

## Agrotourism in a context of pluriactivity in rural areas



Analysis of the link between tourism and agriculture in Messinia – Greece

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**CAP:** Common Agricultural Policy

**CCIM:** Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Messinia

**GDP:** Gross domestic product

**LEADER:** Link between Actions for the development of the rural economy

**NGO:** Non-governmental organization

**NSSG:** National Statistics Service of Greece

**OCDE:** Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development

**PDO:** Product of designated origin

**UAA:** Useful Agricultural Area

**IUCN:** International Union for Conservation of Nature,

**UNESCO:** United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

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## Introduction

In Greece, the rural space covers almost 90% of the national territory, with a strong presence in mountainous and islands areas. In the 1960's and 1970's, both internal and external population migrations have resulted in the demographic decline of this space, often accompanied by the abandonment of farmland. The abandonment of countryside for more attractive urban centers has changed the rural landscape, usually maintained by human activities changing social relations and economic activities. Since Greece entered the European Union (EU) in 1981, incomes in rural areas increased significantly, and this has been attributed to subsidies from CAP (Common Agricultural Policy) for the agricultural sector but also to tourism related activities (ILIOPOULOU and *al.*, 2006).

Nowadays, agricultural space represents 40.2% of the national territory and employment in the primary sector had been very important for a long time. However, it has significantly decreased over the past decades while employment services (tertiary sector) increased which led to an increase of the salaries in many Greek regions (ILIOPOULOU and *al.*, 2006).

This phenomenon can be in part explained by important land use changes, especially during 1999-2000 (increase of urban landscaped areas – +14% – and undergrazing agricultural areas), and the modernization of agriculture supported by the CAP (changes in agricultural practices).

Yet, despite a severe economic crisis context, there seems to be a “renewed interest in the agricultural sector” (GOUSSIOS D., 2011) with a 7% increase of agricultural employment between 2008 and 2010 in the 45-64 years old class.

Tourism contributes to an important part of the GDP, *i.e* 15.4% and includes 754 000 jobs (Greek tourism enterprises association, 2010). In the 1950's, tourism was developed around the cultural attraction of the country. Gradually the tourism model has evolved and Greece became, in the middle of the 1980's, a holiday destination to “relax” (sun/sea pattern). This model has largely reinforced the phenomenon of seasonality which led to an exclusive development of the coastline and islands and to a spatial concentration of touristic structures in coastal areas

(Greek tourism enterprises association, 2010). To compare, mountainous areas which cover 70% of the continental Greece, are geographically isolated and are among the poorest areas.

The study takes place within Captain Vassilis Foundation, in southwest Greece in Messinia. This foundation is interested in the promotion and development of a sustainable agriculture in Messinia, according to the CAP objectives (2014-2020).

This report aims at studying agrotourism in Messinia. We will take as a reference, MARCOTTE and *al.* (2006) definition which was elaborated thanks to a comparative analysis of several scientific and professional documentation on agrotourism. At the end of the analysis, agrotourism is defined as “a tourist experience realised in agricultural environment. This experience relies on the relationship between a farm organisation, the services that accompany the agricultural product, and the tourist (traveler). The demand for this kind of services is based on leisure”.

We will first present what is agrotourism and define it through Greek literature. In a part titled materials and methods, tools used are described. Literary researches allow to understand how agrotourism contributes to the evolution of agriculture and tourism. Meetings and interviews done allow to understand in part the socio-economic situation of farmers. The results linked to the hypothesis are presented and then discussed.

# **PART 1. Agrotourism, an activity for the development of rural space**

Given the rural characteristics of Messinia, most of the activities are carried out within a framework of rural tourism. According to Eurogites<sup>1</sup> (2008), rural tourism is defined in the following manner: "*it is a sustainable and multifunctional activity, based on local resources, related to the traditional agricultural activity, culture or natural values in the countryside or in small (rural) cities where tourism is not the main source of income*". Thus, sport tourism, green tourism, eco-tourism, agrotourism, health tourism, gastronomic tourism and even cultural tourism, offer thematic activities in all areas of Messinia (Convention Bureau of Kalamata, 2012). The mountains of Taygetos allow hiking, climbing, rafting or other sports, but also the discovery of the terroirs and the cultivation of olive trees through route of the olive trees, recognized by UNESCO, for example, that allows to connect different spaces between them and thus break with the dispersed activities and tourist structures side (KIZOS T., IOSIFIDES T., 2007). Among these different forms we will adopt agrotourism.

## **1. Definition of agrotourism**

We chose as reference definition a general definition derived from a comparative analysis of MARCOTTE et al. (2006) For our study, we focus on the elements of definition from Greek literature on agrotourism and rural tourism in order to consider a discussion on this definition.

The term used throughout the report makes reference to the Greek origin of the term 'agros' which means "ground" (Agritourism, CABI<sup>2</sup>, 2009). IAKOVIDOU and KOUTSOU (2007) write "*it is worth mentioning that the terms rural tourism, farm tourism, agrotourism and agritourism are used interchangeably in Greece*". The only difference between agrotourism and agritourism focuses on the etymology of the word: one Greek, the other Latin.

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<sup>1</sup> European Federation for hospitality in the countryside, farm and the village home stay. [www.eurogites.org](http://www.eurogites.org)

<sup>2</sup> CABI is a not-for-profit organization, which relies on scientific research, field actions and experiences to improve the quality of life of the people by providing information and by supporting in particular in the field of agriculture and the environment. It is an international organization. [www.cabi.org](http://www.cabi.org)

Agrotourism in Greece takes place in a rural framework, mixing culture, environment, society and traditions. "*Rural space within which it can grow is a space that has not yet been submerged by another tourism*" (Geotechnical Chamber of Greece, 2003). These are the areas with a low resident population, mountainous areas, less-favoured areas...

Like the rural house, agrotourism aims to welcome visitors at the inhabitants places, on an excursion for the day or for a longer period, in at least offering accommodation in a quality habitat, traditional and exotic, generally including breakfast (such as the Bed & breakfast). Meals when there are asked by the visitors are prepared with local products, from the farm production, from a cooperative or from local producers.

In the rural area, there is n isolated farm seat as found in France where the workplace and the home are in the same place. Very few farmers have their farm and their homes on one site which complicates the uniformity of the agrotourism product. The distances between home and land vary from a few to several kilometers despite the fact that some cultures require daily care.

Agrotourism which takes place in Greece is not the same as in France. Indeed, agrotourism which is proposed in Greece does not match the welcome to the farm such as promoted by "Accueil Paysan" or "Bienvenue à la ferme". These are two French labels attributed to a farm which proposes agrotourism activities. The main difference lies in the fact that the farm is dissociated from host place of residence and does not allow a clear vision of products and tourist amenities, which can appear as a handicap. Thus, the proposed services are often made outside the place of home. They are delivered by external service providers, to energize the local economy. The experience that may withdraw the tourist in France of the exchange he had with his host/farmer is only very weakly allowed in the Greek framework.

Agrotourism, when undertaken, is seen by its originator as a complementary activity of the first farm income.

This reinforces the idea that combining tourism and agriculture to form agrotourism appears *a priori* as difficult to the extent where these are two distinct benefits that cannot be satisfied in one and unique product. This kind of tourism is



closer to rural tourism without specificity than agrotourism, because what distinguishes agrotourism from rural tourism is the product available only in one place.

## 2. The agrotourism clientele

A survey on the quality of the rural tourism in 2009-2010, under the auspices of the QUALITOOL<sup>3</sup> project, focused on clients of agro-tourism in Europe. The survey consisted in a series of questions to identify practices, profiles and the interests of consumers. It was conducted on the internet with 3487 people from 55 different countries: the majority of respondents came from Greece, Bulgaria, Slovenia and Spain (Association of the Latvian tourism, 2010)<sup>4</sup>.

For 86% of the respondents, agrotourism is practiced in the country of origin.

Overall, it appears that the 31-40 years age group is one who practices the most agri-tourism. It has an average income and generally family. However, there is no evidence their socio-professional category.

Asked – what do you associate with rural tourism? – Greek respondents chose farmhouse for 16%, 19% accommodation in one rural framework and 23% for outdoor activities. Overall, it is mentioned that more the respondent's age is high more he will associate rural tourism to agrotourism, whereas for younger, rural tourism will be associated with an active holiday.

