

SICILY LEARNING & INNOVATIVE CULINARY ENTERPRISES (SLICE)

LEARNING JOURNEY

8-14 May 2022

# ***EXPLORING THE POTENTIAL FOR AUTHENTIC TOURISM EXPERIENCES***



Co-funded by the  
Erasmus+ Programme  
of the European Union



### **Learning Journey Group Members**

**Clare Dean** – Mara Seaweed

**Claire Donaldson** – SRUC, Scotland's Rural College

**David Fraser** – Lomond Developments and Loch Lomond Coffee

**Sheila Gilmore** – VisitArran

**Sheena Horner** – Food from Farming

**Andrew Kojima** – Chef Koj, Berzeli Limited

**Deborah Macken** (group leader) - East Cambusmoon Holiday Cottages

**Stephen McDonach** – Lochaber Environmental Group

**Fiona Richmond** – Scotland Food & Drink

**Mary Tebje** – Chilterns Tourism Network

**Hilary Knight** - Sussex Food Network

## Introduction

Agritourism is at the core of Sicily's food offer. The group focused on the products and entrepreneurs on the learning journey site visits, recording observations of what stood out and why. Participants plan to transfer acquired knowledge and experiences to their own workplaces and training programmes.

Entrepreneurial vision and a strong sense of place contribute to the area's overall visitor experience.

The group undertook some background learning and discussion to understand and appreciate the similarities and differences in definitions and usage of terms such as agritourism, rural tourism, food tourism. It was also important to appreciate that geographical and cultural variations are frequent and common so use of a word or definition in one place may not be the same as intended in another. The SLICE group from across the UK represented different geographical regions and elements of food, tourism and agriculture businesses.

## Background

Agritourism, food tourism, rural tourism and farm diversification initiatives are increasingly becoming important factors in the development of rural and regional communities worldwide. With many countries seeing it as the panacea for economically poorer rural communities.

Over the years many academics have attempted to define agritourism: For example, Clarke (1996) defined it as '*Tourism products in which the consumer is aware of the farming environment*'. Weaver (1997) defining it as '*Rural enterprises which incorporate both a working farm environment and a commercial tourism component.*'

According to Arroyo et al (2013) Agritourism is defined as '*educational and recreational activities offered on working farms*'. The authors believe over the past four decades both the demand and the supply of agritourism has increased. This can be accredited to family farms striving to boost and diversify their income and more people seeking rural experiences.

Agritourism was defined by the Italian Government in 1985 as; "*...activities of hospitality performed by agricultural entrepreneurs and their family members that must remain connected and complementary to farming activities.*"

The Italians have attributed agritourism with distinctive characteristics resulting in national legislation which regulates the sector. Agritourism in Italy can only be performed by the farmer and his (her) family members. The prerequisite being, the tourism activities carried out on the farm must be connected to agriculture which has to be the fundamental enterprise of the farm (Lupi et al, 2017).

Interestingly Kim et al, (2019) suggests that agritourism is purely a type of marketing tool. This implies tourists/consumers change their purchasing habits because of experiencing farming activities. Perhaps it could therefore be argued agritourism is a type of experiential tourism. It involves actively participating therefore experiencing the destination on a deeper transformational level. Experience can be defined as tourists 'responses to external stimuli, which are a function of the activities designed by a farm for tourists 'participation (Rong-Da Liang et al, 2021).

Agritourism has become and remains an evolving and prevalent industry across the globe. The sector can be seen as a key feature for sustainable development in the countryside (Rong-Da Liang et al, 2021). Consequently, agritourism has received growing attention from policymakers, researchers, and local governments because of this.

### **Case Studies**

The following pages represent case study reports for visits the learning journey group made to individual businesses across the agritourism, food tourism, and rural tourism sectors. It is recognised that some are long-established large commercial companies and others are embryonic projects; few fell directly into the agritourism definition as per the Italian government. A good number of businesses visited did not open their enterprise to casual visitors nor were they tourism enterprises per se. Some of the key learnings reflect that and identify the potential for extending the business to include this and to enhance authentic tourism experiences.



## The Vucciria Market

Piazza Caracciolo,

90133 Palermo PA, Italy

<https://turismo.comune.palermo.it/palermo-welcome-luogo-dettaglio.php?tp=68&det=24&id=280>



The group visited the Vucciria Market via a short walk through the highly populated and mixed residential streets of Palermo in the historic heart of the city. The market's immediate locality is characterised by an intensified residential presence and flanked by an even narrower, more concentrated, historic development than that of the neighbouring districts. This adds to the heightened drama which frames The Vucciria.

