

Tourism as a Supplementary Activity on Organic Farms in the Primorska Region, Slovenia

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The paper deals with tourism as a supplementary activity on organic farms in the Primorska region, in Slovenia. In the region, at the end of 2013, there were 99 organic farms with different types of supplementary activities, 44 of which had formally registered at least one form of tourist services. We analysed 27 organic farms by using a qualitative approach (structured interviews with the owners, content analysis of the brochures and relevant websites of the identified organic farms). In the research, we primarily focused on tourism supply, marketing and promotion analysis together with the plans for farm tourism. The aim of the research was to estimate farms' contribution to sustainable regional development. Findings show that the supply of tourism services on organic farms in the Primorska region is highly diverse, and that the owners are mostly satisfied with tourist visits and outcomes of the farm. While tourism on organic farms in the northern (pre-Alpine) part of the region is relatively well developed, the southern part shows a different picture, with low numbers of such farms. One of the main findings is the detection of a high correlation and synergetic relationship between farm tourism and organic farming, which results in significant benefits for both activities. Developing tourism on organic farms has consequently (despite some obstacles and disadvantages) good regional potentials in the future.

Keywords: farm tourism, organic farming, ecotourism, development opportunities for rural regions, the Primorska region, Slovenia

Introduction

One theoretical and applicative model of sustainable (neo)endogenous rural development that has been in use in recent years is the concept of an eco-economy, which can be considered to be a new paradigm

of the rural development, according to Horlings and Marsden (2014). The eco-economy can be defined as an effective social management of local resources, with the aim of integrating socio-economic development and the conservation of natural resources on the local or regional levels. By combining local production and consumption, we create links and net-

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works of innovative entrepreneurial activities that use environmental resources in a more sustainable and eco-efficient way. This, in addition to new products and services, creates new rural-urban relations, which represent a new driving force for rural development. It is, therefore, a paradigm based on integration into the local environment, ecological modernization and small-scale economy (Kitchen & Marsden, 2011). The eco-economy includes a range of economic and entrepreneurial activities. In addition to (organic) farming, activities connected to food processing, the use of renewable energy, social entrepreneurship and rural (eco)tourism also play an important role. In this paper, the majority of attention is devoted to rural (eco)tourism.

Farm tourism (or agritourism) has numerous definitions. According to Garrod, Wornell, and Youell (2006), it represents a mild form of sustainable tourist development and multi-activity in rural areas through which the visitor has the opportuni-

ty to become acquainted with rural areas, local products, traditional cuisine and the daily life of the people, as well as the cultural elements and the authentic features of the area. Tourism, as such, has been widely promoted and recognized as a development strategy for rural areas seeking to replace declining primary activities, i.e. agriculture (Cawley & Gillmor, 2008; Woods, 2011; Potočnik Slavič, 2012). When defining farm tourism, a focus on the relation between tourism and agriculture or the links between both is often present. Sznajder et al. (2009) define agritourism as “tourist activity whose aim is to familiarize oneself with farming activity and recreation in an agricultural environment”. Farm tourism necessarily comes into some form of contact with agriculture, but the level of contact tourists have with agricultural activities can vary (Phillip et al., 2010).

Farm tourism is often recognized as a form of sustainable tourism (Hardy & Beeton, 2001) and thus, has an important role in sustainable rural de-