To the question – what is for you the most important when choosing accommodation? –, Greek responded by increasing order of importance on a scale of 1 to 5: the price, the good situation, complete and credible information about the accommodation, the nature and/or attractive landscape, tranquility and silence of the environment. During their stay, what is the most important is the local cuisine and the confidence in the host and his helpfulness.

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<sup>3</sup> Transfer of tools to ensure the quality of the European rural tourism sector, in partnership with Bulgarian, Slovenian, Greek, Andalusian and Latvian associations, as well as the European Federation of rural tourism Eurogites.

<sup>4</sup> <sup>4</sup> [www.celotajs.lv/cont/prof/proj/Leonardo2008/Doc/Customer\\_survey\\_results\\_en.pdf](http://www.celotajs.lv/cont/prof/proj/Leonardo2008/Doc/Customer_survey_results_en.pdf), PDF link of the report 2009-2010.

For the Greeks, they are often urban people seeking for nature who are engaged in agrotourism (Kalamata Convention Bureau, [www.alternativegreece.gr](http://www.alternativegreece.gr)).

Several studies concerning Greece refer to the previous idea without specifying the socio-professional category of consumers. It is nevertheless often explained a phenomenon of 'back to the land' and break with the daily urban (GOUSSIOS D., 2011). Although many Greeks possess land, directly or indirectly, those who do not own a land need to be in rural areas, far from the "stress" of the city.

## **PART 2. Problematic**

### **1. The stakes of tourism and agriculture in a crisis context**

Greece is currently undergoing the global economic crisis. Among the main consequences, a high rate of unemployment and the decline in purchasing power are recognized. Most of the economic sectors is affected, particularly agriculture and tourism. In Messenia, agriculture is struggling to find new economic opportunities to remain as a first economic resource. Agricultural works are not valued at fair value. Farmers are trying to find other solutions that only agricultural production to find a semblance of balance in rural space.

#### **1.1 New forms of tourism in development**

Messenia is part of the new tourist destinations in Greece. Driven by integrated tourism development programs, but also rural development programs (including LEADER), capacity in the number of tourist beds increased by 20% between 2007 and 2011. In 2012, tourism professionals are worried. They recorded a turnover of two times less important than that of the year 2011 over the same period (from Gialova).

Even if mass tourism remains few present in Messenia, the previous tourism development policies contributed greatly to the phenomenon of seasonality, particularly during the summer season. The major problems that can be identified at this level are on waste management and water resources, the erosion of the beaches or even disturbance of coastal ecosystems.

From a socio-economic point of view, the over-representation of tourists compared to short-term residents alters human relationships where tourism consumption is often made excessive. More generally, the mass tourism completely absorbs local particularities and develops relationships standardized between local people and tourists.

On the studied space, a dynamic of promotion was introduced over the past five years with aims to promote alternative forms of tourism, both to destination of the Greeks and foreign tourists, whose requests for local and authentic services increase more and more. They will prefer the outdoor accommodation or rentals furnished in rural hotels or standardized accommodation. The search for return to Earth, the

discovery of terroirs, experience sports, cultural or gastronomic as conductive line of holidays are now each registered in a style of tourism.

For these reasons, the competent Greek authorities had been led to rethink tourism and to expand and strengthen its potential. Thus, the model of tourism based on the sun and the sea seeks to be limited to promote new areas, new spaces, "*which have not yet been conquered by tourism*" (Geotechnical Chamber of Greece, 2003). These alternative forms tend to be developed in rural areas, particularly in mountain areas, and peri-urban space. Measures have been taken to encourage rural people and especially young people affected by a high rate of unemployment to develop new sources of income, including ecotourism and agrotourism (UNO, 2009)

Alternative tourism is based primarily on the work of environmental awareness. It has for main objectives to minimize the environmental and social damage respecting the integrity of local populations, while diversifying their income (APOSTOLOU M., et PAPANIS E., 2007). It represents an alternative to mass tourism.

This awareness-raising work is done both by hosts when they incorporate environmental approaches (recovery of rainwater, solar panels and compost..) but also on the part of associations and local NGOs (Non-governmental organizations), partners of the European Union (Life project, Birdlife International...). The State organizes some campaigns to promote this type of tourism through public institutions such as the CCIM.

In summary, the decline of tourism on the model "sea/Sun" and the phenomenon of urbanization of coastal areas of Messinia have both contributed to the emergence of new forms of tourism.

## **1.2 Farming quest for renewal: pluriactivity in rural areas**

A household is considered pluriactive if at least one of the permanent members of the family (father, mother or child) earn money outside of the family farm. A study in Messinia (GIDARAKOU and *al.*,2004) on 78 farmers showed that 13% of them are pluriactive and in this case, they lived in urban centers.

Agricultural activity is exercised on a part-time, the other half is devoted to a second activity. This is mainly due the difficulty to live prosperous only farming, but also by the low availability of jobs in rural areas, pushing farmers to find a complementary activity in urban centers. The study concludes that the recovery of family farms is largely influenced by the second activity and especially when it is carried out in urban areas: potential successors turn away from agriculture for the benefit of another work exercised in an urban area, settled there without selling their land.

Farm households do not sell their land, continue to exploit it, but for personal purposes. The abandonment of the countryside for the benefit of urban activity by these households is synonymous with a decline of agricultural activity. This is in part due to the low rate of recovery of farms which is one of the key issues in the policy of rural development of Messenia. In the local rural development program, the actions determined to face this stake are integrated into the axis of diversification of agricultural activities. To encourage young farmers to develop another activity and to stay in the rural space, financial helps are offered under the LEADER program. Another important stake concerns the age of farm operators that increases. Indeed, while the number of farmers over 65 increases, the less than 35 years old decline considerably.

By highlighting natural and 'agri-cultural' local specificities, i.e., the result of an interaction between man and the living which have created a local identity<sup>5</sup>, heritage and traditional knowledge, agro-tourism can participate in the anchoring of populations, rural development and the construction of a 'new' identity while promoting it.

## 2. The queries

Can the diversification of the agricultural sector contribute to the anchoring of the rural populations on their territory? These populations are sufficiently informed about their natural heritage in order to promote it and use it for tourism purposes? What are the ways of pooling? Is agrotourism a way?

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<sup>5</sup> [http://www.unesco.org/mab/doc/moreThemes/E\\_agro-culture.pdf](http://www.unesco.org/mab/doc/moreThemes/E_agro-culture.pdf)

Are farmers willing to engage in this type of approach in a very difficult economic environment? What are their means of assessment, the existing references?

Rural development policies focus on the 'identity' of territories, but what importance is given to the farmer? Can identity be modified? Does Identity give him the will to engage in agro-tourism? What are the partnership tools available?

Is agrotourism practiced differently between a farmer producing conventionally and an organic farmer? What is the difference in services? Is organic produce an element favouring the agrotourism?

### **3. Working hypothesis**

**We ask as the first hypothesis in the establishment of agro-tourism in Greece, that the diversification of non-agricultural income is moving towards the development of a secondary tourist activity (services), which is not necessarily based on agricultural activity but take advantage of territorial resources close to the farm.**

Overall, most operators are small producers. For several years, the trend is towards enhancement of the quality of food products and these small producers seek to convert to organic farming. When they are, **we ask as a second hypothesis that certification in organic agriculture is used to support tourism on agriculture because it represents a label rewarding the work of the farmer and attracting visitors. Thus, when tourism activity is directly related to the activity of the farm, this enables an experience for the tourist and the farmer.**

## **PART 3. Materials and methods**

On the territory of study, a survey of institutions and competent authorities for agrotourism was conducted in order to guide different researches.

Then, a non-exhaustive inventory of agrotourism in Greece was conducted to understand how this concept is applied in Messenia. This comes mainly from the studied literature, agricultural and tourism statistics available, people met who formed our database.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 7 farmers engaged in a tourist process (all openings of the farm or space at the initiative of the operator for the benefit of the visitor). Contacts have been established by mail at first and by phone to restart, but also by presenting ourselves directly to the operator.

Interviews of 1 hour or more was conducted with each selected farmer. It should be noted that the interviews were conducted in English and using a French interpreter living in Greece for 30 years when interviewed people spoke only Greek. The citations that are used later to illustrate our point have been translated word for word.