This ancient market, which in Sicilian lends its name to approximate translations of 'Confusion' or 'Madhouse', was made famous by Renato Guttuso's 1974 work 'La Vucirria'. This painting was completed during a period of tumultuous national transition following the war and captures themes of chaos, feud, corruption and religiosity, present then as now, on the island.

On the day of the visit, a number of our group were struck by the small volume of patrons and vendors open for business. On further enquiry our guide informed us that this was quite normal and related to the wet weather.

This echoed experiences of markets in Scotland and has been cited as a historic reasoning for the comparative few open air markets in the Scottish Highlands, with noted exceptions in Sligachan on the Isle of Skye, and Dalmally in the county of Argyll.

Whilst barriers to trade such as weather and cultural complexities may have been bypassed in many cities through large scale relocation to purpose built commercial zones, the group reflected that the cultural importance embedded within The Vucciria could be lost through efforts to modernise. Notwithstanding the undeniable richness and depth The Vucciria held, the group felt strongly that there was an unfortunate absence of context with which to frame, place and interpret the market, in relation to the significance it held in Sicilian cultural life and identity, and that this may have been a missed opportunity. The notion of the marketplace and the bridge it represents between rural and urban Sicily appears, as a theme, to form fundament to regional identity and therefore it could be seen as critical that markets, such as The Vucciria, be given prominence within an agritourism proposition.

Click on the image to play a video of our Visit



## Morettino Coffee

<https://morettino.com/global/en/coffee-museum>

This business is located in the San Lorenzo ai Colli area in Palermo Sicily and is a family owned and operated coffee roasters founded by Angelo Morettino in 1920. Currently owned and operated by Arturo and his son Andrea Morettino. Now on its 4<sup>th</sup> generation, the passion for Sicily and coffee is abundant from the moment you come through the front door. The Custom-built unit is a training centre, museum, coffee roasters and distribution hub with a dedicated area for growing coffee plants.

Although not open to walk in tourists the group managed to organise a coffee tasting and business background story from Arturo Morettino in their sampling room before a tour of the roasting facility and an in-depth tour of their coffee museum.

Sicily is the largest island in the Mediterranean Sea, with a typical Mediterranean climate of mild, wet winters and hot, dry summers. The island's proximity to Africa can result in higher temperatures than most areas of Italy – making it more suitable for growing coffee.

The origins of Morettino coffee, and how they developed into one of Sicily's largest producers and exporters were explained. Three coffees were sampled from three different brewing methods Chemex, mocha pot and espresso.

Two of the group operate coffee roasting facilities in the UK so the experience was a great addition to our Sicilian learning journey.



A drawing from a family friend of the 4 generations involved with Morettino Coffee

### Key Observations

- Does not grow coffee commercial volumes of coffee in Sicily, therefore not agritourism.
- Doesn't usually welcome consumers as tourists to site, also not currently food tourism.
- With current site facilities, could very easily develop into food tourism offering given consumer interest into coffee when on holiday in Palermo
- No shop or direct consumer place to buy consumer goods at end of tour and lots of party were keen to do so, huge opportunity to integrate food tourism into the business



- Coffee plants produced 30kg of beans in 2021, a first for Sicily and a great PR story and educational experiment.
- Main angle of visit was education on how they view coffee as part of Sicilian culture, really embedded into how people live
- Great assets at site, coffee tasting, video, enthusiastic, museum
- Modern efficient factory
- Mainly wholesale trade sales and training centre
- Family history a massive part of experience
- Similar coffee roasters in the UK using imported beans from the main coffee producing countries
- [Website](#) has a great range of coffee and brewing equipment for domestic and commercial markets
- Operate their own Café in Palermo and supply a discount card

### Key Learnings

- It was presumed Morettino would have a tour available to visiting day trippers and coach groups although this doesn't seem a market they are seeking to enter.
- Custom built facility is a perfect space for training and bespoke tours although no retail shop or products are available.
- Passion for coffee and Sicily is very evident in all parts of their culture.
- Group sizes of 20 would be the maximum for tasting and training in their lab due to the size and space available.
- There is an audio visual room for up to 25 people, with the video mainly in Italian so subtitles or more narration would be useful for groups from outside Italy.
- Coffee culture in Italy is different to the UK and most countries outside of Italy. Italians mostly drink espresso shots as a fuel or caffeine 'hit' up to 5 or 6 times a day usually standing for up to 10 minutes. Italians only enjoy milky coffee in the morning – never in the afternoon, and especially not after a meal!
- Italy has 20 regions all having slight variations on how their coffee is presented although espresso remains consistent throughout.







[Link](#) to a recent visit to Morettino regarding their coffee growing experiment.

