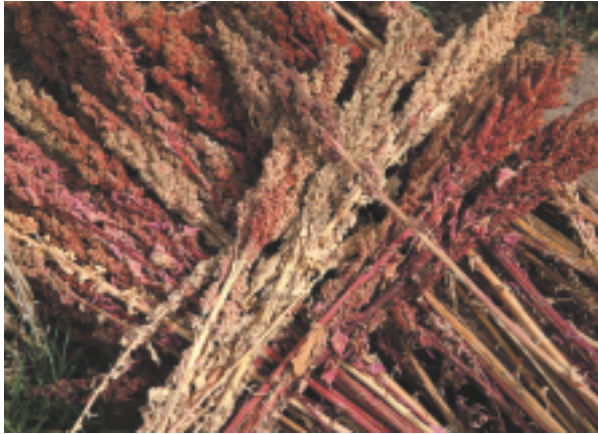


Maintaining and promoting agricultural diversity through tourism



Fruitful interplay: Rare and exotic food crops (here: quinoa) can delight tourists, while tourism revenue can be deployed to conserve this floral diversity. Photo: GTZ

Tourists seek experiences of nature; they want to try foreign foods and regional specialities. This interest in what is down-to-earth and distinctive represents an opportunity to preserve old plant varieties and animal breeds and unique agricultural landscapes that farmers in different parts of the world have created over centuries whether they be rice terraces in South-East Asia or vineyards in central and southern Europe. The varieties and breeds that have been bred over generations and the landscapes on which they have left their mark are the cultural inheritance of future generations. At the same time they form a resource base of great value for our future food security.

Diversity is a form of touristic capital that, correctly used, benefits both the entire tourism sector and related aspects of the economy such as manufacturers of local food specialities or producers of craftwork.

Agrotourism for the conservation of agricultural diversity

Many people have become involved in the conservation of now rare farm animals and crop plants. Research and breeding institutes, charities, parks and botanical gardens work privately or on behalf of the state to secure agricultural diversity for the future. Not all these institutions are

funded entirely by external sources; some must raise some or all of their funds themselves, and income from tourism is one of the means by which they do so.

However, the most important breeders and keepers of now rare farm animals and crop plants are still the farmers themselves. In developing countries, in particular, farmers make use of a large number of local plants and animals because they are well adapted to local conditions or because the farmers have no access to alternative seed or other animals. Some farmers, even in developing countries, make a point of keeping endangered animal breeds and plants varieties in order to preserve them for the local culture or to earn extra income through tourism. For example, providers of rural holiday accommodation may add the opportunity to encounter rare plants and animals to the attractions of the traditional farmhouse stay. The table on the following page summarises the important functions of this value chain and the different individuals and organisations involved.

Within the setting of the agricultural enterprise visitors can encounter the plants and animals “live”; they can buy bread, cold meats, jam or fruit juices produced from them, or craft products such as jumpers made from the wool of rare sheep or tablecloths of handwoven linen. In addition to the farmhouse guests, local businesses such as bakers, butchers, restaurants and souvenir sellers are also important buyers. They purchase the raw or already pre-processed products from the farmers and sell them on to the tourists as specialities.

In order to market the local attractions successfully, the involvement of other bodies may be necessary marketing agencies for the development of tourism products and advertising strategies; tourism associations for the distribution of information, to serve as a contact point and to make arrangements with guests; and local and regional planners to ensure that the infrastructure is adapted to tourist needs.

There are many ways in which agricultural diversity can be profitably combined with tourism, as examples from all over the world illustrate.

Figure: Possible functions and participants of the value chain between agricultural diversity and tourism

