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MANUFACTURE OF REGIONAL PRODUCTS AND AGROTOURISM AS AN EXAMPLE OF THE USE OF NATURAL VALUES OF TUSCANY

Abstract: The developed agrotourism and a rich range of regional products point to broad opportunities of attracting tourists by Tuscany. The region takes a leading place in Italian statistics with respect to the number of tourists (38 million in 2002), agrotourist farms (1,406 in 1998) and of traditional products (424 in 2003). The present article conditions favouring the appearance of the both elements of the broadly conceived tourism.

Key words: tourism, agrotourism, regional products

Introduction

The author presents current state of the use of natural values of Tuscany with respect to the development of tourism associated with the manufacture of regional products and the development of agrotourist farms.

The aim of the article is to present the opportunities associated with the use of natural values of a given region as linked with the organization of the developing agrotourist structures and with the manufacture of regional products. The article also aims at pointing to the complementarity of both phenomena.

General characteristics of Tuscany

Tuscany lies in central Italy and is a region with diversified natural conditions which is due to its position in the middle part of the Appenine Peninsula. The dominant landforms in Tuscany are hills and uplands – 67% of the surface, mountains – 25%, lowlands – as little as 8%. The natural division of the region, characterized

by the predominance of hills and uplands in the south of the region, of lowlands in central-western part of the region and of mountains in the north, involves different conditions for the development of agriculture and tourism. Tuscany lies within the reach of Mediterranean climate. The region displays a natural cover in the form of mountains in the north which protect it against cold northerly winds. The influence of the sea is smoothed by winter periods. The precipitation in Tuscany is lowest in the whole region of the Tyrrhenian Sea and differs depending on the terrain; some 1,500 mm per year in the Appenines and some 600 mm in the south-west of the region. The region displays precipitation regime of Mediterranean type with a maximum of precipitation in the period of autumn-winter and a minimum in summer months (Barbieri 1972).

Tuscany is marked by an unrepeatable and unique landscape. It includes hills covered by broad-leaved trees, meadows with strong shade of green and the alleys of cypress trees along the roads leading to few properties located on the hills. The landscape adds to the development of tourism and in particular of agrotourism.

Agrotourism

Agrotourism conceived as a payable sojourn, offered by an agricultural farm, began to appear in the Tuscany region in the 1960s when the first symptoms of tourist interest in farm accommodation had been recorded. In Tuscany as in the whole Italy the phenomenon of agrotourism appeared with some delay. In 1965 a National Association of Agriculture and Tourism (Associazione Nazionale Agricoltura e Turismo) was created but it was only in the period of 1965-1975, called the “decade of experimentation” in the field of agrotourism, that this sector could develop. It was then in 1978, that the above-mentioned association took the name of Agriturismo (Telleschi 1992). The 1980s were a flowering period of the agrotourist activities in Italy. Agrotourism, according to the Act nr 730 of December 5th 1985 of the Italian Republic is meant exclusively as “activities consisting in the reception of persons and the provision of lodgings by farmers and their family members who employ for this purpose their own farm where agrotourist activities are performed according to the principle of complementarity with respect to arable farming, forestry or cattle raising, which must remain however chief activities with respect to agrotourism”. This means that the income from agrotourism as well as the time devoted to carry out such activities must be lesser than the income from agriculture itself and from the time spent on farming works. In the framework of agrotourist activities it is possible to distinguish periodical provision of lodgings in open spaces e.g. on campings, offering food services based on produce from one’s own farm as well as organizing recreational and cultural activities within one’s own farm. These activities predominantly met the demand for alien tourists who visited Tuscan villages.

Tuscany owing to its history, orography and the culture of hospitality was capable of creating good conditions for the development of agrotourism. Also its landscape, rural architecture and interesting traditions have their own contribution. Agrotourism in Tuscany became the basic element of the development of farming and tourism in

rural regions. The development of that activity is regulated by the regional act No 730/85. The act is implemented by regional programmes such as Regional Development Programme. The principle assumptions of the programme relate to: promotion of social integration, favouring the combining of income from many sources of earning for those living in the country and facilitating the development of enterprise among young people.