The objective was to obtain the profile of each, to know their agricultural practices and tourism which has been implemented or which will be in place. On this last point, the most important is to know if this tourist activity has a link with their first activity and finally understand their motivation to get engaged in tourism. It is also to determine the part of farmers offering agrotourism and producing in biological, identify if the proposed meals are from production in biological (meals with local products, sale to consumers...), and understand to what extent this influences the attractiveness of the site. Further informal talks have been made but without conductive line, nevertheless providing important elements of a response.

## PART 4. Results

### 1. Non-exhaustive inventory of agrotourism

#### 1.1 Agrotourism in Greece within the literature

##### 1.1.1 A recent phenomenon whose concept remains vague

The entire studied literary corpus highlights that agrotourism in Greece was born in the 1960's and was practiced in coastal areas. The offer was essentially directed towards accommodation to the farmer's house while promoting local food: *"the model of agrotourism prevalent in Greece concerns tourist services – lodging and board, entertainment activities, production and distribution of small-scale, local products by family or co-operative units functioning within the framework of the village and not necessarily that of the farm."* (IAKOVIDOU O., KOUTSOU S., 2007).

Nevertheless the trend quickly ceased: on the one hand due to a lack of will and competence of the public service officers dealing with agro-tourism development programs (IAKOVIDOU o., KOUTSOU s., 2007), and secondly because agrotourism was quickly confronted with a strong growth of tourism in coastal areas.

According to IAKOVIDOU and KOUTSOU (2007), rural tourism has grown rapidly in Greece after the 1990's and *"became widely know as the tourism of the three 'phi's ("physi-philía-philoxenia"=nature, friendship, hospitality"*. Many rural areas were then promoted on the market of alternative tourism as rural tourism destination (KOUTSOU et al., 2005). The creation of agrotourism units in an isolated and dispersed way in coastal areas has been the result of European subsidies granted under the program of rural development LEADER for the benefit of some sponsors. These areas were not directed towards agricultural production or even possessed farms (ANTHOPOULOU T., 2010), but they have still benefited from subsidies LEADER.

Thus, the rural development program 2007-2013 in Messinia represents 2 227 273 € for the improvement of the quality of life and diversification component towards non-agricultural activities (axis 3 of the program). The creations of housing in all took place near farms even if isolated cases have their accommodation on the site of the operation. Literature also points out that agrotourism prone mountainous



areas. It appears that agrotourism is put forward as a means of development of the rural area.

### *1.1.2 Which actors for agrotourism in Greece? A particular attention to the woman*

Many texts also highlight the female figure in the Greek agricultural society and in particular its role in the development of rural areas. Several authors including Olga IAKOVIDOU, Stavriani KOUTSOU and Theodosia ANTHOPOULOU, professors at Greek universities became interested in the role of women in the activities of processing and sales of products in agricultural cooperatives (small craft: cosmetics, clothing, utensils; but also small-scale agri-food: confectionery, jam, fruit paste, pastries, pasta...).

Woman's place in the structure of the farm was often limited to the role of the lady of the house, dealing with the children while her husband was doing farm work. She did not own income and so was neither financially nor socially independent. The employment of women in rural areas was still lower than that of men (ANTHOPOULOU T., 2010), due to the low level of education of women in rural areas who then find themselves excluded from the labour market. To overcome a high rate of unemployment and underemployment in rural areas, many women are launched in the creation of cooperatives or small businesses with low capital to generate additional income to the farm. This phenomenon has been initiated in the 1950's by the public authorities by pushing women to settle in cooperatives to increase the family income but also their social status (IAKOVIDOU O., KOUTSOU S., 2007).

Most of these initiatives relates to local food production, which processed products are sold through cooperatives, in a local or used circuit within the framework of a tourist home at the farm. Women appear as important local actors in the conservation of cultural heritage, particularly culinary, and traditions in the transformation of agricultural resources in marketing products through rural tourism (ANTHOPOULOU 2007, IAKOVIDOU 2007). Far from satisfying the requirements of a professional career, women engage in this kind of activity in order to combine work and private life, while opening social. Indeed, they have often more affinity for social relationships than men (GIDARAKOU 1999, IAKOVIDOU 2007, MINITTI et al. 2006

in ANTHOPOULOU T., 2010) and are thus ideal candidates to the welcoming and sharing traditions with visitors.

Although they do not have a high level of education, most have acquired a know-how from generation to generation and which only reinforces the traditional, rural and family character of their productions. In addition a more marked desire to research genuine products and quality by consumers (PDO, PGI, organic, handmade, natural...), confirms the opportunity to develop small structures commercial on a local scale (ANTHOPOULOU T., 2010).

## 1.2 Agricultural and touristic data: difficulties in finding

The available data from the competent authorities are old and not updated. Most of the data are grouped by department and there are no local data, except for the population census, carried out by municipal entities. The National Statistics Service of Greece (NSSG) "*does not have data on number of farmers who have a tourism activity*" (email from Efi Hantsouli, of the provision of data of the NSSG section, received on Friday the 1<sup>st</sup>, June, 2012).

Research data was also conducted with local institutions such as the Chamber of Commerce and industry of Messinia, municipality of Pylos, the Chamber of agriculture of Kalamata which have failed to provide answers clear and quick with different queries: the data do not exist, they are not given, they are partial or not available in English.

The difficulty of obtaining data has also resided in the fact that public institutions are under Kallikratis reform in 2010 and many of them have merged and are being reordered.

*"To analyze the functioning of farms in Greece, to take into account previously that statistical data are not perfectly represent the agricultural reality. The concepts of farm and agricultural land ownership is often confused, not only in the censuses, but also at the level of national legislation or applied taxation, sometimes etc. (Goussios and Tsiboukas, 1993). However statistics can show trends of changing structures of farms and those of their economic operation."* (TISBOUKAS K., SPATHIS P., 2000).

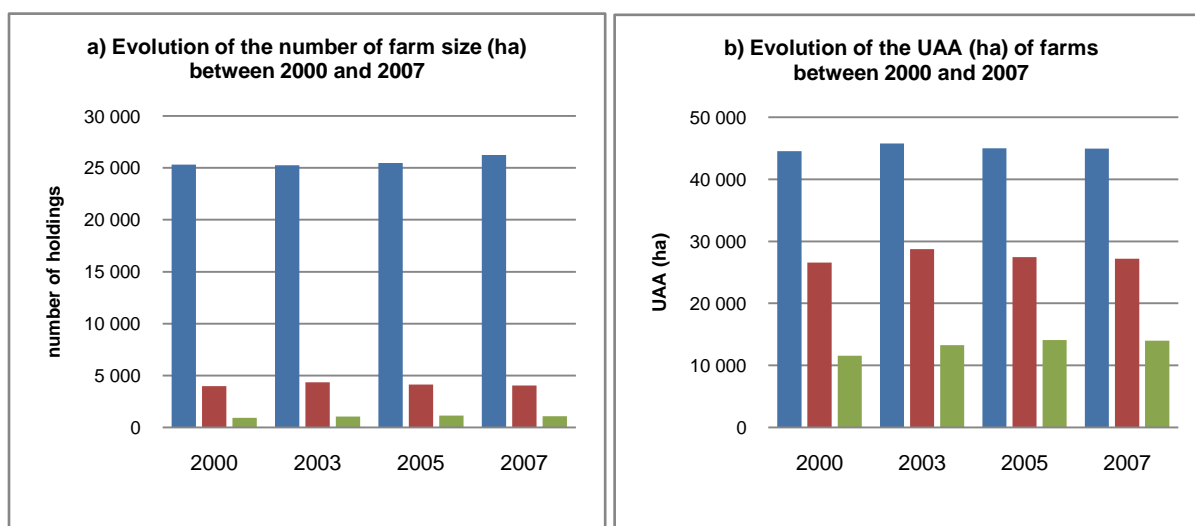
The latest data that were acquired come from the statistical European office Eurostat from 2010 for tourism and from 2007 for agriculture. Agricultural data are explained below.

### 1.2.1 Characteristics of agricultural holdings

According to table I, it appears that the number of farms is increasing since 2000 for each area. It is also noted that the rate of increase between 2000 and 2007, both for the UAA and for farms, is low even though it increased sharply during the period 2000-2003 and then dropped significantly in the next period.