Production	Processing	Marketing	Consumption
Functions			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Cultivation of rare crops ■ Breeding of endangered farm animal breeds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Processing raw materials into products (food, craft products) ■ Describing the special characteristics of plant varieties and animal breeds ■ Developing quality labels, brands and certification systems ■ Developing tourism infrastructure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Compiling product packages and programmes ■ Drawing up marketing plans ■ Organising or taking part in trade fairs ■ Developing Internet platforms ■ Selling local products (souvenirs, food) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Viewing animals and plants ■ Consuming food products made from them ■ Buying souvenirs etc. ■ Leisure activities (riding, carriage rides, dyeing, spinning etc.)
Participants			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Farmers ■ Scientists ■ Breeding associations ■ Sector organisations ■ Environmental organisations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Farmers ■ Local/regional representative bodies ■ Occupational bodies/ breeding associations ■ Scientists ■ Specialists ■ The food-processing trade ■ Craft workers ■ Restaurants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Holiday companies ■ Tourism advisers ■ Marketing agencies ■ Tourism and farming organisations ■ Tourist guides ■ Sales stalls, shops selling souvenirs and local food ■ Restaurants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Day trippers ■ Holidaymakers ■ Social groups (weddings, company outings) ■ Educational tourists (schools, occupational groups) ■ Specialist visitors

Serbia: Wallachian sheep and woolly pig as tourist attractions

In the mountainous region surrounding the Stara Planina Nature Park in Serbia the predominant form of farming for centuries involved the alternating use of the high-altitude summer pastures and the winter meadows in the valley. This local usage pattern fostered a varied mountain flora and fauna and contributed to the development of animal breeds adapted to this system – Bardoka and Wallachian sheep, the Balkan goat, the Bosnian mountain pony and the Mangalitza or woolly pig. In the last hundred years the extensive farming of the mountain meadows has declined. In consequence some areas have become overgrazed as a result of more intensive farming methods; in other places the meadows have gone wild and there has been a sharp decline in the number of species.

Since 2002 the organisation *Natura Balkanika* in Dimitrovgrad has been attempting to help the region's farmers reintroduce native pigs, horses, sheep, goats and chickens. The old local breeds are of great interest from an economic point of view because they are easy to keep and well adapted to the barren terrain. Meat and wool are of high quality and readily saleable. *Natura Balkanika* is supported by the national authorities, the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (German Technical Co-operation, GTZ), the Evangelischer Entwicklungsdienst (Church Development Service of the Protestant Churches in Germany, EED) and the Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe (REC).

Natura Balkanika advises farmers on agricultural issues and also promotes measures for strengthening tourism in the region. A farm with a wide range of tourist facilities set up in 2004 forms the region's central attraction. It



Rare farm animals, such as Wallachian sheep (left) and Mangalitz woolly pigs (right), are adapted ideally to local conditions and can also be strong tourist attractions. Photos: GTZ

offers bed & breakfast accommodation combined with the opportunity to encounter traditional local farm animals and to taste their products such as smoked meat and cheese. Astride mountain ponies tourists can explore the natural beauty spots of the area and visit traditional farms whose owners have been specially trained in matters of tourism. As they visit these small rural enterprises tourists can discover local craft techniques and enjoy foods typical of the region.

A special attraction is the annual “Regional Fair of Balkan Agrobiodiversity and Rural Heritage”. With its well-known livestock show and a range of local specialities on offer it draws visitors not only from the local area but from all over the country.

The modest but varied tourist attractions enable the farming families to bring in additional income. As a result of the various farm initiatives the region around Dimitrovgrad is now one of the most important centres for the conservation of Serbian animal breeds.

Ecuador: Ullucu tubers, jicama roots and community tourism

Two hours north of Quito are the villages of the Cotacachi, an ancient volcanic area. The local cooperative umbrella organisation has launched a tourism initiative there that enables visitors to hike selected routes through the distinctive landscape or to explore it by mountain bike or on horseback. Excursions are led by 25 licensed guides young people of the villages who have been specially trained as tourist guides. Accommodation for tourists is provided by twelve host families who have erected simple lodges hosting up to four people.

During their stay in the individual villages guests can learn how the local people live. They can, for example, visit the local gardens and fields where many unusual food crops are grown alongside herbs and plants for ceremonial uses. Ullucu tubers, jicama roots, tree tomatoes, quinoa, annona and dozens of other plants arouse visitors’ curiosity and can be tasted at shared meals taken with the host families. Via a partnership with the National Agricultural

Research Institute the villagers receive additional old varieties that had disappeared from the area. These are now being planted and used not only for the tourists.