[Link](#) to a guide on Italian coffee culture and its regional variations

The museum at Morettino

Arturo receiving a gift from the group

David and Stuart Fraser from [Loch Lomond Coffee](#) roasters, Balmaha, Scotland, and Alice Rendle from [Edgcumbes Tea and Coffee](#) in Sussex, England. Coffee professionals within the group managed to follow their noses to a [coffee roaster](#) in central Palermo and had a good look around during the learning journey.



## La Lumaca Madonita

Via Salvatore Cipolla, 66,

90010 Campofelice di Roccella PA,

<https://www.lumacamadonita.it>

Sicilian slow food: the success of Madonie snails. Two brothers, Michelangelo and Giuseppe Sansone, assisted by the marketing manager Davide Merlino, had the idea of relaunching snails and created a new method to obtain the delicious snail caviar within months. [Read further here.](#)

The report on this visit has been recorded and added below.

Click on the image to play the video of our visit to La Lumaca Madonita





## The Citrus Groves

On arrival at the citrus groves, the group walked along a dusty road past lemon and orange trees, eventually opening to a table set for 24 in a clearing in the shade of fruit trees. It was a dream come true for many. Since retirement, three brothers and their families farm avocado, Sicilian lemons (7,000 trees), Sicilian oranges, olives, mangoes and cherries on land originally owned by their parents, 14 hectares at the foot of the Nebrodi Mountains. [The company](#) employs 10 people and, in addition to Sicily, exports all over Europe. They also produce 3000 litres of olive oil per year.



The SLICE group enjoyed a traditional peasant's lunch with bread, olive oil, cheese, and traditional Sicilian pizza, arancini, salami, and focaccia-style sandwiches, served with fresh olives, oranges and local red wine. The whole atmosphere was very informal and enjoyable. Cakes and limoncello followed in the sunshine, with many generations of the family enjoying the ambiance and their great company. This was a truly wonderful experience – completely relaxed and very special. Because of the UK climate it could be difficult to replicate the same relaxed outside ambiance.

### Key Observations

- The relaxed atmosphere was absolutely fantastic, from arrival until leaving, with each group member being given a paper bag to pick their own fruits.
- The lemon cycle is all year round, with flowering from Oct-April, green bianchetto from May - June and ripe yellow lemons July to Sept
- The natural layout enabled wandering about the fruit trees at leisure.

### Key Learnings

- The relaxed atmosphere of the owners rubbed off on all present. Even when a litre of wine was spilled, the owners never got ruffled at all! Everyone could learn from this approach to life.
- Whilst the family don't usually host visits, this could be something they develop to extend their business, with income from booking revenue. The hospitality was fabulous, and there may be a danger of belittling the wonderful experience.



- However, an example of development might be [Bellevue Farm](#) on Arran where they have developed a visitor experience which includes options to buy the produce at the end.
- The same could happen here, generating additional income and increasing visitors' knowledge of the orchard and farming, continuing the connections between food and farming.





## **Frantoio L'Oro Di Sant'Andrea**

98070 San Salvatore di Fitalia

The Azienda Agricola L'Oro di Sant'Andrea is a small and enthusiastic family-based business pressing olives to produce olive oil and flavoured oils alongside value added preserves. They pride themselves on a modern approach, using research, modern equipment and the best manufacturing conditions to produce high quality pressed oil. Their own olive groves are managed with organic fertilisers to be eco compliant.

The group were warmly welcomed for a factory tour with the owner and his wife and some further staff to help. A table of finished goods in various sizes was ready to view and sample.

The business recently planted peach trees amongst the olive grove which they now make peach jam from, sold to consumers and retail.

The first site visited was a bottling plant, the olive processing carried out around the corner less than 1km away at a separate location. The business takes olives from across the region, producing products mainly into 5 litre tins, approx. 5,000 a year and is strict on taking only organic produce.

The family are not new to pressing olives, in fact, it is a tradition with previous generations of the family also involved in differing production and techniques over the years. The largest part of their business comes from local and regional families with olive groves, who use the pressing and bottling facility as a paid for community service.

As well as community pressing, they also sell some product to local families, restaurants and to local export markets (Germany, northern Italy Veneto). The business has carried out little marketing and sales have grown organically mainly through word of mouth within the wider community. Currently more than 500 people use the factory for private consumption purposes.

The tour of the factory was in depth, visitors were able to ask many questions around details of how the full production works, moving from the bottling facility to pressing. The group as a whole did not move together, moved from the tasting table to listening to the tour as they wished.

During the tour it was explained that olives are pressed at 32°C; a fast process which only takes 30 minutes. The oil, water and remainder of the olive is split out including the stones. 2000 kilos of olives can be processed in an hour, and the yield is around 10%, with the most popular olive variety Santagatese. Olives are harvested between September until December, sometimes into January.

The company work hard to remove all waste from their business. They turn their waste stones into a dried product that is pressed to produce a very low-quality oil. The final baked waste is double pressed and is used to burn on fires at the family home.