**Table I. Evolution of the number of farms and the UAA (ha) area of Messinia (data Eurostat, 2007)**

		2000	Increase 2000-2003 (%)	2003	Increase 2003-2005 (%)	2005	Increase 2005-2007 (%)	2007	Increase 2000-2007 (%)
Less favoured areas	Holdings	10 940	-0,6	10 870	3,4	11 240	2,0	11 460	<b>4,8</b>
	UAA	40 440	7,5	43 460	3,0	44 780	-2,1	43 830	<b>8,4</b>
Mountainous areas	Holdings	8 330	1,2	8 430	-1,4	8 310	4,7	8 700	<b>4,4</b>
	UAA	31 280	10,3	34 500	-2,7	33 570	3,1	34 610	<b>10,6</b>
Other areas	Holdings	11 030	4,7	11 550	-1,0	11 440	1,0	11 560	<b>4,8</b>
	UAA	14 300	33,1	19 040	-8,7	17 380	11,3	19 350	<b>35,3</b>
Total holdings		<b>30 300</b>	<b>1,8</b>	<b>30 850</b>	<b>0,5</b>	<b>30 990</b>	<b>2,4</b>	<b>31 720</b>	<b>4,7</b>
Total UAS		<b>86 020</b>	<b>12,8</b>	<b>97 000</b>	<b>-1,3</b>	<b>95 730</b>	<b>2,2</b>	<b>97 790</b>	<b>13,7</b>



**Figure 1. Evolution of agricultural holdings in Messinia: a) size (ha) and b) UAA (ha) (data Eurostat 2007)**

According to Eurostat in 2007, 82.75% of the farms in Messinia are less than 5 hectares (figure 10a, previous page) with an average of 1.71 ha of UAA per holding (figure 10b, previous page). The average size farms in Messinia remains very small,

about 5.3 ha (GIDARAKOU et al., 2004). The 2000-2007 period reveals a rate of positive growth for all sizes of farms and the corresponding UAA even if it is found that the highest increase is for farms of 10 to 20 ha (+ 20%). However, there is no preliminary data or trend for the period 2008-2012.

### 1.2.2 Characteristics of the farmer

Table II. Gender distribution of agricultural employment in Messenia (data Eurostat 2007)

	2000	2003	2005	2007	Increase 2000-2007 (%)
Man	23 860	24 460	23 220	24 280	1,8
Woman	6 440	6 390	7 770	7 440	<b>15,5</b>
TOTAL	30 300	30 850	30 990	31 720	4,7

According to Eurostat (2007, table II), 76.5% of farmers are men. Between 2000 and 2007, the part of women in the sector has increased of 15.5%. For the same period, the number of farmers has increased by 4.7% (+ 1420 jobs).

Table III. Evolution of the number of farmers by age between 2000 and 2007 in Messenia (data Eurostat 2007)

	2000	Increase 2000-2003 (%)	2003	Increase 2003-2005 (%)	2005	Increase 2005-2007 (%)	2007	Increase 2000-2007 (%)
< 35	1 770	-27,1	1 290	-10,9	1 150	9,6	1 260	<b>-28,8</b>
35 to 44	3 620	-2,2	3 540	-5,4	3 350	-4,5	3 200	<b>-11,6</b>
45 to 54	4 900	5,3	5 160	5,8	5 460	12,5	6 140	<b>25,3</b>
55 to 64	6 650	-5,7	6 270	-4,0	6 020	-1,7	5 920	<b>-11,0</b>
> 65	13 350	9,3	14 590	2,8	15 000	1,4	15 210	<b>13,9</b>
TOTAL	30 290	1,8	30 850	0,4	30 980	2,4	31 730	<b>4,8</b>

In 2007, according to Eurostat (2007, table III), farmers over 65 years old represent 47.9% of the total, whereas farmers under 35 years old only represent 3.97%. The number of farmers over the age 65 is increasing since 2000, while that of farmers aged less than 35 years declined from 28.8% in 7 years. The trend is the aging of farmers in Messinia with a low cover of farms during the retirement of the older.

Table IV. Family participation in the farm in Messenia (data Eurostat 2007)

	2000	Increase 2000-2003 (%)	2003	Increase 2003-2005 (%)	2005	Increase 2005-2007 (%)	2007	Increase 2000-2007 (%)
Total workforce	53 060	3,7	55 000	4,6	57 520	3,9	59 780	<b>12,7</b>
Total family labour	53 020	3,1	54 690	4,6	57 220	4,1	59 550	<b>12,3</b>
Full-time total family labour	3 710	-3,2	3 590	0,0	3 590	-15,6	3 030	<b>-18,3</b>

Table IV puts forward a strong family participation in the activities of the farm. Over the period 2000-2007, the full-time workforce remains very low and tends to decline (-18,3%). It is therefore more a help that is part of the cultural tradition of the Greeks than a real job. This suggests that the members of the family of the farmer do not work in the agricultural sector and thus have another activity. These are pluriactive families.

## 2. Analysis of the interviews

Table V. Presentation of the people we met

Farmers	Place	Geographical location	Production	Kind of farming	Home ownership	Tourism activity
F1	Gialova (Pylos)	Lowland	citrus fruits – vegetables – olive oil	Biological	Heritage	Hotels - Apartments
F2	Pyrgos (West Mani)	Mountain	vegetables - olive oil	Biological	Purchase	Apartments - bungalows
F3	Kambos Avia ((West Mani)	Mountain	Olive oil – honey	Biological	Purchase	In project
F4	Pyrgos Tryfilias (Trifilia)	Semi-mountain	Vegetables – fruits – olive oil	Biological	Purchase	In project
F5	Karadmily (West Mani)	Mountain	Olive oil	Conventional	Heritage	Apartments
F6	Gialova (Pylos)	Lowland	Olive oil	Conventional	Heritage	Small houses
F7	Gialova (Pylos)	Lowland	Olive oil	Conventional	Heritage	Coffee

### 2.1 Agriculture, an activity to high values

#### 2.1.1 A family heritage in the agrarian culture

Most of the encountered farmers are men. Each in his own way has underlined among his children, his son. Most farmers have access to ownership of

agricultural land by inheritance (table V). They have also inherited the know-how of their father that they will also pass on to their sons. As well as know-how, lands are part of the family patrimony. A farmer in Gialova particularly insisted on the notion of heritage value: *"I tell my son, don't sell the land, because your father, your grandfather, your great-grandfather worked on it, one day you will live with this land."*