Agrotourism plays a significant part in the protection of landscape and in consolidating human presence in rural areas considered as marginal and in most cases “hostile” to farming activities. Agrotourism is also appreciated for its role in the encouraging a renewed use of village buildings, frequently degraded owing to which the buildings become revitalized and are used according to their basic function. The renewed buildings, to be found in the unpopulated areas or far from other buildings, become a driving force of economic and social growth of a given area.

The word agrotourism consists of two members; “agro” and “tourism” which clearly points to the roots of the activities aiming at providing tourist services, namely agriculture.

Tuscan agriculture links traditional Italian cultures of farming and breeding and is characterized by the types of crops and animal husbandry cultivated all over Europe. The phenomenon is caused by climate which in Tuscany as in the whole of Italy is more favourable for cultivation on account of longer growing season and lesser daily temperature ranges. The crops characteristic of Italy – fruit and vegetables, typical of the whole Mediterranean area, in particular tomatoes, olive and soup vegetables are the basic products for dishes served in agrotourist farms. The magnificent cuisine based on farming products of a given region, man-friendly climate and the unforgettable landscape add to the exceptional image of Tuscany, which in consequence attracts tourists to come to rest on the bosom of nature.

According to a paper by the Regional Institute for Economic Programming of Tuscany of 1999 the region takes the first place in respect of the number of agrotourist farms - 1,406 and the second place in respect of accommodation – 16,233. Agrotourism is practiced both by alien as well as Italian tourists. In the 1990s the agrotourist farms were visited in 2/3 by aliens and in 1/3 by Italians. Nowadays the number of aliens and Italians taking advantage of agrotourism is roughly equal.

Agrotourism is best developed in the provinces of Siena (SI), Arezzo (AR), Grosseto (GR) and Pisa (PI). The number of tourists practicing that type of tourism is much more higher in the province of Siena (SI) – 265 thousand as compared to the three remaining provinces in which the number of tourists oscillates between 66 and 83 thousand tourists (Fig. 1).

Around half the agrotourist farms is situated at a height between 300 and 600 m a.s.l. and only 10% above 600 m a.s.l. In those regions as much as 91.8% of agrotourist farms is situated on the hills.

It follows from studies by the author that village houses which are used in agrotourist activities are marked by a high architectural and historical values. On the other hand, agrotourism makes it possible to renew and partially manage the non-used houses.