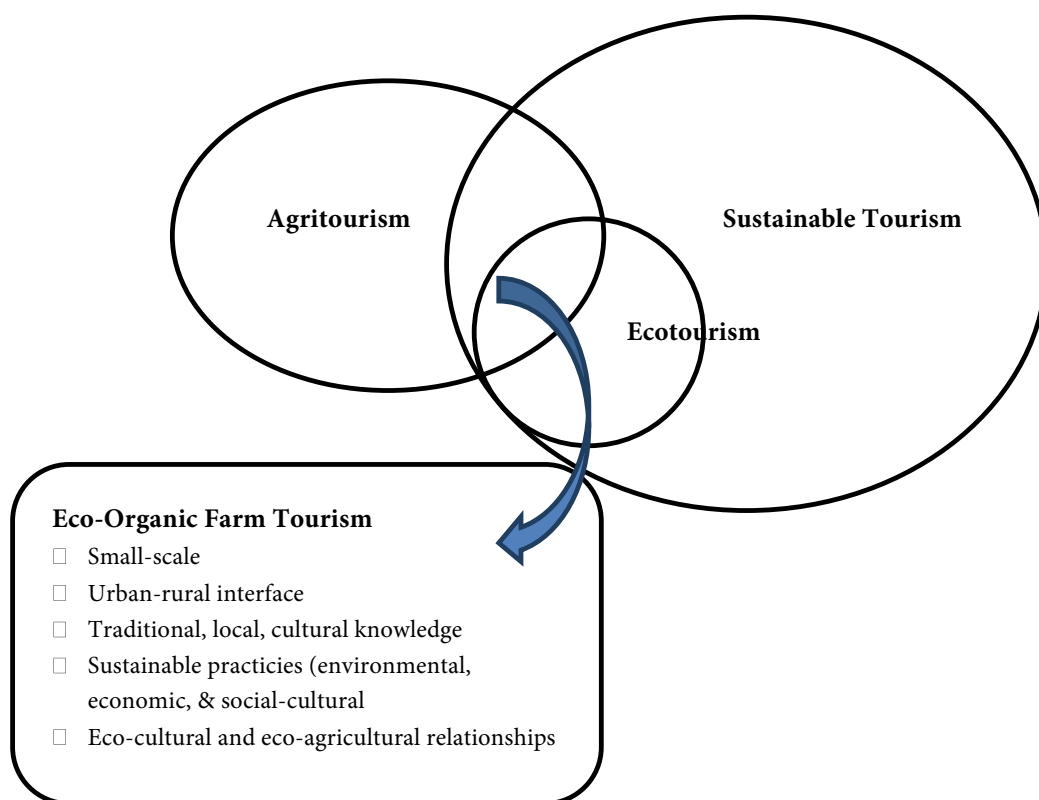


Figure 1 Definition of “Eco-Organic Farm Tourism” by Choo and Jamal
Source: Choo and Jamal, 2009, p. 450.

velopment. However, can agritourism automatically be defined as sustainable? If we consider various problematic impacts of (intensive) conventional agriculture on natural resources, biodiversity, landscape, human health and socio-economic condition of the (smaller) farms, the answer to this question is "no". There are various interpretations and definitions regarding what sustainable agriculture is (Bavec et al., 2009), although many authors agree that organic farming is the most sustainable form of agriculture (Rigby 6 Caceres, 2001). According to Lampkin (1994), organic farming owns numerous sustainable potentials such as ensuring environment protection, better food quality, redirection of farming towards the market demands and others. The contemporary primary goals of organic farming are, however, precisely defined by the International Federation of Organic Agricultural Movements (IFOAM, 2013).

We could, therefore, argue that only tourism on organic farms represents a truly sustainable practice of agritourism, and can be considered as a particular (new) form of ecotourism or "eco-organic farm tourism" (Choo & Jamal, 2009).

The authors suggest that this type of tourism can be employed as a strategy for facilitating sustainable agriculture, local development, social, cultural and environmental conservation, well-being, and education. According to them, ecotourism principles may be usefully applied as a guiding sustainability paradigm for small-scale organic farms engaging in tourism, but at the same time they are aware of the fact that some organic farms may not be suitable for adopting ecotourism activities (Choo & Jamal, 2009).

At this point, we shall move from theory to the concrete facts related to farm tourism and organic farming in Slovenia, in order to understand and compare the current state in the studied region. According to the Registry of Supplementary Activities (MAE, 2014, January), 1,904 tourism supplementary activities were registered on 1,120 Slovene farms (from the total of 74,646 farms). There were 454 tourist farms offering accommodation and 633 tourist farms offering only food and beverages. Other forms of tourism offer available on the farms include tours of the farm and farm surroundings, provision of barbecue sites, horse riding, etc.