### **2.1.2 A safe double value**

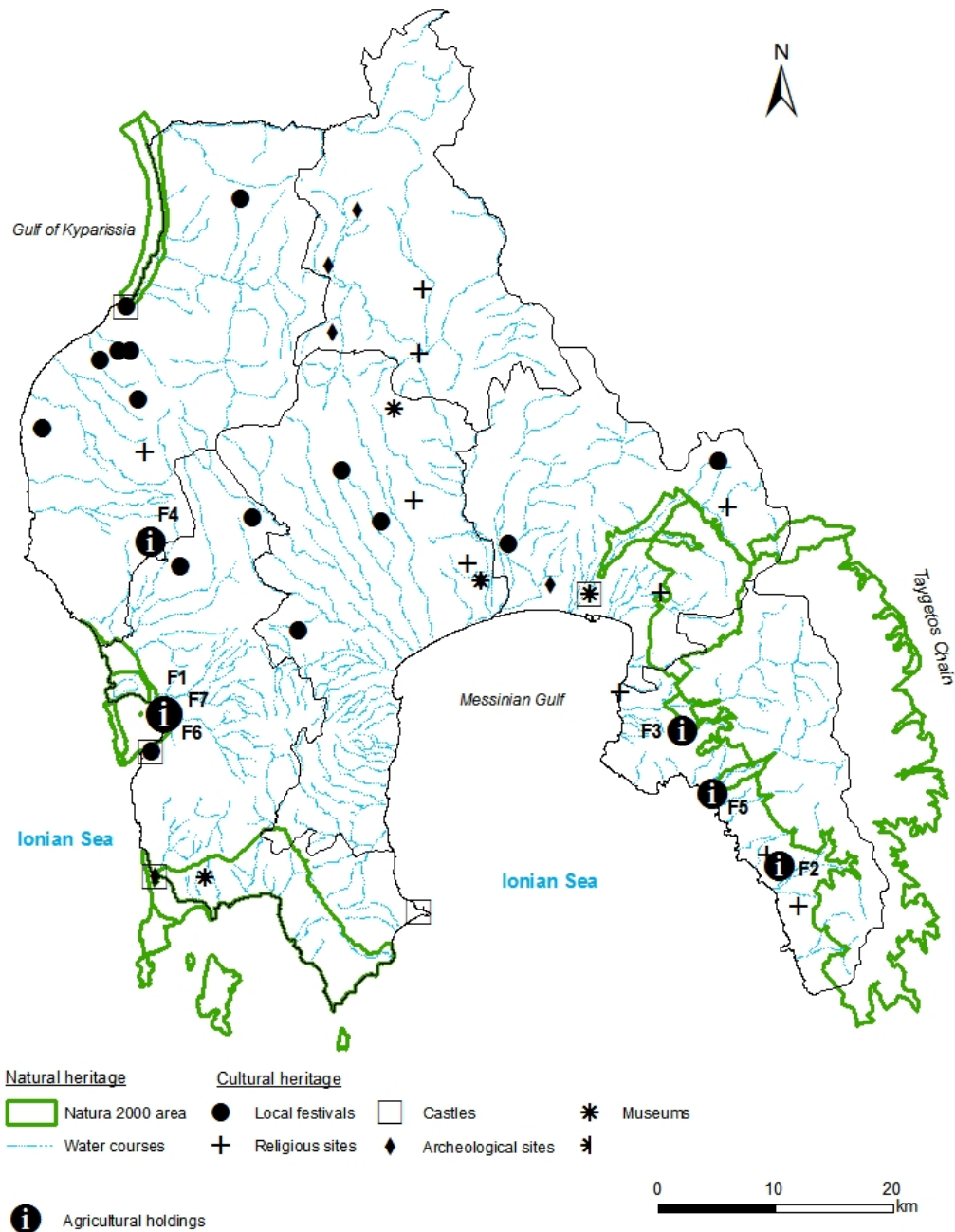
It is clear from the interviews that agricultural land is perceived by some as a financial security: *"When my son will have my land, if he has the opportunity to sell it as a land to be built, he must do it"*.

For others, to own land and exploit it is a food security especially in times of crisis: *"with a farm you can live [...], you can produce"*, *"In addition to my olive trees, I have a 2.5 stremmas garden where I plant my vegetable for me and for my family"*.

## **2.2 Pluriactivity of farmers, the choice of tourism**

It appears that the tourist services of the encountered farmers are offered in tourist areas (figure 2, next page), with different visitors inflows according to the promotion of the space and its tourist reputation. Thus it is rural spaces of plain, semi-mountain and mountain. For example, proximity to natural and cultural sites is an asset for each farmer (ex: F1, F7, F5, F3 farmers...).

**Natural and cultural heritage,**  
**an asset for the implementation of a tourist activity by the farmers**



**Figure 2. The natural and cultural heritage, an asset for the development of tourism by farmers**

Most of the encountered farmers highlight the safety aspect to start a tourism business in a place that already has a tourist clientele, where other activities exist, where natural, cultural, and culinary resources are assets which they can take advantage. These are broad opportunities for diversification of agricultural activities that take into account any opening to tourism in any type of space.

Interviewed farmers, 4 out of 7 practice polyculture, and 3 monoculture of olives. The analysis of pluriactivity of farmers is performed according to the type of farming: monoculture (2.2.1) and polyculture (2.2.2).

### ***2.2.1 Monoculture that leads to diversification***

For the latter, the diversification of the agricultural household income was made for several reasons: the seasonality of monoculture of olives (a), risk and the low profitability of this type of culture (b) and the economic need to diversify (c).

#### ***a) The seasonal nature of olive cultivation among encountered farmers***

The size of the cultivated area, dedicated exclusively to the olive tree, varies between 1.5 and 10 ha for 3 encountered farmers. Each of these farmers works in a similar way, i.e. the time attributed to the olive tree is seasonal. Culture takes place in two steps:

- Maintenance of the trees (size and irrigation) and the land (mowing) during the summer season. This step requires the presence of the farmer only. Depending on the area, working time varies between 3 and 7 hours a day.
- Picking of the olives (by hand) from the month of November and until late December.

The work dedicated to the harvest time is concentrated over a short period and requires the use of other persons, in addition to the farmer, when the workforce is not family. A single farmer explains *“during the harvesting of the olives, I in my fields throughout the day. This is a very difficult job and I am forced to take two more people to help me”*. *“If you've never picked up the olives in your life you can't understand how it's hard to work in such a production”*.

This is why the seasonality of the olive-growing has prompted many farmers to embark on a second tourist activity. In the case of small farms, farmers wanted to be *“occupied”* when they were not operating their land (during the hours of free time of the months in the spring and summer).



### b) Risky and unprofitable agriculture

Growers emphasize the difficulty of living only through the cultivation of the olive tree. The low profitability of that crop is attributed to the fact that *“here everyone [in Messinia] makes the olive tree”*. With the opening of markets, the challenge is even greater. Other producing countries as *“Morocco, Algeria, Turkey, Lebanon, Italy, Portugal and Spain, where workers earn 3 € salary and the price of the olive is much cheaper”* compete with the Greek production. A farmer explains that *“agricultural products are not purchased in the EU but outside and it is the same for all products”*. The sale of great olive oil is so penalized. A farmer in Western Mani is more radical on this subject, for him, *“populations need to rebel against the system of globalization”*.

Olive monoculture is under several risks. The seasonal nature of the olive tree, which actually produces fruits a year, does not provide the certainty of income for the agricultural household. Natural risks (parasites, heavy rains destroying olives, cold...) and political contexts also influence the price of the olive on the market inside and outside. A farmer stresses *“that a war [in a producer country of olives] can make vary a lot the kilo of olives”*.

Another farmer from Western Mani explains that *“we are in a mountainous region. Here is a combination between sea and mountain, and it is the ideal climate for the olive tree. But there is a problem with the cold especially in winter due to the frosts. It is a problem for the production because it decreases it”*.

Thus, *“make only olive tree, lemon or tomato, this is not good because you put everything on a single product”*.

### c) A necessary economic diversification

Three olive growers in monoculture chose to diversify their agricultural activity to a non-agricultural activity. They put forward during the discussions, a desire to *“have more money”*.

A farmer explains that his salary amounted to 1000€ /month and he shares with his wife and son who operate with him. Of that, the State picks up *“30% of what we win”*. To that is added the salary of persons employed for the picking of the olives. For example a farmer in mountainous region that has 1.5 ha with olive trees explains that *“my land is on a mountainside and during picking I am forced to take 2 more*

*people to help me, it cost money”.*

For many farmers, subsidies of the European Union do not measure up to the work provided. For example a farmer who has 50 stremmas evokes that he has “100 €/stremma for 1 year” and “*production requires diligent work*”. Small farmers are not sufficient because “*to get by, you need large farms and large olive groves*”.

Regardless of their age, their level of education, size of the operation or the year of opening of the second activity, they did not develop link between it and agriculture, because they were only looking for a “*complement to their income*”. Two of these farmers have chosen tourism, one trade.

The choice of tourism has emerged itself in a context of tourism development driven by public policy. According to several farmers met “*they [rural development policies] pushed us to invest in tourism then many of us have to build tourist accommodations*”. Yet one of them emphasizes that “*when I built my housing in 1996 I could not receive subsidies because they had already been allocated to Costa Navarino*” adding “*you have to build the largest possible to steal the most money*”.

The tourist activity of the two farmers (F5 and F6) is limited to the construction of self-catering accommodation of the dwelling place. The accommodations of one are nevertheless situated in one of his plots of olive trees. In addition there is no sharing of experience or relationship between the host and the visitor. The third farmer to be diversified has opted to open a cafe and “*hope in a few years to be able to sell his olive oil there*”.

#### d) A customer on the Sun/sea model

The talks have highlighted that customer of farmers offering only accommodation is not looking for particular service. As one of the two farmers has explained, “*my customer is essentially family and when she rents at me is just to have housing*.” The second farmer does not forward its exploitation but emphasizes the proximity of its housing with “*the sea, the lagoon, the Bay*”. He added “*I go in my fields every day, customers see me but I never had queries on my olive trees*.”

