

***ENTREPRENEURIAL LEARNING EXCHANGE INITIATIVE FOR SUSTAINABLE
HOSPITALITY SMEs IN THE BALKAN-MEDITERRANEAN REGION***

Subsidy Contract No. BMP1/1.3/2616/2017

Company name: Agreco Farm (Greccotel Hotels and Resorts)

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Country/region of operation: Greece/Region of Crete/Rethymnon

Sustainability dimension: social/economic/environmental

Description of the enterprise/initiative:

Greccotel Hotels and Resorts is a hotel chain in Greece with a collection of 30 luxury hotels and resorts all over Greece. They have their own character, from ultra-luxury boutique hotels to resorts on sprawling estates and family-friendly or all-inclusive holiday-lands and luxurious spas. To demonstrate the group's agricultural initiatives, the Agreco Traditional Estate opened in 2001 in Crete, Agreco Farm. On a 4-hectare estate near Rethymno, Crete, the traditional farm showcases centuries-old farming methods on organic production of the island's simple and healthy food.

Social/ community impact:

Greccotel's philosophy is to provide an authentic hospitality experience with the highest standards by highly skilled staff. In addition, Greccotel supports the preservation of the natural environment around its premises, makes efforts to hire locally and invest in its people's long term professional development and advancement, creating highly skilled hospitality professionals that add to the community's capital.

Stakeholders: Local producers, local communities, schools, universities, suppliers, NGO's, members of the tourism sector

Approach applied:

Agro-touristic approach

Innovation applied:

The Agreco Farm an experience of 'live life' in an organic farm. "Play Farmer for the Day" is an activity at the Agreco Farm where each visitor learns just how it feels to make and eat home-made traditional Cretan food. The 'hands-on' experience includes:

- Preparing stuffed vegetables.
- Making farmhouse bread and baking it in the wood-burning oven.
- Visiting the wine press to taste organic wines and see where grapes are pressed by foot in the autumn.
- The raki still that produces Crete's famous tsikoudia.
- Picking vine leaves to make the famous Greek dolmadakia.

- Picking vegetables from the organic gardens to enjoy later.
- Collecting hen eggs to make village-style scrambled eggs.
- Milking the goats and helping shear the sheep
- Making Cretan cheese pies



Sustainability of the business model:

The agro-touristic model promoted by the hotel can bring many economic and non-economic benefits for farmers, visitors and communities. On the one hand, the visitors can enjoy recreation and leisure agricultural activities, while, on the other hand, the entrepreneurs have the opportunity to increase their income, maximize the productivity of farm resources through their recreational use and diversify their business by providing touristic services. In this sense, local natural and cultural heritage -based on agriculture- is preserved and the local community is economically enhanced (increase of local employment and promotion of local businesses, such as restaurants and shops) (Broccardo et al, 2017; Tew & Barbieri, 2012), while, at the same time, education and environmental awareness is promoted (Zoto et al, 2013).

Key success factors: Quality of accommodation, sales of own and/or local agricultural products, excursions and guided tours, learning laboratories, agricultural production activities, such as harvesting vegetables and fruits, complete tourism packages, support and participation of local government, sufficient funds for tourism development, cooperation with local businesses (Broccardo et al, 2017; Komppula, 2014; Tew & Barbieri, 2012).

Challenges and problems: Balancing between the primary agricultural production activities and the agro-touristic activities -as sources of income-, responding to market opportunities, seasonality, small scale character of the business, matching the quality of products and services to tourists demands and expectations, effective marketing (Doh et al, 2017; Tew & Barbieri, 2012; Sharpley, 2002).

Year when the enterprise was created: 2001

References (web-site, intent links, video, etc.):

<http://www.grecotel.com/>,

<http://www.grecotel.com/luxury-lifestyle/nature-activities.html>