According to the Analysis of the State of Organic Farming (*Analiza stanja ekološkega kmetovanja*,

MAE, 2014), by the end of 2013, there were 38,664 ha of organically farmed agricultural land (representing 8.4% of total agricultural land in use), and 3,049 farms that were managed in an ecological way (4.1% of all farms). One of the key characteristics of organic farming in Slovenia is a very high share of grassland (86.7%), but the average size of organic farm is nearly twice that of conventional farms (12.7 ha). This is mainly due to the fact that the majority of organic farms are located in the hilly and karst regions of the country, where traditional extensive agriculture (husbandry) prevails (Podmenik, 2012; Slabe et al., 2011). Since these areas are characterized by various limiting factors for agriculture and remoteness from urban centres, where the primary market for (organic) products is, as well as by rich natural and cultural heritage, we can assume that there are significant needs and potentials for developing (eco) tourism on organic farms.

After data analysis of tourist organic farms on the state level, it is evident that the level of diversification of income on organic farms is in general higher than on conventional farms. The reasons for higher diversifications are found in the unfavourable land use structure of organic farms (predominantly grassland) but also the innovative approach of many organic farmers being much more market oriented (Cigale et al., 2013; Slabe et al., 2011).

In this paper, we focus on the Primorska region, which can be defined as a very heterogenous region, in terms of both physical-geographical and socio-economic characteristics. One of the main characteristics of the region is its strong orientation towards tourism, with some recognized tourist sub regions, such as the Upper Soča valley, Brda, Karst and the Coastal part (Slovene Istria). Generally less developed in tourism is the eastern part of the Primorska region (Idrija and Cerklje hills, the high karst plateaus of Banjšice, Trnovski gozd and Nanos, the Vipava valley and Brkini), but the number of tourist organic farms there is relatively high. Preserved nature, natural and cultural heritage, tourist visibility, together with the increasing number of organic farms in the recent years represent great potentials for the development of tourism on organic farms in the region.

Methodology

In the first phase, a comprehensive literature review regarding tourism on organic farms has been carried out. This was followed by an analysis of the current state of organic farming and the supplementary activities on organic farms in Slovenia (number, location, size, farm orientation, etc.), by using data of the Registry of Supplementary Activities and the Registry of Organic Farms, provided by the Ministry of Agriculture and the Environment (MAE, 2014; MAE, 2013). The second part of the paper is based on the research outcomes. The main emphasis is put on the analysis of tourism supply on organic farms, which has proven to be quite diverse. We also introduce other significant findings related to farm tourism, such as seasonality (duration), structure of the guests, marketing and promotion strategies, main problems regarding the development of farm tourism and future plans, in order to estimate eco-organic farm tourism potential.

The study was conducted in the Primorska region, which has various territorial definitions. We decided to follow the administrative criteria based on the regional strategic documents (RDPs), according to which the Primorska region is divided into a northern and the southern part (RDA North Primorska, 2006; RDA South Primorska, 2006). Primorska consists of two statistical regions: Goriška with 13 municipalities (North Primorska) and Obalno-kraška with seven municipalities plus Ilirska Bistrica from the Notranjsko-kraška statistical region (South Primorska).

In the Primorska region, 27 organic farms with the registered supplementary activity of “farm tourism” were identified at the time of our research (late summer 2012). Detailed research data were then obtained by using qualitative techniques and/or methods. Tourism supply on 27 organic farms was checked on the Internet or in promotional material (content analysis of their own websites and brochures, collecting information on some other relevant websites and in specialized publications, e.g. those of Association of Tourist Farms of Slovenia).

Personal experiences, acquaintances and networks also aided in our data collection. The acquired information was verified, completed and discussed in detail with the owners (structured interviews) of the analysed organic farms in August and September

2012. It appeared that three organic farms were not active in tourism at the time of the research due to current investments into accommodation facilities. One owner refused to answer the questions. The methodology is similar that used by Choo and Jamal (2009, 435–439). Geographical distribution of the 27 farms is shown on the map (Figure 2) and listed in Table 2.