The farmer as the client is not interested in sharing a common experience.

To summarize, olive monoculture cannot, on the one hand, ensure sufficient income for farm households, and on the other hand to be occupied throughout the

year. This is why they choose a second non-agricultural activity in order to diversify their source of income. The choice of tourism had been operated as farms were located in tourist areas. However, these operators in monoculture did not choose to link the two activities. In addition their customer does not seem interested in the discovery of the agricultural community. This is not the case for farmers in polyculture.

**2.2.2 Polyculture, an item promoting the development in place of the agrotourism**

a) Farmers in biological polyculture

It is possible to establish a relationship between production and farming. Among the met farmers, 4 are polyculture-oriented and are certified in organic agriculture. Conversely, those in olive monoculture (previously studied) cultivated conventionally.

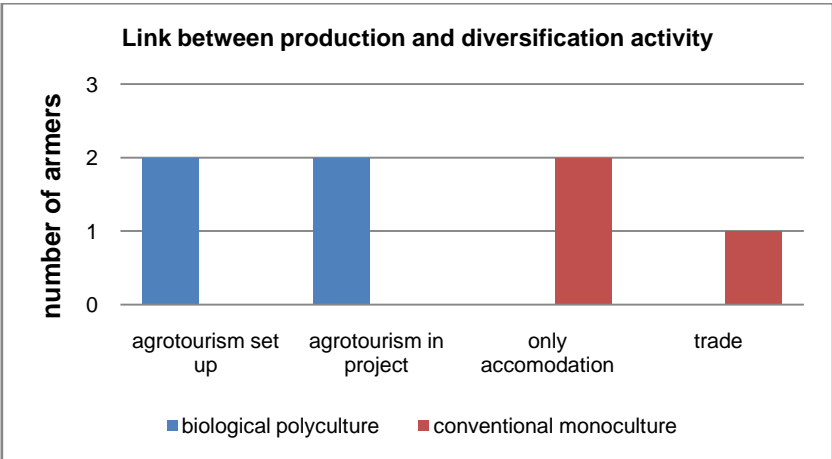


Figure 3. Link between diversity of production and choice of non-agricultural diversification

It appears as shown in figure 3 that four farmers practicing organic polyculture are oriented towards agrotourism, while three conventional olive farmers are not. Two have already set up agro-tourism, other two wish to diversify through this.

## b) Their profile

Table VI. Profile of farmers on the road to agrotourism

	F1	F2	F3	F4
Gender	M	F	M	M
Age	70	53	42	46
Formation	tourism	music	accountant	Commercial manager
Family situation	married	married	single	married
Geographical origine	rural	urban	urban	urban
Space of residence (NSSG)	rural	rural	rural	rural

Table VI highlights that three farmers on the four are of urban origin and have made the choice to move to rural areas for agriculture. The *“impersonal”* aspect of the city and the lack of time for himself are a part of their motivation to settle in rural areas. One, who lived in Athens, *“do not like life in the big city, it's really impersonal”*. A couple who made the choice to leave also from Athens and settle in semi-mountainous area says that *“we had money, but it did not live, we did not have time, we did nothing, just work”*.

For these urban elders, this phenomenon of *“back to the countryside, far from the city”* is often accompanied by the choice to move to organic farming to produce quality food, for sale and consumption. A female farmer from Western Mani pushes the notion more far and explains that for her *“food is the cure for the world”*. Yet the organic certification remains *“expensive and delays in obtaining the label are long”* says certified farmers.

## c) Characteristics of holdings

Table VII shows agricultural activity put in place. We can see that F2 and F3 grow on surfaces of 1 ha and have their operations in one piece while F1 and F4 cultivate greater than 5 ha surfaces (respectively 11 and 7 ha) and have several plots. Their operations are also located in the area of plain and semi-mountain, which facilitates the more widespread cultivation. F2 and F3 are located in a mountainous area. The seniority of installation has no relationship with the type of production.

**Table VII. Agricultural activity of the farmers in biological agriculture**

		F1	F2	F3	F4
Year of set up		1969	1990	2007	2009
area (ha)		11	1	1	7
production	one	Citrus fruit	vegetables	Olive oil	vegetables
	several	vegetables	Olive oil	honey	fruits
Kind of agriculture		biological	biological	biological	biological
fragmentation		yes	one piece	one piece	yes
farmer		alone	In couple	alone	in couple
Geographical situation		lowland	mountain	mountain	semi-mountain

**d) Characteristics of agrotourism services**

**Table VIII. Link between agriculture and tourism**

			F1	F2	F3	F4
Tourism	Year of set up		1961	2004	In project	In project
	Accommodation	1	hotel	apartments	bivouac	Self-catering cottage
		2	apartments	bungalows	no	no
	capacity (beds)		160	18	0	15
	Open to farm		yes	yes	yes	yes
	Operation		annual	annual	annual	annual
	Manager		family	couple	alone	couple
Link agriculture - tourism	Location of accommodation		On the farm	On the farm	Outside the farm	On the farm
	restoration		yes	yes	no	yes
	Farm products used in the restaurant		yes	yes	no	yes
	Visit of the farm		yes	yes	yes	yes
	participation in agricultural activity		yes	yes	no	yes
Other activities			none	Music festival	trekking	Discovery of wild fauna

Table VIII highlights the links between agriculture and tourism for farmers who already provide agrotourism services and for those with the project to do so.

- *2 farmers have already set up an agrotourism activity.*

Common features are the double provision of accommodation and its annual operation and the opening of the tourism farm. In both cases, the management is

family (couple: F2; with children: F1). The differences noted are in the capacity, F1 having opened its tourism for 51 years (160 beds) whereas F2 for 8 years (18 beds).

The link between agriculture and tourism is characterized by agrotourism services. In both cases accommodation was built on the place of operation. A restaurant service is proposed by using products from the farm (olive oil, fresh vegetables...). Participation in agricultural activities is considered by the farmer “as an experience” for the visitor. For the host it is a way of showing “*how it works*” and to create a “*trustful and friendly*” relationship with its customers.

This seems to contribute to the process of customer loyalty “*33 years that they come and they go home, pick up oranges, feed the animals*”. For older clients, this is done naturally “*they go themselves*”. For the farmer from Western Mani, this is first a share of the quality of the food grown through the establishment of cooking workshops.

Two farmers in agrotourism stressed the specificity of their clients. The latter is urban, foreign, and “*with money*” and wishes to discover the rural and agricultural way of life: “*customers ask me why we grow olive in the region, what are the constraints of this culture, how goes the harvest...*”. These two farmers insist that their services are more expensive than the average, and that even in times of crisis clients remain loyal: “*you know, everybody can't come to me [...]. I noticed that those who come once return in the following years, [...] now I'm complete [interview conducted at the beginning of August]*”. This same farmer adds that “*customers who go for campsites remain two or three weeks, but me they stay a few days, they look for quality*”.

- *2 farmers in diversification project to the tourism*

F3 and F4 (table VIII) have the project to couple their agricultural activity with tourist activity.

The first wishes to not implement accommodation but only focus his services around the discovery of local agricultural products and sharing traditions. He imagines that “*one might very well take them [tourists] to a traditional olive oil mill for example, to taste the product of this procedure, and also have a possibility to browse*

*the traditional paths where over time, donkeys and mules walked to bring bags with olives*". *"There are such trails, especially in our region, near Kardamylí"*. He emphasizes also the possibility of accommodation such as the bivouac during these various hikes.

The second hopes to open a gite and offer meals from the products of his operation. The great variety of his cultures (ancient, many species of vegetable and fruit varieties) would be able to meet the needs of his visitors. The fact that his hosting (to renovate) lies on his place of business would strengthen proximity with his customers that he wishes to participate within the operating farm. He profiles a relationship based on *"experience"* and the sharing of his *"pleasure"* he has to cultivate his land. He also bets on the fact that *"the quality of [its] products attracts the visitor"* and hopes that direct sales carried out currently will have economic repercussions on tourism.

These two farmers have brought out a big issue *"big tour operators have benefited from aid [LEADER] at the expense of small farmers [...] like us"*, indicating that there is a minimum investment threshold, with a minimum capacity to benefit from this aid.

