoretical framework and on field experience in the region of Messenia, several remarks will be offered and answer to the main research question of the current study will be given.

From the comparative analysis between the case – studies (North Tyrol, Tuscany, Scane) and the region of Messenia, it came as a surprise the fact that the latter is practicing agrotourism similarly to North Tyrol and Scane and not alike Tuscany, as one might expected. Bearing in mind that both Messenia and Tuscany have approximately the same morphology and climate, as well as the same institutional framework and European aid regarding agrotourism projects, thus, it can be assumed that the intervention of the involved actors or social structures are the reasons for that difference.

Quite interesting, as can be seen from *Table 14*, is the fact that farmers actively involved in agrotourism are not driven by economic gains, but rather from social incentives; the well –

being of the household and the need to maintain and promote the unique characteristics of their region. It is definitely a complementary income but not a driving force, especially when the potential benefits do not outweigh the expenditures. In the past, the opposite was the case; the fact that financial support was given to locals without any guidance from the government's side and the absence of knowledge from the locals, formed the present image of agrotourism which still lacks a *local identity* and *scent of tradition*. Consequently, a plethora of settlements do exist offering breakfast or breakfast and lunch, while ignoring the key components of agrotourism; farm accommodation, food made by local products, recreational activities in the farm and the respective region, provision of information about the area, etc.

Along the research, we came across another conclusion which addresses the economic impact of agrotourism with regard to job opportunities in tandem with people's migration from rural areas to urban centers. Undoubtedly, the aforementioned are closely related to each other and influence the survival of rural areas and their further evolvement. Thus, there is social and political unanimity regarding the necessity for job creation. At this point, it should be mentioned that agrarians are indeed driven by social gains, but they are highly sensitive when it comes to job employment. However, taking into consideration the employment only in numbers, it would be misleading unless we look at the nature of jobs, skills required and further opportunities. In other words, as some of the respondents mentioned, the number of jobs may have increased but a great percentage of people living in rural areas lack proper education, training or entrepreneurial skills. The perception that getting involved to agriculture and even to agrotourism does not require special abilities, inevitably leads to unprofessionalism, impeding regional development.

Last but not least, looking at *Table 17* ("Barriers and Constraints"), the lack of marketing and the unwillingness of locals to cooperate and create networks in favor of agrarian development can be assumed to be the major drawbacks in the Greek case model. Besides our empirical findings, even in the literature, the lack of synergies or cluster is supported to be crucial for the Greek rural areas, and thus, the absence of it, is the most problematic aspect.

Overall, this study attempted to provide the trajectory of agrotourism development through decades, and examine how regions of different countries within Europe practiced it. From



the comparative analysis, similarities and differences (section 6.2), as well as the success factors and barriers (section 6.3) were thoroughly analyzed in order to identify under which preconditions agrotourism could be a tool for urban areas' regeneration and revitalization. Thus, this thesis came with several conclusions and remarks with respect to the role of alternative types of tourism in rustic areas. Accordingly, in response to the main research question of the due study: *"How can agrotourism contribute to the development of rural areas?"*, the following implications derive: restructuring of the respective field, essential public – private intervention and establishment of monitoring mechanisms, as well as, communication of the derived benefits and change of scope and motivations. The implication of this is that the aforementioned could lay the foundations for rural areas to exploit the potential of the agrotourism concept.

## 7.2 Policy Recommendations

Tourism and agriculture are two areas which should be set as main pillars of a strategic plan aiming to enable the prospect of growth and prosperity in the region's population. The utilization of agricultural wealth and the development of tourism are the main areas that can be developed rapidly. However, the management and planning of this perspective from all stakeholders will play a crucial role in this initiative. Thus, an industry that combines tourism and promotes agricultural products, would give opportunities for the development of rural economy and the manufacturing sector of the respective region. Messenia is heading to this destination by developing in the short term, alternative tourism visits - tours to farms and plants products (oil, olives, figs, wine, etc.), in order to provide an additional tool for tour operators and hotels to attract tourists. In the long-term the goal to be achieved is to earn potential guests or even ambassadors of the local products in their countries, while increasing region's exports. Thus, in response to the sub – research question: *"How could Greece successfully implement agrotourism?"*, the following recommendations emerge:

1. *Emphasis on education through training courses, seminars or other educational programs*

However, there are still a lot to be done as the residents of rural areas hesitate to get involved in the tourism sector, either because they do not realize the advantages of engaging in agrotourism or because they lack financial support. According to the former, training courses, seminars or other educational programs which provide the farmers and all

relevant parties with knowledge about the tourism sector, promotion and advertising of products and management issues, would play a chief role in the composition of consciousness regarding the significance of locals' participation in the process. In Messenia, even though informative units and offices addressing agrarian issues do exist, their role and their field of action is not communicated to the public and only the ones who are really interested in agrotourism are well informed about the sector. Furthermore, even the farmer unions / associations or the Chamber Of Commerce should play a more determinant role in impersonating farmers' wishes and rights and not only stand for bureaucratic or other organizational issues.

### *2. Financial support mechanism only in the context of employment creation*

The second factor of a financial support mechanism is relevant only in the context of employment creation. This assumption is based on previous evidence when locals who were located in disadvantageous areas, instead of using the subsidies for investing in agrotourism, they created settlements and units similar to the ones that mass tourism provides. On the other hand, job creation is a more powerful incentive and responds to the actual needs of rural population and is more plausible to lead to growth and upgrade of the rural areas' economy. Hence, the Ministry of Agriculture, trade unions and other relevant associations should address the financial support on other aspects that the agrotourism concept entails, besides the pure farm accommodation.

### *3. Shifting the focus on environmental ameliorations - or on other concepts*

In line with the findings of the research, the aforementioned suggestion highlights the relevant minor impact in the number of new jobs from the provision of farm accommodation or self - contained apartments. It also recommends shifting the focus on environmental ameliorations - or on other concepts - as it sets the prerequisites for tourist activities on farm units.

*4. Strong marketing & advertising; more sophisticated projects, co - operations with travel agencies, organized trips to farm units and other local enterprises*

With regard to another problematic scheme, that of marketing, there is urgency from the public actors and unions related to agriculture and agrotourism to launch more sophisticated projects like other European countries have. Word – of – mouth, brochures, and advertisements on radio, do not attract the interest neither of locals nor of potential tourists because for the former, the concept of agrotourism and its key characteristics are not embodied yet in the Greek lifestyle and culture. With respect to tourists, more intensive efforts need to be done in this field through co - operations with travel agencies, or even organized trips to farm units and other local enterprises, under the support of a national program / plan.

*5. Creation of clusters or synergies with businesses from the tourist sector*

In continuity with the aforementioned, lack of co – operation seems to be the most significant drawback in the development of agrotourism. Creation of clusters or synergies with businesses from the tourist sector would be pivotal for the growth of the involved parties. Consequently, the implication of this is that individual evolvement would lead to regional prosperity.

*6. Provision of subsidies, loans or even tax deductions to support young farmers with innovative ideas (move towards farm diversification)*

Because of the fact that the vast majority of people engaged in agriculture are of older age, lacking proper education and entrepreneurial spirit, thus, support to young farmers with innovative ideas should be offered by public bodies. Financial support in the form of subsidies, loans or even tax deductions could be used as economic gains in order to move towards to farm diversification instead of staying attached to the core farming activity. Additionally, bearing in mind that younger people are making extensive use of technology, new agronomic techniques might be introduced.

7. *Creation of a common conceptual framework so that the key characteristics of agrotourism can be clearly identified*

Finally, in comply with the literature, the lack of a common conceptual framework about what agrotourism is, leads to misunderstandings and causes problems because its key characteristics cannot be clearly identified. Under the broad umbrella of agrarian debates, issues like: working farms, farm accommodation, active participation in the agricultural activities, etc., provision of information about cultural and historical figures of the area, should be specified in order to restrict the obstacles in the organization and after, in the implementation process.