In order to evaluate the role of tourism on organic farms in regional development policies and projects, we also analysed two regional strategic documents: the Regional Development Plan of North Primorska, and that of South Primorska. The topics of development potential and the role of tourism on organic farms in the Primorska region have not yet been studied in detail. However, on the state level, these issues were addressed in the work of Bojnec (2010), Pažek et al. (2005) and in the special edition of the journal *European Countryside* (Cigale et al., 2013), which observes that the occurrence of tourist farms (on the level of Slovenia) is primarily the result of farmers’ needs and opportunities and not (yet) the result of tourism market demand. As regards the studied area, Bojnec et al. (2007) and Podmenik (2012) addressed some issues of development potential of sustainable tourism. Therefore, in this paper, we bring some relatively new insights for the heterogeneous Primorska region.

Research Outcomes

Characteristics of Tourist Organic Farms in the Primorska Region

In the Primorska region, various forms of farm tourism are relatively well established. By the beginning of 2014, farms with supplementary activities (SA) in the studied area registered 448 different forms of tourist services, representing no less than one quarter of all farm tourist activities in Slovenia.

Following the official data (MAE, 2014) presented in Table 1, there are 44 tourist organic farms in the region with no less than 102 different registered tourism supplementary activities, which is more than two tourism activities per farm on average. The share of different tourism supplementary activities on organic farms in the Primorska region is 22.8 %, which is above the Slovene average. The high percentage indicates higher dynamics or business agility of organic farms, which evidently look for the income not only

Table 1 Types and Volume of Supply on Tourist Organic Farms of the Primorska Region

Relevant data	Primorska region	North Primorska	South Primorska
All tourist farms – number of SA	448	231	217
Tourist organic farms – number of SA	102	62	40
Share of SA on tourist organic farms	22.8	26.8	18.4
Tourist organic farms – number of restaurant seats	1,052	668	384
Catering part of the offer – number of SA	54	36	18
Additional offer – number of SA	48	26	22
All tourist farms – number of restaurant seats	8,622	3,919	4,703
Share of restaurant seats on tourist organic farms	12.2	17	8.2

Source: MAE, 2013; MAE, 2014

within but also outside the basic agricultural activities more often than conventional farms do.

However, it is necessary to call attention to some differences and specifics, reflected both in the services offered as well as the spatial representation. Tourism on organic farms is more developed in the northern part of the region, where 20 tourist organic farms offer accommodation and 62 out of 102 different tourist activities are registered. Above all, considerable differences can be noticed in the number of farms offering food (catering), with 36 in the northern part and only 18 in the southern part of the region.

Additionally, the developmental role of tourist organic farms can be highlighted through the analysis of the data on the registered restaurant seats on farms. As a rule, they are registered by farms with catering or excursion farms. At the beginning of 2014, the farms in Slovenia registered a total of 33,425 restaurant seats, 8,622 in the studied area of 21 municipalities, and 1,052 on tourist organic farms. This represents more than 12% of all restaurant seats on the farms of the Primorska region, which is a relatively modest number according to the proportion of all forms of supplementary tourist activities on organic farms (22.8%). These values, however, need to be interpreted in a wider context. Koper and Sežana together offer as many as 3,200 restaurant seats on their tourist farms. These are the areas with a long tradition in supplementary tourist activities that were in

recent years designed predominantly to accommodate the visitors who mainly come from the Italian side of the border.

Even these values show explicit regional differences in the services offered. Tourist organic farms in the southern part of the region offer only 8% of all restaurant seats on farms, while tourist organic farms in the northern part have 17% of these seats, which is mainly because farm tourism in Slovenia is developed mostly in the areas with no other tourist services.

The developmental role of tourist organic farms (or so-called eco-organic farm tourism) can be determined by the share of organic farming on farms that have developed various forms of tourism. In the studied area, there are 448 formally registered supplementary activities connected to tourism, with only two smaller (newly established) municipalities out of 21 with no registered farms with tourism supplementary activities. Among the other 19 municipalities, no less than 17 also have organic farms as bearers of tourism supplementary activities, but to a considerably different extent. The studied supplementary activities are most widely represented in bigger municipalities (in Koper 82, Sežana 51, Nova Gorica 48, Idrija 46, etc.); however, tourist farms with organic farming are most common in typically rural municipalities, e.g. Bovec, Kobarid, Cerklje, etc. In Divača 72%, in Bovec 71%, and in Cerklje 61% of all tourism sup-

plementary activities take place on organic farms. In these rural areas, eco-tourism has been recognized as a developmental model on the level of an individual farm, but increasingly on the local and regional level as well. A detailed spatial distribution of (tourist) organic farms is shown in Figure 2.