#### e) A particular interest for natural and cultural heritage

4 agrotourism-oriented farmers have a very good knowledge and a particular attachment to their territory: from a cultural but also natural perspective: *"we are producer, we love our land, we love to be with nature"*. Whether or not they have put in place agrotourism, they have an environmental look on how they produce and an interest in willing to preserve natural and cultural resources and promote them.

For a urban former, this attraction represented a criterion of choice when he set up. He explains that *"for now I live permanently in the village, I hope that I will dwell there all the time because I like much the region but also the nature"*, that he values by the fact that *"Taygetos is a mountain which is very rich in flora. A very large part of the flora of Greece is located in the Taygetos"*.

This attraction to nature is also underlined by two other farmers who grow old varieties of vegetables, thereby seeking to enhance the local and traditional heritage:

*"I'm crazy to find varieties of the past in the villages" or "my pleasure is to plant new and old varieties".*

One encountered farmers frequently collects injured animals and protect vulnerable species when he can: *"right now I am taking care of a baby owl"*, this same farmer adds that he has recovered a couple of turtle's Earth which already reproduced several times, justifying his intervention by the fact that they *"are victims of ploughing"*.

Water resource management is something that emerges among farmers in organic. Some stress *"uselessness to water olive trees" or "plant them in a plain irrigated so that they do not need water"*. One of the interviewed farmers is installed for 43 years in Gialova (lands around the lagoon) and saw agricultural practices evolving, what he now calls into question *"me when I take the water for my trees, I pump water at 3-4 meters while others they will pump more than 10 meters directly into groundwater"*. Nearly permanent irrigation of the plots around the lagoon influences greatly, according to him, the recoil of the wetland.

Those located in mountainous areas use water in a reasoned way and especially for vegetables. One of the farmers said that *"in the region of Mani, trees are smaller [...]. olive trees come out by the stone. These are traditional olive groves which are not watered, whereas in plain, they are"*.

Other farmers examines the issue of tanks constructed to power the two golf courses from Costa Navarino resort: *"I'm frightened by this hotel, for example for water, you know, it is not really know how much water is taken, they put a concrete formwork in the River [where the pump is installed] so that anyone can check"*.



## **PART 5. Discussion**

Agriculture and tourism are the first economic sectors of Messenia. However, the agricultural sector shows signs of decline widely influencing the rural economy. Most farm households migrate to urban centers to turn to another job, abandoning agricultural activity in favour of a more profitable business. In this context of pluriactivity, when agricultural households did not migrate to urban centers, they have turned to a secondary tourism activity in rural areas, taking advantage of the attractiveness with their territory.

However, just like agriculture, tourism is in crisis. The sun and sea model put forward by tourism development destined to a foreign customer is running out of steam. Thus, alternative forms of tourism are promoted by public institutions and especially agrotourism, whose customer seems to remain faithful, even in times of crisis. In agrotourism, customization of the home, the quality of the services offered and the experience arising there contrast with a standardized and uniform model, and meets the expectations of a clientele looking for “*tranquility*” (APOSTOLOU M., et PAPANIS E., 2007) and “*nature and attractive landscapes*” (Association of the Latvian tourism, 2010).

The low number of farmers encountered (7) implies that the remarks that follow must be put into perspective. Nevertheless, the richness of the interviews conducted have identified important discussions and in coherence with the bibliography studied. New avenues of work are proposed to deepen our study.

### **1. Farmers’ pluriactivity through tourism**

The interviews conducted with farmers engaged in a process of diversification of agricultural activity through tourism show that tourism does not necessarily rely on agricultural activity but benefits from the territorial resources close to the exploitation.

Two farmers have chosen to diversify only through accommodation. Two others proposed tourist benefits related to their operation. Two others still are in project to bind their farming to tourism. Among these six farmers diversified through tourism, only one is a woman. Although most of farmers practiced the tourist activity

in family or couple, the male figure predominates in farm management and seems to continue at the generational level, as confirmed by the trend of Messinia (76.5% of farmers are men).

Six of the seven encountered farmers live in a tourist area. Whether they practice agrotourism or not, they take advantage of territorial resources close to the exploitation at two levels: natural and cultural and tourist basin level. The promotion of tourism is based on the richness of the territory. This wealth is a factor of attractiveness for tourism as it has been put forward by the all farmers during talks.

Those located in mountainous area (Kardamyli, Kambos Avia, Pyrgos) take advantage of the hiking paths traditionally used when transporting the olives as well as the Natura 2000 area encompassing almost all of the mountains of Taygetos. However, it is not the only natural and cultural resources of these spaces.

Similarly, those located in the plain (Gialova) highlight the presence of two Natura 2000 areas (Gialova lagoon and Cape Akritas and Sapienza and Shiza Islands at the southern tip of Messinia), many festivals of local agricultural products, but also the coastline.

Most use a website to ensure the tourism promotion and put forward territorial resource.

The results highlight that the tourism activity is not necessarily based on agricultural activity. For those who have not established a link between these two activities, i.e. who do not practice agrotourism; this can be in part explained by the sole research of supplement income without desire of involvement from the farmer. In addition, the customer of these farmers does not appear to be interested in tourist services other than hosting, seeking nothing other than the sun and the sea. The clientele is not the same as in agrotourism.

However we have shown that there is a demand for agrotourism through the return to the land, the proximity with the agricultural community or even the discovery of the terroirs.

## 2. Biological agriculture, a motor for the development of agrotourism

The results highlight a relationship between organic farming and agrotourism. First, when the tourist activity is based on agriculture, the link between these two activities is established by the involvement of tourists to the functioning of the operation in addition to the provision of accommodation. MARCOTTE and *al.* (2006) state that “*the essential participation of the client to the service is that the production and consumption of a service are simultaneous*”.

Then, we have shown that this participation appears only in the case of farmers producing in biological. Certification in organic agriculture is used to support tourism on agriculture. The link between the two activities allows an experience for the tourist but also for the farmer.

The results also pointed out that the diversity of agricultural crops encourages diversity of tourist services. For example, a producer in biological polyculture will be more likely to practice agrotourism by offering various tourism services in connection with agriculture, but also with the local natural and cultural characteristics. Instead, olive monoculture and conventional farmers only offer a hosting service. Biological polyculture seems to be correlated with the implementation of agrotourism.

Organic farmers have a special relationship with their customers. Even if the economic aspect is important for the host, he also wishes to share his experience by offering to tourists to participate in the picking of the olives and the transformation process in order to obtain their own bottle of oil. The collection of vegetables also allows tasting products at the same time, interspersed with a few explanations on the production techniques.

The proposed experiment is also linked to the contact that the farmer established with the visitor. “*Customers know me, they know how I work, they know my life. They trust me*”. Treating ones clients as friends is for this farmer very important, which then motivates them to invest in the operation, even when the farmer is not present. This also seems to motive them to return from one year to the next.

The experience that tourists get focuses on rural and agricultural benefits through discovery and quality services. They are willing to pay more than a classic benefit (only accommodation) for agrotourism experience. This is why farmers engaged in agrotourism experience undergo the economic crisis to a lesser extent, because the demand for this type of tourism is from a wealthy clientele.

### **3. Agrotourism, a difficult choice in crisis period**

We found that agricultural activity is evolving in Messinia. The traditional model is transformed little by little. The dwellers arrived in rural space with another vision of agriculture.

They come to settle in rural areas to find a living environment more pleasant than the one of the city. They buy land to exploit, but also want to develop an agrotourism activity. They bring a new way to practice agriculture through organic production but also by entering the opportunity to use land resources, which they know well, for tourist purposes.

They are aware of the potential of organic farming from an urban point of view because they were part of this environment. They also identified gaps in agrotourism offer for city dwellers, seekers of such services (Kalamata Convention Bureau). Also, they see the potential of tourism in rural areas, says a former urban installed in organic agriculture *“we are in an area that is really agricultural, it has no industry, no heavy industry, we have agriculture and tourism that are the only two most important topics of our region. It is with that we want to work and to survive”*. Usually the dwellers who settle in agriculture become pluriactive by choice through tourism.