From a spherical view, in the field of agrotourism in Messenia, there are a lot that has been done, but more to expect. The region is undeniably blessed with a plethora of natural resources and a rich cultural and historical legacy. However, in order to take advantage of the aforementioned and exploit its potential in favor to rural development, it is indispensable that human – oriented actions and initiatives promoting innovativeness and diversification will have to be taken in tandem with a greater public intervention, support and guidance.

### **7.3 Implications for further research**

The current study examined thoroughly the concept of agrotourism and came with several conclusions and results. However, in this section food for thought and further consideration will be provided.

Accordingly, this study will incur a number of alternations and additions regarding the definitions used, as well as specifying the actors (individuals, associations / organizations) that should be part of the sample of the research. In the future, it is plausible that more agrotourism farmers will exist or more policy makers and unions related to agrotourism could be included for more results' accuracy. Furthermore, the research could be conducted in a longer period of time in order to achieve more farm visits and thus, obtain information directly from the source. It would be interesting also to examine the impact of agrotourism in other countries, not necessarily European ones, in order to get an overview of the topic examining and analyzing cases from all over the world. Special attention could be paid at the

social impact of agrotourism, as, according to the interviews, it proved to be more powerful than the financial one.

For the case of Greece in particular, it should be further examined the economic incentives of residents of rural areas that are possible to lead them to farm diversification. So far, it was proven that financial support through subsidies did not result to agrotourism development and the impact of agrotourism as income generator was not strong enough. The interviews did prove though, that individuals of agrarian areas are more driven by social gains but seem to be more sensitive when it comes to job creation. The implication of this is that new jobs impede population migration and contributes to regional growth. However, special attention should be paid at the nature of jobs and not only to the number of those.

Another important issue seeking further examination is the marketing role of agrotourism with respect to other local products or functions. Taking into consideration the co – operative problems, especially noticed in the case of Messenia, it is of high importance and relevance that the derived benefits and advantages from such an initiative will be stressed out. The existing literature lacks such references about tourism and farm business networking. Especially for small operators who do not have the means, the funds or the knowledge to move towards an effective marketing, creation of clusters, could be a solution.

General suggestions not only applicable to the Greek case but of a broader coverage follow as well. Hence, gaps in the literature have been observed with respect to barriers and difficulties that arise in the implementation of agrotourism. Awareness of the aforementioned constraints would be useful for the interested parties in order to find ways to overcome them and be more confident about their decision on whether getting involved or not to this sector. Moreover, while numerous papers and studies examine specific components of the agrotourism concept, like the economic impact, sustainable development, etc., little is written about agrotourists. Comprehension of their needs, demands and attitudes are very useful information for actors in the supply side in order to adapt to tourists' demands, seeking for maximization of efficiency, security of the survival of their "business" and gain profit.

Finally, as mentioned in section 6.2 (*"Comparative analysis between the three case – studies (North Tyrol, Tuscany, Scane) and the region of Messenia"*), not all rural areas are suitable or attractive for rural tourism. The difference lies in the morphology, the physical environment as well as, in the proximity to urban centres. This implies that the distinct characteristics of

the rustic areas are determinant in the selection process from the side of tourists. However, further research should be done not to the natural or morphological features, but to the quality of infrastructure, proximity to transport nodes and urban centers. Undoubtedly, this does not neglect the fact that agrotourists are looking for peacefulness and calmness, but the existence of proper infrastructure and services in the vicinity provides them with a sense of security in case of an emergency.

## List of References

Abawi K., 2008, "Qualitative and Quantitative Research", pp. 1 – 14

Ahmad B. M., (2012), "Tourism Service Quality: A dimension – specific Assessment of SERVQUAL", *Global Business Review*, Vol. 13, No. 2, pp. 327 – 337

Akrinar N., Talay I., Ceylan C. and Gunduz S., (2004), "Rural women and agrotourism in the context of sustainable rural development: A case study from Turkey", *Kluwer Journal*, No 6, pp. 473–486

Arabatzis G., Aggelopoulos S. and Tsiantikoudis S. (2010), "Rural Development and LEADER + in Greece: Evaluation of local action groups", *Journal of Food, Agriculture & Environment*, Vol. 8 (1), pp. 302 – 307