Tourism Supply Analysis and Other Key Findings

Tourism supply on the analysed organic farms is quite diverse. Gastronomy service and catering is the prevailing type of tourism supply (23 farms), followed by accommodation (18 farms), guided tastings of (typical) homemade products (e.g. wine or olive

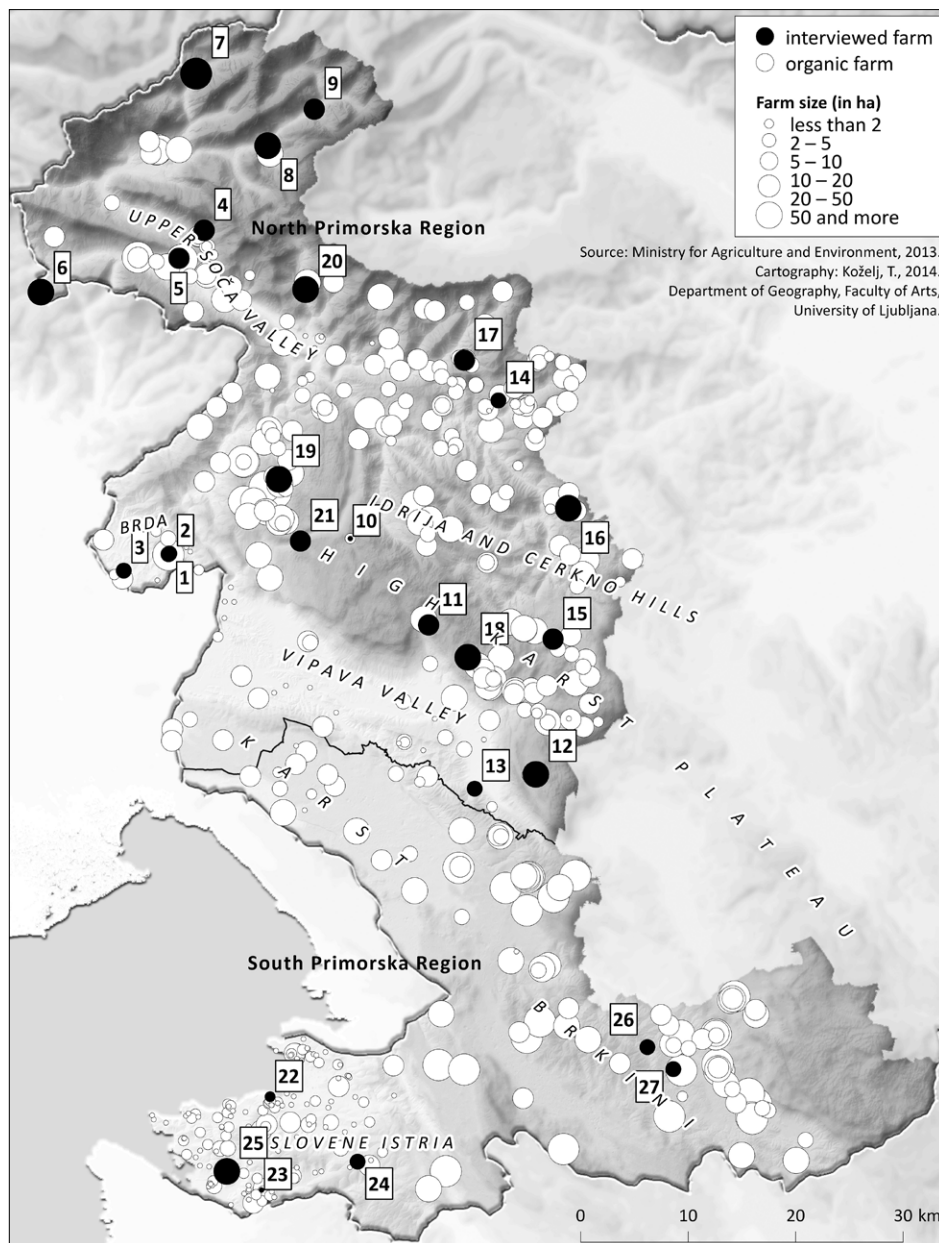


Figure 2 Spatial Distribution of Organic Farms and Tourist Organic Farms in the Primorska Region

Note: Data shown on the map are adjusted to the present situation (field work).