For rural people, phenomenon is different. They have always lived in rural areas and practiced agriculture. For those in olive growing, diversification of income was needed. In the 1990's tourist development policies have highlighted the need to expand the capacity of welcome (number of beds) of the Department and especially through the development of agrotourism. By 'agrotourism' ones must understand: to allow farmers to urbanize agricultural land with the support of European funding (LEADER). Farmers have seized this opportunity to supplement their incomes. They urbanized part of their land to build tourist accommodation.

That is why today only tourist accommodation is offered. Farmers have not grasped the challenge to stand out to a tourism activity and varied services in connection with their first activity (agriculture).

Today some “new-rural” farmers seek to integrate into an agrotourism approach. However in the current context of economic crisis, some of these projects appear difficult. The crisis is an obstacle to any type of project. Without financial assistance on the part of public institutions, invest now in a costly project is too uncertain for farmers, whether they are new dwellers or former residents. “*Banks do not lend more money even for small sums; they accept only cash*” explains a farmer in agrotourism project. This is why farmers are unwilling to engage in an agrotouristic approach since they can receive no support.

#### **4. To a clarification of the concept of agrotourism for all (proposals)**

Agrotourism to which we are witnessing in Messinia is finally not so far from the definition proposed in the introduction, or the model that prevails in Greece in general. It is defined as a set of services linked to the agricultural activity provided by a farmer to the visitor, including not only accommodation but also the involvement of the tourist to the operating activities with the aim to offer an experience of rural and agricultural world.

Encountered farmers only offering accommodation are aware that they do not practice agrotourism. The different definitions proposed in the literature and summarized in results take into account a number of criteria to characterize the agrotourism. For example one of these criteria is the accommodation. Thus a farmer renting houses or apartments is agrotourism. Yet this is more similar to a rural house, simple accommodation proposed by a farmer, than to agrotourism.

In our study, although all services are not gathered in a single place, those who make up the agrotourism product are found: accommodation, participation in the activity of the farm or the use of the products of the farm for the preparation of meals. In addition the experience remains at the centre of the approach, like the definition of MARCOTTE and *al.* (2006).

However, it is necessary to clarify the concept of agrotourism. The term “agro” is used “wrongly” in the steps of some farmers, or if applicable, landowners in order to benefit from LEADER subsidies. These last make only build on agricultural land, they do not engage visitors to the agricultural activity and do not promote the local agrarian culture. This penalizes small farmers who practice really agrotourism within the meaning of the definition recalled previously, because they didn't have access to European subsidies for the reasons given in results.

Through the elements given in results and in discussion, a few axes of recommendation may be proposed to illuminate the notion of agrotourism in local programs providing subsidies to develop this activity:

- define the criteria that will characterize the proposed services,
- determine if these criteria apply to all spaces, adapting them taking into account local particularities of territories,
- Identify the target actors:
  - o specify the role of the operator with respect to the tourist
- Determine what institutions can play an important role of council to clarify this notion.

## **5. Tracks research and actions for the Captain Vassilis Foundation**

Since there is a low cover of family farms and therefore the abandonment of agricultural activity in favour of a more profitable activity without intent to sell agricultural land, information of young farmers, and the promotion of the different ways they have to expand their activity appear important. In addition, public institutions, in full restructuring faced also the economic crisis, and as banks they can no longer financially support projects.

Thus, the role of the Captain Vassilis Foundation through existing partnerships (universities, farmers, Chambers of agriculture...) and private supports may be to intervene at the level of Messenia in the social, economic and environmental areas. These actions can be carried out with different audiences and transversely:

The promotion and education among young people and unemployed on the opportunities they have to study agriculture and develop an activity in connection therewith may be effected by:

- school-based interventions
- meetings with farmers witnessing their activity, which may lead to discovery days
- courses of immersion within an agrotourism unit (to see the operation, the relationship with the customer, accounting/management...)

The promotion of ways and means to integrate an agrotouristic dimension to the farm in the case of farmers in activity by implementing:

- meetings of consultation and discussion between farmers and professional tourism
- tourism training for farmers, for whom the lack of knowledge in tourism appears as a gap,
- access facilitated to information concerning tourist clientele.

The support of the farmers to facilitate the establishment of agrotourism by:

- providing advice customized to each of them, depending on their budget and their project
- promoting innovative projects (originality, environmental practices for tourism and agriculture),
- highlighting tourism initiatives incorporating the environmental dimension,
- providing the necessary assistance to the creation of records to claim EU subsidies.

The enhancement of sustainable agriculture to:

- develop special events related to good agricultural practices for farmers but also destined for the general public (tasting of local products in an operator, establishment of thematic environmental management...),
- facilitate requests for certification in organic agriculture for those who wish to make the approach,
- promote the link between organic farming and agrotourism.

Work on the image of agriculture in Messinia:

- by positioning the farmer as a key player in the revival of agriculture in Messenia,
- by explaining the different possibilities of management of agricultural land (tenancy, sharecropping) that are available to landowners highlighting the benefit of this type of practice, especially for young people with no land, and who would like to settle in agriculture but also for people unemployed who seek to reintegrate socially,
- by promoting agrotourism as a means to open the farm to the visitor, to share the agrarian culture and sell products derived from exploitation.



## Conclusion

Messinia is a Department which agricultural and tourist potential is shown. It is, since the beginning of the crisis, one of the destinations chosen by the urban wishing to change their life, including settling in organic agriculture. Conversely, rural oriented to pluriactivity, tended to leave the countryside for the benefit of urban centers to find a secondary activity. The farm passed to the next generation does not constitute an enough source of main income.

Pluriactivity of farmers is a response to a non cost-effective agricultural system. Centered on olive monoculture, agriculture seems to stagnate and rural development policies stressed the need to diversify sources of farm income to anchor the rural populations. Among the alternatives, agrotourism appears as one of the most relevant answers when this activity has a real link with the agricultural activity, both valuing the work of the farmer and the experience that is got. Agrotourism is also seen as a way to overcome the phenomenon of seasonality related to olive monoculture.

In the context of diversification of farm income, we have highlighted that tourism is proposed differently according to two categories of farmers.

Farmers in conventional olive monoculture offer a tourist hosting service but have not created a link between the first agricultural activity (constituting the principal source of revenue) and secondary tourism. This can be attributed to tourism development policies that did not, from the outset, clarify the possibilities of opening of exploitation to tourism

Biological polyculture farmers, mainly from urban areas, have been able to join these two activities, seizing the opportunity to develop an alternative form of tourism: agrotourism. In this case, the experience that relies on the link between agriculture and tourism is valued by a range of agrotourist services (accommodation, entertainment activities, participation in the activities of the farm, restore to database products of the farm...).

Eligible for European subsidies granted under the LEADER program, some farmers in agrotourism project have made the request. However, they could not get them for two main reasons. On the one hand their project on their family farm was not large enough (too small capacity), on the other hand, the economic crisis has resulted in terminate grants for this type of project.

The development of agrotourism seems to face the contradictions of local public policies in their application and their articulation. Rural development policy support agrotourism as a way to anchor the rural populations and enable them to maintain agriculture, while maintaining the landscape and making a local agrarian culture. While tourism development policies put forward agrotourism as a means to increase the capacity of the Department.

From these different findings, some recommendations can be proposed in terms of clarification of the concept of agrotourism, promotion of this activity and organic production for young farmers, especially in a perspective of agrotourism.

It would be interesting to deepen this study to assess the implementation of public policies at the local level, including the LEADER axis of the program of rural development in Messinia 2007 - 2013, but also to determine to which extent the creation of tourism resorts impact on the implementation of small agrotourism structures. Also, it would be interesting to understand why farmers only offering accommodations do not engage in agrotourism to the meaning of the definition of MARCOTTE and *al.* (2006), while they already offer a basic service to develop agrotourism.

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Abstract :

The Greek department of Messinia is located in the South-West Peloponnesus. It is an agricultural and touristic territory, favorable to agrotourism development. In the context of pluriactivity of the rural households, agrotourism appears like an alternative to the recent rural exodus in order to make this population remain in the rural space. In an economical crisis time, agrotourism is also set up by urban population looking for a better and a new quality of life. Between these two kinds of population, agrotourism is used and practiced in a different way.

Keywords:

Agrotourism – rural territory – organic agriculture – rural exodus – pluriactivity – economical crisis – diversification