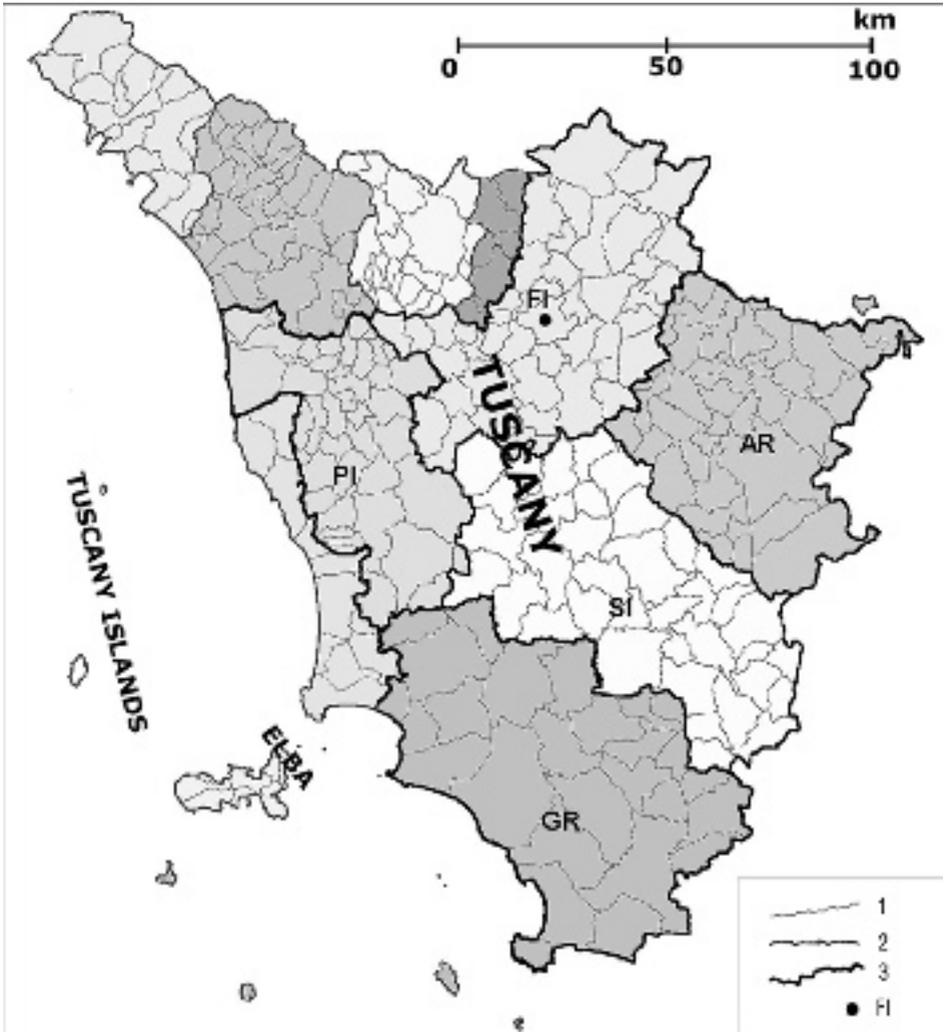


Fig. 1. Tuscan provinces with well-developed agrotourism – Siena (SI), Arezzo (AR), Grosseto (GR), Piza (PI)

Ryc. 1. Prowincje Toskanii o rozwiniętej agroturystyce – Siena (SI), Arezzo (AR), Grosseto (GR), Piza (PI)

Explanations: FI – Florence – regional capital, 1 – provincial border, 2 – district border, 3 – border of province with well-developed agrotourism..

Objaśnienia: FI – Florencja – stolica regionu, 1 – granica prowincji, 2 – granica gminy, 3 – granice prowincji o rozwiniętej agroturystyce.

In the environs of Florence and Siena it is possible to meet many villas and palaces scattered on the neighbouring hills. Farmers who, apart from agriculture, undertake agrotourist activities are on average 45 to 55 years old and have been for years receiving guests. Most of the farmers (4/5) have a good command of one foreign language, which makes it possible to communicate with alien tourists.

In most cases the duty of agrotourist services is carried out by women while men - husbands continue to work in typically agricultural fields. Most of agrotourist farms situated on Tuscany hills grow chiefly olives and grapes.

The general number of agrotourist farms increases rapidly and starting with 1991 the growth was as follows;

Tab. 1. Increase in the number of agrotourist farms in Tuscany over 1991-1998

Tab. 1. Przyrost liczby gospodarstw agroturystycznych w Toskanii w latach 1991-98

Year	number					increase in agrotourist farms (%)
	of farms				of accommodation in all	
	with licence	offering open-air lodging (agrocampings)	providing eating services	offering various forms of recreation		
1991	377	100,0
1993	476	8	158	141	5 443	126,2
1995	843	28	219	255	9 595	223,6
1997	1 226	59	254	268	14 272	325,2
1998	1 406	57	332	310	16 233	372,9

Source: Plan for Regional Development of Agrotourism (Piano di indirizzo regionale dell'agriturismo, 1998) Paper by the Regional Institute for Economic Programming of Tuscany, 1999.

Źródło: Plan Regionalnego rozwoju Agroturystyki (Piano di indirizzo regionale dell'agriturismo), 1998 r.; Opracowanie Instytutu Regionalnego ds. Programowania Gospodarczego Toskanii, 1999 r.

It is to be emphasized that it is very difficult to present the real number of agrotourist farms. It follows from a comparison of data from a few years that not all such farms are recorded in the regional agrotourist associations, which means they prefer to promote their services by other means.