Table 2 Selected Results of Content Analysis of Websites and Promotional Material, and Interviews Conducted on 27 Tourist Organic Farms (August–September 2012)

	Tourist organic farm	Sub-region	Accommodation	Gastronomy (catering)	Guided tastings	Outdoor activities	Wellness	Educational programmes
1	Kmetija Štekar	Brda	✓	B&B	✓	✓	✓	×
2	Vinogradništvo in turizem Štekar	Brda	✓	✓	✓	✓	×	×
3	Kmetija Klinec	Brda	✓	✓	✓	✓	×	✓
4	Turistična kmetija Žvanč	Upper Soča valley	✓	B&B	✓	×	×	×
5	Turistična kmetija Mašera	Upper Soča valley	×	×	×	×	×	×
6	Turistična eko kmetija Robidišče	Upper Soča valley	✓	✓	✓	✓	×	✓
7	Turistična kmetija Černuta	Upper Soča valley	✓	✓	✓	✓	×	✓
8	Turistična kmetija Jelinčič	Upper Soča valley	✓	✓	✓	✓	×	✓
9	Ekološka TK Pri Plajerju	Upper Soča valley	✓	✓	✓	✓	×	✓
10	Ekološka kmetija pri Tončkovih	High carst plateau	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
11	Kmetija Jagruše	High carst plateau	×	×	×	×	×	×
12	Turistična kmetija Abram	High carst plateau	✓	✓	×	✓	×	×
13	Posestvo Burja	Vipava valley	×	×	✓	×	×	×
14	Kmetija-camp Zalaze	Idrija and Cerkno hills	?	✓	×	✓	×	✓
15	Pr Mark	Idrija and Cerkno hills	✓	✓	×	✓	×	✓
16	Kmetija Pr Jureč	Idrija and Cerkno hills	×	✓	✓	×	×	✓
17	Kmetija Flander	Idrija and Cerkno hills	✓	✓	✓	✓	×	✓
18	Penzion Sinji Vrh	High carst plateau	✓	✓	×	×	✓	✓
19	Kmetija Jakopič	High carst plateau	×	?	×	✓	×	✓
20	Kmetija pri Lovrču	Upper Soča valley	✓	✓	×	×	×	×
21	Kmetija Stanar	High carst plateau	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

22	Kmetija Dujc	Slovene Istra	×	×	✓	×	×	×
23	Kmetija Lisjak	Slovene Istra	✓	✓	✓	✓	×	×
24	Eko Laura	Slovene Istra	✓	✓	✓	×	×	×
25	Korenika&Moškon	Slovene Istra	×	✓	✓	×	×	×
26	Domačija Boštjančič	Brkini	✓	×	✓	✓	×	✓
27	Turistična kmetija Peternejl	Brkini	×	✓	✓	✓	×	✓

Note: North Primorska (organic farms No. 1-21), South Primorska (organic farms No. 22-27).

Legend: ✓ – yes, × – no, B&B – bed and breakfast, N/A – no tourism activity (temporary).

oil) and different outdoor activities (e.g. horseback riding, cycling). Approximately half of the farms offer various educational programs, such as guided visits of the farms with the presentation of the life and work on a farm, school in nature, art workshops and others. There are three farms offering wellness treatment, i.e. indoor pools, however, this cannot be defined as a holistic wellness product (see Table 2).

The fact that only one farm is without its own website proves that farmers are very much aware of the importance of the presentation and promotion on the Internet. We may assume that tourist organic farms are significantly more entrepreneurially orientated than conventional ones. In addition to this, the majority of tourist organic farms also promote themselves on domestic web portals (e.g. on www.turistickemetije.si and/or www.slovenianholidays.com), and just a few of them use “conventional” channels (TV, radio, newspapers, etc.) for their marketing. However, interviews confirmed our assumption that by far the most important promotion channel for tourist farms is “word of mouth” marketing. Most of the farms have regular guests, who are the best “promoters” of their services.