Ashworth G. and Page S. J., (2011), "Urban tourism research: Recent progress and current paradoxes", *Tourism Management*, Vol. 32, pp. 1-15

Bober, 2000, "Qualitative Data Gathering: A Summary", pp. 1 – 7

Breiling M., 2005, "Rural Tourism: Experiences from Austria, Opportunities for Japan", Department for Urban Design and Landscape Architecture, TU Wien

Briassoulis H. and Van Der Straaten J., (2000), "Tourism and the Environment: Regional, Economic, Cultural and Policy Issues", pp. 1 – 375

Brouwer F. (2004), "Sustaining Agriculture and the rural Environment: Governance, Policy and Multifunctionality", pp. 1 – 83

Bryan T., (2012), "Cyprus hill: A new mountain agrotourism resort", *The Guardian*, available on link: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/travel/2012/dec/07/cyprus-new-agrotourism-resort>, last visit on 29/03/2013

Cooper C., Fletcher J., Fyall A., Gilbert D. and Wanhill S. (2008), "Tourism: Principles and Practice", pp. 2 – 672

Calina, A., Calina, J., Iagaru, R., & Croitoru, A. (2009), "Researches on the potential and impact of agrotourism upon the economic and social-cultural development of rural areas in the South-West of Romania", In Zbornik Radova 44. Hrvatski i 4 Medunarodni Simpozij Agronoma, Opatija, Hrvatska, 16-20 Veljače 2009, (pp. 139-143). Poljoprivredni Fakultet Sveučilišta Josipa Jurja Strossmayera u Osijeku.

Doyon M., Bourdeau L. and Charron I., 2006, "The Relationship between Farmers' Values and the Decision to Practice Agrotourism: An Exploratory Study", A Journal of the Canadian Agricultural Economics Society, No 7, pp. 75 – 84

Eadington W. R. and Redman M. (1991), "Economics and Tourism", Annals of Tourism Research, Vol. 18, pp. 41 – 56

Forborda M., Schermerb M. and Griebmairc K., (2012), "Stability and variety - Products, organization and institutionalization in farm tourism", Tourism Management 33, pp. 895 – 909

Gill J., Bostock A. and Smith H., (2013), "Good news from Greece! Local holiday ventures are on the up", The Guardian, available on link:  
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/travel/2013/mar/22/greece-islands-new-holiday-ventures>, last visit on 29/03/2013

Gonzalez A. M., and Bello L., (2002), "The construct "lifestyle" in market segmentation: The behavior of tourist consumers", European Journal of Marketing, Vol. 36, Iss: 1 pp. 51 – 85

Gousiou A., Spilanis I. and Kizos T. (2001), "Is Agrotourism "Agro" or "Tourism"? Evidence from Agrotourist Holdings in Lesvos, Greece", Anatolia: An International Journal of Tourism and Hospitality Research, 12: 1, pp. 6 - 22

Gossling S. and Mattsson S., (2002), "Farm Tourism in Sweden: Structure, Growth and Characteristics", Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism, 2: 1, pp. 17 – 30

Gurgul J., (2005), "Manufacture of regional products and agrotourism as an example of the use of natural values of Tuscany", Prace Geograficzne, Vol. 115, pp. 115 – 124



Kazakopoulos L. and Gidarakou I., 2003, "Women's Cooperatives in Greece and the Niche Market Challenge", *Journal of Rural Cooperation*, No 31, Vol. 1, pp. 25 – 45

Knezevic M. (2011), "Agrotourism as a generator for regional development", *Iss: 2*, pp. 241 – 248, available on: [www.ceeol.com](http://www.ceeol.com)

Koutsou S., Iakovidou O. and Gotsinas N., (2003), "Women's Cooperatives in Greece: An Ongoing Story of Battles, Successes and Problems", *Journal of Rural Cooperation*, No 31, Vol. 1, pp. 47 – 57