Germany: Ark Farms – a model for the conservation of rare breeds

Ark Farms (Arche-Höfe) are a group of more than 80 farms located all over Germany that combine the provision of farm holidays with the breeding and use of rare, local animal breeds. Interested visitors can join farm tours that provide a fascinating insight into the history of these breeds, their current situation and their prospects for the future. Each Ark Farm has its own special character with a range of animals on view. At the same time the “Arche-Hof” designation is a quality label held by the Society for the Conservation of Old and Endangered Domestic Animal Breeds (GEH). The GEH set up the project, monitors adherence to defined quality criteria, provides support services to members and documents animal stocks. The Ark Farms are visited by individuals, school groups, societies and specialist groups.

Great Britain: Farm Parks as a refuge for rare breeds

The Cotswold Farm Park in Great Britain was set up in 1970 as a private initiative. It focuses on the breeding of rare breeds of British cattle. The farm, originally planned purely as a breeding centre, utilises the interest of tourists in history, culture and aesthetics to generate additional income. Visitors pay an entrance fee and in return are able to view small groups of each animal breed in an attractive pastoral setting. The Farm Park has never received any external financial support; it is funded solely by the visitors, who number about 100,000 each year. Their entrance fees are used to maintain more than 300 sheep, 100 cattle, 30 pigs, 50 goats and 15 donkeys of rare breeds. Other Farm Parks have now been established; they attract a great deal of media interest and are popular destinations for tour organisers, school outings and specialist groups. The farms thus play an important role in raising aware-

ness and disseminating information about rare animal breeds and the importance of agricultural diversity.

Elements of successful touristic marketing of agricultural diversity

Agricultural diversity in itself does not draw any visitors. It becomes a business proposition only when combined with other tourist attractions. For example, riding, hiking, wine-tasting and traditional festivals will attract the required numbers of people. The more diverse the facilities of the region, the larger the stream of visitors. It is also advantageous if options are bundled together to form attractive packages for different groups of visitors, according to their particular interests.

Quality labels make marketing easier, as the Ark Farms show. Such seals confirm the quality of the services and products on offer – an essential requirement if species diversity is to be successfully sold as an attraction.

It is also important that the whole atmosphere of tourist facilities should reflect the distinctive features of local culture as authentically as possible. The products, too, must be genuine. Visitors love opportunities to try, feel and taste new things.

Cooperation and networking between agricultural enterprises, the restaurant trade, food processors, dealers, local authority bodies and travel organisers is useful, making it easier to create and market integrated packages. Strategic

partnerships with environmental organisations, NGOs and nature conservation groups facilitate implementation.

The contribution of tourism to the conservation of agricultural diversity and culture

The conservation of traditional farm animals and crop plants ought to bring with it improvements in income that provide breeders with an incentive to continue their work. In developing countries the additional gain from tourist activities depends on fair agreements between groups and individuals involved in the value chain. Through equitable profit-sharing the low incomes of rural dwellers can receive a significant boost even from relatively low levels of tourism.

The close encounters that take place between visitors and hosts provide an opportunity for in-depth communication; at the same time the risk of negative consequences such as alcoholism, prostitution or begging must not be ignored.

As well as having an impact on incomes, agrotourism can help to strengthen the identity of the native population, heightening cultural awareness and appreciation of local farm animals and crop plants. For farmers in remote regions additional benefit accrues from the intensive communication both with visitors and with other farms involved.

The Issue Paper series “People, Food and Biodiversity” aims to:

- stimulate an interest in the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity,
- present quickly and clearly concrete actions and experiences,
- explain new concepts and issues relating to the topic of biological diversity,
- encourage and stimulate the mainstreaming of this topic within development cooperation projects and programmes.

We look forward to your suggestions and experiences so as to enable us to improve this series.

Further information:

WTO (1996): Agenda21 for the Travel and Tourism Industry. (<http://www.world-tourism.org/sustainable/doc/a21-cover.pdf>)

IPGRI (2001): Adventures in agrobiodiversity. Ecotourism for agrobiodiversity conservation. (<http://www.ipgri.cgiar.org/Agrobiodiversity/downloads/AdventuresinAgrobiodiversity-finalimke.pdf>)

Marleni Ramirez (2007): Community Tourism in the Northern Andes. (<http://www.planeta.com/planeta/03/0301eccotacachi.html>)

Ark Farms: <http://www.g-e-h.de/geh-arch/>

Natura Balkanika:
<http://directory.crnps.org.yu/detail.asp?id=71464>
<http://farmaluka.awardspace.com/english.htm>

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