Less than half of the farms cooperate with tourist agencies, but for most of them cooperation is occasional, with little (economic) importance. A few more (20) cooperate with local tourist information centres/points, but also here the farmers question the benefits of this kind of cooperation.

A little more than half of the farms are open throughout the year (with prior reservations), while other farms are open during the main tourist season, which is between May and September for the vast majority of them. The season is even shorter for those

farms that are located in the hilly and mountainous parts of the region.

Farmers referred to the natural and peaceful environment, climate and geographical position as the prevailing motives for visiting their farms. The structure of guests by nationality shows that farms are visited by approximately the same number of domestic and foreign tourists, which has also been reported by Horvat (2010). Domestic guests prevail in the low season and for short-term stays (one day or weekend), while foreign guests prevail in high season and for long-term stays. Foreign guests come from different countries, however; from the interviews, it can be concluded that the majority of them are German, Austrian and British.

Taking into consideration the future plans for tourism on the farms, about 60% (17 farms) plan to extend/improve their offered tourist services. Among those, seven farms have plans for new or additional accommodation facilities (rooms, apartments or a camp-site). For them, access to funding and financial support is crucial. Within the Rural Development Plan, there are measures for investments regarding supplementary activities (tourism) on farms. In our case, just 40% of the farms applied and were successful in obtaining this kind of financial support for developing farm tourism (e.g. facilities). The main inhibiting factor for many farmers is the large amounts additional bureaucracy and work, which results in high(er) costs for material, work, etc. Some farmers even reported that (by their calculations) overall costs can be higher in the case of applying/getting the support.

The general issue of excessive bureaucracy was indicated as one of the crucial problems regarding de-

veloping farm tourism, together with a) weak marketing support and weak cooperation with (local) tourist organizations, municipalities and regional development agencies; b) accessibility (problems with road infrastructure); and c) weather dependency and increasingly frequent weather extremes (due to climate changes).

With regard to the tourism potential of the studied organic farms, the analysis conducted shows that tourism holds an important position and that it is already seen as the central activity at seven farms. Eleven farms still predominantly focus on their primary (farming) activity, while for the other nine farms we estimate that both activities are in the complementary dynamic balance and occupy an equal position. Tourism on organic farms in the Primorska region is on the rise, but in general (at least for now) it does not threaten their primary activity. Quite the opposite: we estimate that it helps the farms to survive or deal with problems. From the regional sustainable development point of view, this is of great importance.

Discussion and Conclusion

Organic farming in the Primorska region has received some research attention (Podmenik, 2012; Podmenik et al., 2013), however, tourism on organic farms (and its role in sustainable regional development) has yet to be studied. Since tourism plays an important economic role (particularly in the southern part of the Primorska region), the aim of this paper is also to evaluate the significance and the future perspective of (eco)tourism on organic farms.

In the strategic planning of regional development (RDA South Primorska region (2006) and RDA North Primorska region (2006)) for 2007–2013, organic farming and the tourism development in rural areas play an important role. Key guidelines for the development of tourism in rural areas are the establishment of sustainable tourism and support infrastructure, the promotion of the development of supplementary activities on farms, the increase in accommodation capacities, the introduction of typical local products and natural and cultural heritage into the offered tourist services, the linking of tourism in tourist and urban centres with tourist services in the rural areas, and the establishment of cross-border destinations. The emphasis is on the promotion of the innovative and “niche” tourist offer in the form of ec-

otourism, active holidays, culinary tourism, and other sustainable forms of tourism. The two key factors hampering the development of (eco)tourism are the lack of resources for the development of tourist services and effective marketing, and weak connections between the providers. The above mentioned strategic documents include numerous proposals connected to the development of (eco)tourism in rural areas (e.g. Regional Scheme for the Support of Small Accommodation and Catering Capacities in the Rural Areas). However, the review of implementation plans reveals that practically all (directly) co-financed projects were aimed at the development of public infrastructure; therefore, the actual financing of the abovementioned contents or projects did not occur.