Agrotourism is not only an opportunity of accommodation in fixed buildings but also in agrocampings. In Tuscany most open agrotourist spaces are to be found in maritime and mountain regions i.e. in those in which agrotourist activities are not widely developed.

Where agrotourism dominates (provinces of Siena and Florence) the reception of tourists in open spaces amounts to only 2% of farms. That division results from a high quality of agrotourist houses in the two latter provinces and from the prevalent type of recreation in the first case.

In Tuscany as in the whole of Italy a periodical "Agrotourism" is issued under the tutelage of the Institute of Italian Farmers' Confederation on Agrotourism and the Environment which facilitates the search of agrotourist farms offering sojourns for tourists arriving in mobile homes. The number of such cars in Europe exceeds one million and in Italy itself more than 135 thousand. The number of tourists practicing such type of tourism is estimated at more than 4 millions (X Rapporto sul turismo italiano, 2000).

Attention should be paid that the tourists arriving in the country do not come only to rest in the "green" environment but also to take advantage of recreation-sporting activities such as hunting, angling, long mountain walks (trekking). In agrotourist farms various activities are organized, which are linked with the use of the potential of the natural environment and of field work. However, they are neither popular enough nor employed in many farms. Most often these are activities associated with an opportunity of looking at daily farm or craft work or with horse driving and the use of a swimming pool.

Agrotourism is also developing owing to the progress of the remaining forms of tourism associated with rural areas. A good example is wine tourism (enogastro-nomy). It is complementary to agrotourist activities. The case of Tuscany is peculiar since as the only Italian region Tuscany had regulated legal questions associated with wine tourism still before the general Italian act No 268/99 (X Rapporto sul turismo italiano, 2000). There were established the so-called "Wine Roads" as a combination of the opportunity of staying in rural areas and of tasting wines of a given area. As early as in 1966 a regional act No 69 of 18th August was approved, which not only regulated the legal aspect of the "Wine Roads" but also constituted a serious step towards promoting rural areas. Among the subjects belonging to the "Wine Roads" and at the same time constituting them, of particular interest are just agrotourist farms which present the most adequate type of a lodging base for enogastronomical tourism.

Tuscany reveals a huge potential linked with the history of the region, which facilitates the development of agrotourism. It is enough to look at the list of thematic paths prepared by local institutions dealing with agrotourism to be convinced that the region possesses not only magnificent conditions of the natural environment but also the exceptionally rich history associated with the stay and activities of man in these areas.

Regional products

Agrotourism is also based on the possibility of using local food products. Tuscany has a wide range of regional products coming from both animal breeding and plant crops. The most exquisite of them have gained not only local markets but also the markets of the whole Italy, Europe and even of the United States. The breeding species of special significance in Tuscany are sheep, the popularity of which has been largely increased by the postwar inflow of breeders from Sardinia. The milk from these animals is processed into cheeses, which are a specialty of many regions of Tuscany especially of Pienza, one of localities in the southern part of the region. The cheeses

owe their traditional character to the addition of milk from sheep of Sardinian breed, maintaining the same production process over a long period of time, and of the process of maturation itself in barrels from oak tree. Cheeses placed in the barrels dry-salted and left for ripening for at least 90 days. Sheep cheeses from Pienza are bought not only in Tuscany or in Italy but also in other regions of Europe and in the United States, and a promotion event of this regional product is “Fiesta del Cacio” which takes place on the first Sunday of September each year.