Leiper N., (1979), "The framework of tourism: Towards a definition of Tourism, Tourist and the Tourist Industry", *School of Business & Administrative Studies*, pp. 390 - 407

Lopez E. P. and Garcia F. J. C., (2006), "Agrotourism, sustainable tourism and Ultraperipheral areas: The case of Canary Islands", *Revista de Turismo y Patrimonio Cultural*, Vol. 4, No 1, pp. 85 – 97

McCabe S., (2005), "Who is a tourist?" : A critical review " , *Tourist Studies*, Vol. 5, pp. 85 – 106

Neuman W., (2011), "Small U.S Farms Find Profit in Tourism", *The New York Times*, available on:

[http://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/10/business/10tourism.html?pagewanted=all&\\_r=2&\\_r=2&](http://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/10/business/10tourism.html?pagewanted=all&_r=2&_r=2&)

last visit on 29/03/2013

Nielsen N. C., Aae Nissen M. and Just F., (2010), "Rural tourism – return to the farm perspective", Paper prepared for the 19th Nordic Symposium in Tourism and Hospitality Research, September 2010 Akureyri, Iceland, pp. 1 – 24

Nijkamp P. and Verdonkschot S., (1995), "Sustainable Tourism Development: A case study of Lesbos", *Research Memorandum – 3*, pp. 1 – 15

Ohe Y. and Ciani A. (2011), "Evaluation of agritourism activity in Italy: facility based or local culture based?", *Tourism Economics*, Vol. 17, pp. 581 - 601

Opendakker R., (2006), "Advantages and Disadvantages of Four Interview Techniques in Qualitative Research", *Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, Vol. 7, No 4, Art 11, pp. 1 – 13

Pagoulatos G. and Triantopoulos C., (2009), "The Return of the Greek Patient: Greece and the 2008 Global Financial Crisis", *South European Society and Politics*, Vol. 14:1, pp. 35-54

Petrișor-Mateuț O., "Agro – tourism in the European Union and Romania", available on: <http://www.economicaljournal.univagora.ro/download/pdf/2008-AGRO-TOURISM-EU-ROMANIA.pdf>

Ribeiro M. and Marques C., (2002), "Rural Tourism and the Development of Less Favored Areas – between Rhetoric and Practice", *International Journal of Tourism Research*, Vol. 4, pp. 211 – 220

Smith S. L. J., (1988), "Defining Tourism: A supply – side view", *Annals of Tourism Research*, Vol. 15, pp. 179 – 190

Spilanis I. and Vayanni H., (2003), "Sustainable Tourism: Utopia or Necessity? The Role of New Forms of Tourism in the Aegean Islands", *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, Vol. 00, No 0, pp. 1 – 23

Sonnino R., (2004), "For a "Piece of Bread?" Interpreting Sustainable Development through Agritourism in Southern Tuscany", *Sociologia Ruralis*, Vol 44, Number 3, pp. 285 – 300

Sznajder M., Przeborska L. and Scrimgeour F., (2009), "Agritourism", *CAB International*, pp. 1 – 293

Topcu E. D., (2007), "Agri – tourism: As a new element of country planning", A thesis submitted to the graduate school of Natural and Applied Sciences of Middle East Technical University

Wilson I. and Anderson A. R., (2004), "Small tourist firms in rural areas: Agility, vulnerability and survival in the face of crisis", *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behavior & Research*, Vol. 10, No. 4, pp. 229-246

# Appendix

## Interview Guide

### **Personal Information:**

1. Name / Surname
2. Current Job Description

### **1) Interview guide for actors in the public administration**

1. In order to develop tourism which are the tools or the resources that you are currently using?
2. How much could you say that the people involved in the tourism industry are aware of previous initiatives and investments in the tourism sector? Are they familiar with the relevant implementation policies coming after?
3. Do you think that tourism in general can influence the non – urban regions of the periphery?
4. Referring to both the supply and demand side, have you taken any actions in order to communicate alternative type of holidays in the region?
5. Agrotourism is an alternative type of tourism.
  - i. Could you define agrotourism?
  - ii. What is your perception towards it? Do you see it as an instrument for regional growth? Yes or No and why?
6. Agrotourism in Greece has its origins in women’s cooperatives. What is the situation now and what are the future plans? Could you highlight the differences in each case and the role that the municipality played on that?
7. Do you think that the prefecture of Messenia meets the requirements/ has the potential to develop agrotourist activities? If so, why? What is (are) the most powerful characteristic(s) where attention should be paid at, namely agriculture, history and natural environment?
8. Is there a certain regulation facilitating the implementation of agrotourism?
9. What are the barriers in the implementation process and which are the successful ones?

