

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

Subsidy Contract No. BMP1/1.3/2616/2017

**Company name: Eumelia Organic Agrotourism Farm & Guesthouse
(Homeodynamic Development. S.A.)**

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Country/region of operation: Greece/Region of Peloponnese/Lakonia.

Sustainability dimension: social/economic/environmental

Description of the enterprise/initiative:

An apartment hotel at the heart of an organic farm surrounded by perennial olive trees, fields of herbs, fruit and vegetable gardens. The farm is located about 2 km from the village of Gouves in a traditional farming area surrounded by the mountains of Taygetos and Parnonas, and about 13 kilometers from Lakonikos Gulf.

Social/ community impact:

The initiative builds on engaging guests in an experience tourism model in order to diversify the offered product, and bringing the wider public closer to nature and its products with the aim to raise environmental awareness and enhance the connection with local assets.

Stakeholders: Local farmers, handcrafters and artisans, local businesses, seminar instructors, schools/students, volunteers, guests, collaborators through European partnerships (research institutions, schools, universities and other NGOs), wider public through consultation activities

Approach applied:

Agro-tourism approach

Innovation applied:

The guesthouse is engaged in using Organic, Biodynamic and Permaculture farming practices, recycling and composting, energy saving (geothermal heat pump, solar water heating system, bioclimatic architecture, low consumption light bulbs), water saving (ecological water efficient faucets and dual button flush toilet buttons), using of organic food and local products. The guesthouse buys local food and products in order to support sustainability and local farmers and supports local businesses in order to help improve their sustainability and income stabilization. It also works with local farmers, handcrafters & artisans as well as workshop and seminar instructors in order to involve the local community and introduce them to the guests. Finally, it involves local youth & volunteers in projects (e.g. Erasmus, H2020) in order to encourage them to participate in the sustainability efforts and encourage the spirit of volunteering.

Sustainability of the business model:

The agro-touristic model promoted by the apartment 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 and quality of life, 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, wellness, 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-, isolation from important tourist attractions, responding to market opportunities, seasonality, small scale character of the business, limited support system for small businesses, need for significant investment beyond the business' capacity, matching the quality of products and services to tourists demands and expectations, having the skills and the resources for effective marketing (Doh et al, 2017; Tew & Barbieri, 2012; Sharpley, 2002).

Year when the enterprise was created: n/a

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

<http://www.eumelia.com/en>