There are legal regulations pertaining to the appearance of new products on the market. The regional “traditional product” in the understanding of the enactment of the Italian Minister of Agriculture and Forestry No 350 of 8th September 1999 is “a product whose methods of processing , preservation, mellowing or ripening are consistent over time, practiced in a given area in a similar way or in accordance with traditional recipes for not shorter time than 25 years <http://www.rete.toscana.it/sett/agric/agriturismo/pdiparte.doc>. The Regional Agency for the Development and Innovation in the Agro-Forestry sector (ARSIA) had prepared in 1999 a map of regional products in order to become acquainted with the distribution of such production and to carry it out under hygienic-sanitary conditions foreseen in the enactment. The first investigations of the territory of Tuscany have brought the identification of 302 traditional products. The “sounding” of the territory carried out each year increases the number of traditional products. Among them are both products of very small range, frequently produced only to satisfy one’s own needs i.e. of the broadly conceived family of the producer as well as products produced on an industrial scale and exported to other countries. Work on the enlargement of the list of typical products is continued. By April 12th each year individual regions can send up updated lists of traditional products to an appropriate ministry or suggest would-be changes to the existing base of the products.

The geographical distribution of regional products is closely associated with areas of established farming and of human activities in the field of crops or animal breeding. As far as the supply of regional products is concerned there dominate the provinces of Florence (FI), Massa-Carrara (MC), Lucca (LU) in the north-western part of the region and Grosseto (GR) and Siena in the northern part (Fig.2).

Today, Tuscany takes the first place among Italian regions in respect of the number of traditional products subject to control on account of their origin and the method of preparation. Out of the most exquisite and most widespread traditional products in Tuscany and beyond it one can mention;

- Porchetta di Monte San Sivo (pork from the region of San Sivo)
- Pecorino di Pienza (sheep cheese from Pienza)
- Salame toscano (pork-butcher’s meat, characteristic of the whole region)
- Tartufo toscano (Tuscan truffles)
- Pane toscano (characteristic bread made without salt)
- Panforte di Siena (honey-cake of Siena exported to the United States and Great Britain)
- Cenci (biscuit prepared during the carnival)
- Vin Santo (wine characteristic of the whole Tuscany)