It can be noted that, on the declarative level, the needs for the encouragement and development of (eco)tourism are clearly defined, but on the operational level, the realization is poor. One noteworthy new source of financial incentives is the LEADER program, which meets the development needs of the local environment through local initiatives with individual focus projects. We therefore used the information from the already established organic farms, active in the field of tourism supplementary activities, to estimate the actual sustainable role of this form of tourism in the rural areas and especially the farmers’ own views of the development of their activity.

Considering the results of our preliminary research, we call attention to the following key findings:

- The research proved a strong connection and synergistic relationship between farm tourism and organic farming (in the studied region), and major benefits for both activities, mostly in terms of marketing (selling options) of organic products. Tourism on organic farms can (in many cases) be defined also as innovative entrepreneurial approach.
- There are noticeable differences in the range of tourism activities on organic farms between the North and the South Primorska regions. The crucial factors are the higher number of organic farms and the longer tradition of organic farming in the northern part. To determinate (other) key

factors responsible for the present situation, additional research is needed.

- Tourism supply on organic farms is very diverse. A total of 102 different tourism supplementary activities are registered on 44 tourist organic farms, gastronomy services and catering being the prevailing type of tourism service, and also economically relevant for the farms. It must be noted that the (official) register does not reflect completely the actual situation, since some farmers register supplementary activities “just in case”, while others include them into their range of services without registering them. This reveals the need for changes in monitoring the data in the register, which are already being implemented on the national level.
- The interviewed owners (27) are mostly (very) satisfied with tourist visits and they plan to extend or improve their tourist offered tourism services (on seven farms, they want to build new or additional accommodation facilities). This proves that many farmers see tourism as a highly important activity and want to invest in further/additional development of tourism on their farms. Resilient farmers are already responding on demands of tourism market.

Despite the obvious prospects for the development of tourism in relation to organic farming, concerns remain that the supplementary activity gradually takes over the dominant economic role on the farm itself, inhibiting the development of agriculture or even gradually leading to its abandonment. Such scenarios can be seen at individual farms; however, at a regional or local level, it is important to establish a dynamic balance between the two activities.

The integration of tourism on organic farms with social entrepreneurship represents a potential based on the activation and the sustainable use of local resources and potentials of the area and encourages social and environmental innovation. It is social entrepreneurship that will receive a lot of attention or funding from the EU and the state in the next financial perspective.

In addition to this, within the 2014–2020 Rural Development Programme special measures for the development of social entrepreneurship in the countryside or organic farms are presented. In this con-

text, we can also see the opportunity in connecting into farm co-operatives, which can contribute positively to the socio-economic development of the small local areas and regions. Therefore, the Primorska region should follow, for instance, good practices in the neighbouring areas of the Friuli-Venezia Giulia region. There are many examples of local tourism co-operatives, which combine small local providers in rural areas and operate a system of “dispersed hotels”.

In the end, however, we can single out the segments of the sustainable development in which tourism on organic farms has the maximum effect (as well as the development potential):

- The economic aspect of sustainable development: Various forms of tourist and hospitality services that represent additional sales channel with added value (home sale with lower costs, higher prices of quality organic crops and products). Organic production methods (certified quality), as well as tourist services help to increase farm income.
- The social aspect of sustainable development: Due to the nature of supply and production methods, family farms have more opportunities for new (mostly green) jobs. Job opportunities in turn contribute to the preservation of rural settlement and viability of rural areas.
- The environmental aspect of sustainable development: Due to lower material and energy inputs (fertilizers, pesticides, etc.) organic farming has been recognized as the most sustainable form of food production, which further contributes to quality living environment and consequently better health. Often, organic production methods complement the farms' other offered services.

The potential for regional development in this part of Slovenia through tourist organic farms is reflected in the figures: by the end of 2013, there were 44 tourist farms in the area. In comparison to the rest of Slovenia, their number has increased rapidly in the recent years. Due to this rapid growth, the focus in the future should be on the effects on the level of individual farms and the wider local community. The findings of this field study further reveal the remaining problem of the so-called supportive environment, which is crucial for the future development

of eco-organic farm tourism and rural (social) entrepreneurship. In addition, stronger networks between farms and different stakeholders should be built, especially in the context of joint marketing and connecting rural areas to urban and tourist centres.

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