

AGRITOURISM IN ITALY



Pauline Porcaro

ISS Institute/Italy (Veneto) Fellowship

Fellowship funded by Skills Victoria,
Department of Innovation,
Industry and Regional Development,
Victorian Government



ISS Institute

Suite 101
685 Burke Road
Camberwell Vic
AUSTRALIA 3124

Telephone

03 9882 0055

Facsimile

03 9882 9866

Email

issi.ceo@pacific.net.au

Web

www.issinstitute.org.au

Published by International Specialised Skills Institute, Melbourne.

ISS Institute
101/685 Burke Road
Camberwell 3124
AUSTRALIA

October 2009

Also extract published on www.issinstitute.org.au

© Copyright ISS Institute 2009

This publication is copyright. No part may be reproduced by any process except in accordance with the provisions of the Copyright Act 1968.

Whilst this report has been accepted by ISS Institute, ISS Institute cannot provide expert peer review of the report, and except as may be required by law no responsibility can be accepted by ISS Institute for the content of the report, or omissions, typographical, print or photographic errors, or inaccuracies that may occur after publication or otherwise. ISS Institute do not accept responsibility for the consequences of any action taken or omitted to be taken by any person as a consequence of anything contained in, or omitted from, this report.

Executive Summary

Agritourism has enjoyed sustained growth in Italy and other parts of Europe since the 1980s. It is a carefully blended mixture of two industries, agriculture and tourism, that offers farming communities, as well as tourists, substantial advantages. These have proven to be socially, environmentally and economically beneficial to both groups.

Agritourism was defined by the Italian Government under national law in 1985 as “...activities of hospitality performed by agricultural entrepreneurs and their family members that must remain connected and complementary to farming activities.” (Sonnino, p. 286) The growth of agritourism, supported financially by government in Australia, is highly recommended in this report.

As highlighted during a recent Tourism Victoria conference, there is a general awareness of a current lack of accommodation and activities for tourists in many areas of rural Victoria. This led the Fellow, Pauline Porcaro, a senior educator in tourism in the Victorian TAFE system, to embrace the opportunity to explore the Italian agritourism system through a Fellowship offered by the ISS Institute and sponsored by Skills Victoria, Victorian Government. Italy has long been regarded as the world leader in agritourism. Three main criteria for its success were of particular interest to the Fellow – broad and innovative product range, sophisticated marketing systems and most importantly, extensive government support.

The Italian system was developed with a clear objective in mind: “*To halt rural out-migration by keeping farmers on the land*” (ibid). With an ongoing economic crisis for farmers in Australia due to climate change, natural disasters and harsh conditions, we need to look at alternative avenues to further support our farmers and keep them on the land. Agritourism development is a proven and reliable source of income for farmers.

The following strategies implemented in the development of Italian agritourism are recommended for consideration by Australia:

- A coordinated financial, planning, and marketing approach to support the development of agritourism by all levels of government and industry.
- The emphasis on farming remaining the primary revenue for the farmer.
- The coordinated marketing approach through branding of agritourism and quality controls.
- The compulsory training of agritourism operators to ensure a skilled sector.

Both our Federal and State Governments have acknowledged an interest in the development of agritourism in Australia. The agritourism brand ‘Gallo Rosso’ or ‘Red Rooster’ which commenced in the Alto Adige region in northern Italy in 1999 presents an excellent model for agritourism development in Australia. The South Tyrol Farmers’ Union commenced the brand with the objective of promoting the region and increasing sales for agritourism operators in the region who were suffering from occupancy problems. Their success has been outstanding with visitor nights to the region growing by a significant 107.4% in just eight years (Knollseisen, Gallo Rosso, personal comment).

The healthy growth in bookings in Alto Adige is testament to the quality control and marketing efforts of the successful Gallo Rosso brand. The range of Italian supply is also noteworthy. With innovative product development ideas such as didactic farms and agricamping facilities that can easily be adapted to the Australian environment.

Executive Summary

Where to from here for Australia? A number of recommendations are included in the report. First, we need to encourage a clear definition of agritourism and outline government policy around funding and standards. Second, it is essential that we build community awareness of agritourism in order to instigate a growth in product and motivate the end users to experience it. In Italy the idea is so ingrained in their culture people speak of taking an 'agritourism holiday'. Third, we need to redefine current applicable farm tourism as agritourism in order to offer internationally recognisable terminology.

It is proposed that a number of agriculture and tourism bodies, both government and industry, be involved in the dissemination of information contained herein specifically to encourage farmers to extend their agriculture businesses to encompass tourism. This should be coupled with the development of specific training programs to enable the farming community to offer tourism excellence in their products and services.

The most important feature of the Italian system, that underpins the successful development of agritourism, is the government funding for farmers to commence these ventures. It is suggested that the Federal Government replace previous initiatives like Farm Help and FarmBis with an 'Agritourism Development Scheme' for farmers. Agritourism should be considered urgently in the interests of sustainable economic and tourism development in Australia.