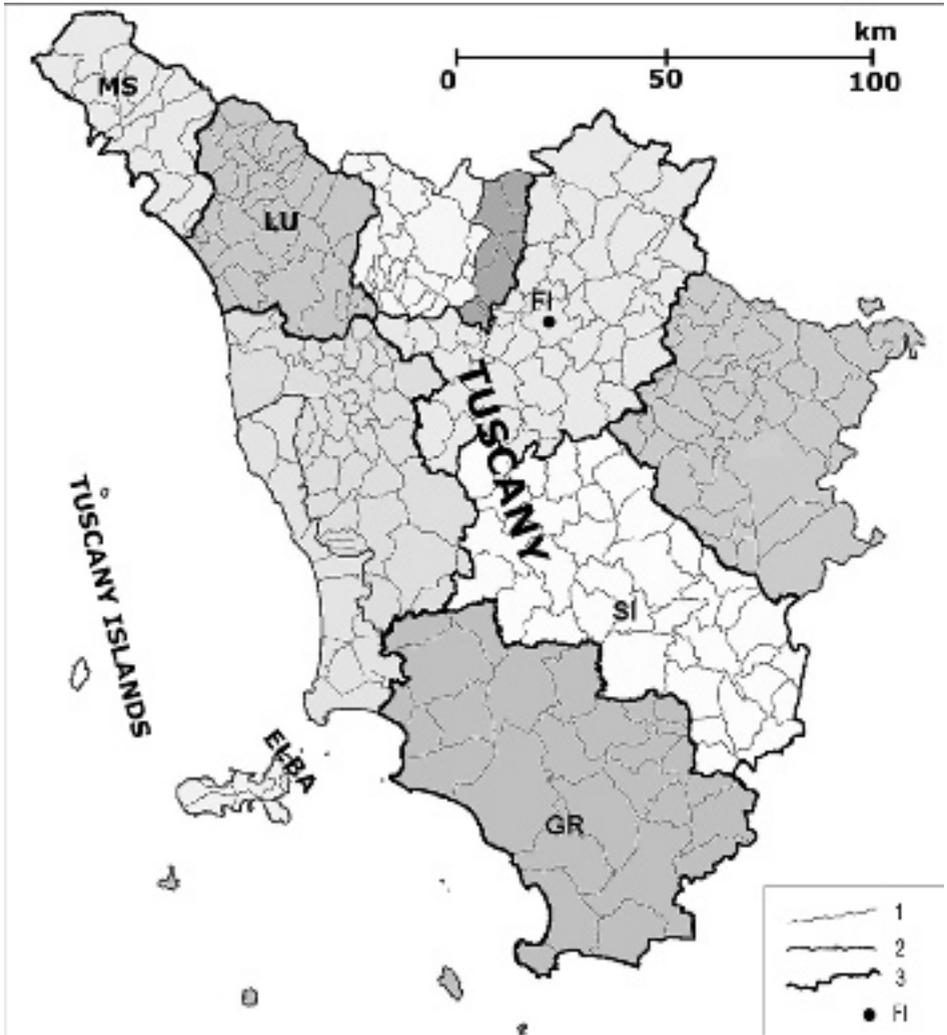


Fig. 2. Tuscan provinces with the highest supply of regional products - Florence (FI), Massa-Carrara (MS), Lucca (LU), Grosseto (GR) and Siena (SI)

Ryc. 2. Prowincje Toskanii o najwyższej podaży produktów regionalnych - Florencja (FI), Massa Carrara (MS), Lucca (LU), Grosseto (GR) oraz Siena (SI)

Explanations: FI – Florence – provincial capital, 1 – provincial border, 2 – district border, 3 – border of province with the highest supply of traditional products..

Objaśnienia: FI – Florencja – stolica regionu, 1 – granica prowincji, 2 – granica gminy, 3 – granice prowincji o najwyższej podaży produktów regionalnych.

– Chianti (wine, the vineyard of which are to be found in the geographical country of Chianti, famous in many parts of the world).

The production of traditional products is deeply rooted in the territory of Tuscany. The manufacture of wines, olive oils, cheeses and of other regional products is possible due to the properties of the soil, features of the local climate, kind of water and other factors to be found on a given area. These products cannot be manufactured in other parts of Tuscany, regions of Italy or of the world because their authenticity is protected by the enactment of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry No 173 of 1998, art. 8 (D.LGS 173/98) "Separation of traditional products" and by the standards relating to the traditional products contained in the enactment No 350 of 1990 (D.L. 350/99).

The buyer of a traditional product can get acquainted with the peculiarity of the production and the character of terrain on which the product is manufactured.

Tourists can visit numerous cellars in which wine is manufactured and tasted and which constitute an integral part of the "Wine Roads", as well as farms in which olive oil (Italian Frantoio) is extracted.

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Oficjalne strony internetowe dotyczące turystyki Urzędu Marszałkowskiego Regionu Toskanii:

<http://www.rete.toscana.it/sett/agric/agriturismo/pdiparte1.doc>

http://www.rete.toscana.it/sett/agric/agriturismo/lr76_94.doc

Produkcja wyrobów regionalnych i agroturystyka jako przykład wykorzystania walorów przyrodniczych Toskanii

Streszczenie

Agroturystyka z roku na rok staje się coraz bardziej znaczącym elementem turystyki, jako jedna z wiodących gałęzi gospodarki Toskanii. W regionie wzrasta ilość gospodarstw agroturystycznych, a co najważniejsze, chętnych osób, które chcą z agroturystyki skorzystać. Turystyka opierająca się na gościnie w gospodarstwie rolniczym współistnieje w Toskanii z bardzo bogatą gamą produktów regionalnych wytwarzanych w terenach wiejskich. Wśród obecnie zarejestrowanych, wiele produktów zyskało sławę ogólnonarodową, a niektóre ogólnoswiatową. Zarówno świadczenie usług agroturystycznych

jak i produkcja wyrobów tradycyjnych stymulowana jest przez korzystne ustawy i rozporządzenia uchwalane przez rząd Republiki Włoskiej oraz rząd Regionu Toskanii. Szczególnie ostatnie dziesięciolecie, w którym powstały nowe środki prawne normujące wyżej wymienione typy działalności, pozwala Toskanii na „bezpieczną” przyszłość i dalszy rozwój turystyki opartej na walorach środowiska geograficznego tokańskich wsi.

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