Agritourism: a farm holiday

Over the past 30 years a new type of tourism has grown strongly throughout Italy, **Agritourism**. It is a carefully blended mixture of two industries, agriculture and tourism, which offers farming communities, as well as tourists, substantial advantages. These have proven to be socially, environmentally and economically beneficial to both groups.



The beginning

Tuscany is where Agritourism began as a form of rural tourism. The initial form of Agritourism was meant as an offer of lodging in exchange for performing small jobs; in other words, some form of collaboration in relation to the various activities on the farms.

Definition and objectives

In 1985 Agritourism was defined by a national law as "…activities of hospitality performed by agricultural entrepreneurs and their family members that must remain connected and complementary to farming activities."

The main objective was to halt rural out-migration by keeping farmers on the land. Additional objectives were:

- enhancement of environmental conservation and management;
- promotion of 'typical' rural products;
- support for rural traditions and cultural initiatives;
- development of agricultural areas;
- development of youth and social tourism;
- enhancement of the relationship between city and countryside.

The "legge quadro", the national umbrella legislation, defined Agritourism as an agricultural activity in its own right with the complementary aspect of tourism. This definition stated that Agritourism cannot exist unless there is a pre-existing agricultural activity. In other words, the working farm must come first, not the other way round, and the complementary element of tourism cannot take precedence in terms of working hours over the pre-existing agricultural business. Basically, the tourism business is the junior partner of the agricultural business.

These are the prerequisites of any agritourism activity as defined by the Italian Parliament. On the basis of this definition set out by the Parliament, the Italian regions have further defined their own legislation around Agritourism.

Evolution

After passing the law, government began financing these operations. The result was a dramatic growth in the number of this kind of enterprises. For example, in the Alto Adige region there were 33 Agritourisms in 1989 and they were 2,506 at the end of 2006.

Agritourism has now spread far and wide. Target markets for the Agritourism product are quite varied, with no absolute age or demographic group. Many young couples seem to be important for the weekend market while families with young children choose farms with animals both at weekends and on holidays. International tourists are an important market, with the experience seekers looking for a special holiday.

A particularly important aspect to ensure success is authenticity of experience. Agritourists are looking for a real farm experience; they are orientated around having a rural experience shared with the family who owns the agritourism on which they are staying, by enjoying foods prepared from raw materials produced on the farm or even taking part in the activities surrounding the farm.

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1 Match the following definitions to the expressions underlined in the text above.

a. prevail over: .....

b. homemade foods: .....

c. vice versa: .....

d. everywhere: .....

e. tourists looking for unique experiences from their holidays: .....

f. considerable: .....

g. because of its own special qualities: .....

h. moving of farmers from one place to another, especially to find work: .....

i. temporary residence: .....

j. motivated by having: .....

2 Decide if these statements are true or false. Correct the false ones.

		T	F
a.	Agritourism is one of the fastest growing segments of travel industry.	☐	☐
b.	Agritourism saved thousands of small farms from extinction.	☐	☐
c.	National laws about Agritourism were passed in the 30s in Italy.	☐	☐
d.	Thanks to Agritourism local products may be promoted.	☐	☐
e.	Agritourism activities usually lead to the desertion of agricultural areas.	☐	☐
f.	Agritourism may be defined as a tourist activity with the complementary aspect of farming.	☐	☐
g.	The regional legislation about Agritourism may have some differences from the national laws.	☐	☐
h.	There was a decrease in Agritourism after passing the new laws.	☐	☐
i.	Agritourists are mainly farmers.	☐	☐
j.	Travellers are looking for new experiences as part of their trips.	☐	☐



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