10. Which parties are involved in the organization of agrotourism?
  - i. Could you briefly discuss their role?
  - ii. Do you fear competition among them, or a cooperative relationship is closer to reality?
11. What is the proportion of population engaged in agriculture in the periphery of Messenia?
12. Are farmers interested in getting involved in agrotourism?
  - If yes, what is the role of the municipality in this initiative?
13. What are your expectations about the development of the rural areas of the periphery of Messenia and what is the role of agrotourism to that? Please state your answer with reference to economic, social and environmental aspects of the topic.
14. i. Do you see any opportunities for further growth, or
  - ii. Do you see any threats, which could jeopardize the development of these regions in the future? Please, answer the questions with agrotourism as a benchmark and name a few examples for each case.

**II) A) Interview guide for service providers in agriculture in general**

1. For how long have you been practicing in agriculture? What is exactly your field of work?
2. How could you describe the evolution of your business through years?
3. How has the (composition of the) market changed over years?
4. How important is agriculture for the survival and development of rural areas?
5. Do you think that you would benefit from a possible cooperation with actors involved in tourism?
6. Agrotourism is an alternative type of tourism.
  - i. Could you define agrotourism?
  - ii. What is your perception towards it? Do you see it as an instrument for regional growth? Yes or No and why?
7. Do you think that agrotourism in particular could play a more dominant role in non – urban areas' growth?
8. Have you thought to get involved in agrotourism? If not, what are the reasons for that?

- i. *Lack of knowledge?*
  - ii. *Lack of municipality support?*
  - iii. *Other reasons?*
9. *Do you support the idea that there is need for the locals to be trained in traditional and cultural aspects of the area?*
  10. *How relevant you think it is to follow training courses in order to acquire business / service skills?*
  11. *Could you address the impacts of agrotourism based on: economy, natural environment and cultural heritage?*

**II) B) Interview guide for service providers in agrotourism**

1. *Agrotourism in Greece has its origins in women's cooperatives. How has the role of women changed (if so) and in which way they are involved in agrotourism activities?*
2. *How do you practice agrotourism? What should the visitors / tourists expect by coming here?*
3. *How important you think is the conservation of rural environment and what is your role to that?*
4. *What is the main attractor for tourists coming here? In your opinion, why they choose agrotourism and why should they prefer the current region?*
5. *Do you offer tourists the possibility to participate in other activities taking place in the nature or in more cultural ones (sports, events, ethics)?*
6. *Who are the tourists coming here? Locals or foreigners?*
7. *Could you say that there is a certain type of people interested in agrotourism (age, job, status)?*
8. *How do you promote your "business"? Name a few ways (web – site, brochures, magazines / newspapers, cooperation with tourist guides)*
9. *What do you see as major competitors; other forms of holidays or maybe, neighbor regions?*
10. *Could you address the negative and positive aspects of agrotourism?*
11. *What is your annually income from agrotourism? Is it significantly higher / lower than your income from agricultural or other activities?*

**III) Interview guide for actors in education (supplementary questions)**

1. *Do you think that people are aware of what agrotourism is and what are its distinctive characteristics?*
2. *In which way could you contribute to that? Do you know any actions that have taken place so far (seminars, conferences)?*
3. *Agrotourism aims to exploit among others the physical resources and the cultural / spiritual heritage of the due region. How do you see yourself embedded in this?*
4. *Speaking about agrotourism, what do you think that is the main constraint for its development?*
5. *Is there a need for greater involvement from the side of public administration, education or other sectors?*