On leaving, the group compiled a full list of olive oil products they wished to purchase and each guest received a small sample pot of apricot jam. Purchases were made in cash as no card facilities were available.

### Key Observations

- A proud family business, very welcoming, the business approach is entrenched in the community and is an example of a truly authentic experience.
- Currently the tour is not open to the general public or private tourism tours, it is not on the tourism map, key turnover comes from local community trade.
- Tasting samples were available and staff were very welcoming but there was no ability to process direct consumer trade at site.
- The potential for prearranged private tourist tours with the opportunity to sell direct and therefore a greater margin and increased revenue potential are considerable.

### Key Learnings

- A story board type communication/ literature, perhaps with translations available via QR code or similar, would ensure the widest majority of visitors would appreciate and understand the story being told and gain more from the experience.
- Some simple wins may help, a translated website, easy and memorable URL, social media links
- A clear and simple price list and card machine ability to buy product there and then
- Engage with local tourism providers to gain traction in this environment



## **LEGA'MI**

San Salvatore di Fitalia

**LEGA'MI** is a rural self catering accommodation project initiated by Giusy Scurria during the COVID19 pandemic lockdown. During this period she was confined to her home village of San Salvatore di Fitalia in the Nebrodi region of NE Sicily and thought it was a good opportunity to use empty, but traditional houses for self-catering accommodation.

Giusy feels it is very important that 'tourism must not change the character of the place' and as part of this the houses themselves will not be changed and should all remain individual. The aim is for these houses to offer the visitor an authentic Sicilian living experience, having all being built by the owners or their descendants. The local residents who lend houses are grateful because the houses 'live again', and the SLICE visit was an inaugural one so Giusy is still to determine how village residents who are not letting properties feel and also acknowledge those who, potentially, don't want an ingress of visitors disrupting their place.

A simple but delicious breakfast was served communally on a terrace overlooking the beautiful valley and mountains. As such the village café benefitted from the arrival (and spend) of the first visitors to this new accommodation initiative.

### **Key Observations**

- The setting of San Salvatore high up in the mountains was beautiful and offered peace and tranquillity. An excellent advert for visitors to the region and a perfect place for a 'slow tourism' destination.
- The village has a population of approximately 1300, many of the younger generation have moved away because of the lack of employment opportunities. Many properties have lain empty for years.
- Houses in general were quaint, with family pictures adorning the walls and furnishings reflecting the local area. Each accommodation had a story book about the original inhabitants which added value to the stay.
- Whilst some accommodation was fine, there were concerns about general safety standards, including electrical wiring, water issues and faulty furniture.
- The standard expected of the SLICE group was perhaps too high but this could be dealt with by better provision of pre visit information.
- Breakfast was very pleasant and included refreshing granitas which weren't experienced elsewhere in Sicily, however SLICE was a large group of 25 which presented perhaps too many people at one time for a small village café.
- Evening meals were enjoyed around the region rather than in the village, this necessitated coach hire and an exit from the village, perhaps for smaller groups and families more local places could benefit from the tourist spend.

## Key Learnings

- Facilities were basic. As privileged visitors to the region, more information in advance of the stay about the concept would have been helpful and perhaps led to less concerns from those staying.
- The SLICE experience was that properties were very spread out, which divided the large group. Perhaps using properties closer together would have been more appropriate for both work and socialising. Alternatively limiting the size of a group visit may be appropriate and also have less obvious impact on the village.
- As a new initiative there will be plenty of need to assess and review how the scheme is working, particularly in relation to the village community as a whole but also to the provision or expansion of other visitor services such as local shops, cafes and other attractions eg there is the potential for more information on a village arts trail.
- Whilst the aim is that 'tourism must not change character of the place', it is key for visitors to feel safe and to maintain certain baseline standards whatever the rating of accommodation. UK examples as evidenced on the [Isle of Arran](#) and also at [East Cambusmoon Holiday Cottages](#) demonstrate.
- Basics such as providing the ability to make a hot drink or access additional blankets for cool mountain nights are important. It is excellent to offer a variety of accommodation and to maintain the integrity of LEGA'MI and retain the local charm and characteristic.



Did it work? Yes, and there is much scope for development of this project in a sensitive and considerate fashion whilst maintaining a comfortable balance between integrity of purpose on the part of the property owners and Giusy Scurria. The interests of villagers who may be enthusiastic to see progress and those who would prefer nothing to change and attracting visitors seeking an authentic stay in a special location whilst still enjoying safe standards.



## **Antico Mulino a Pietra - Arte - Tradizione - Genuinità**

[Antico Mulino a Pietra](#) pride themselves on genuine flavours of the past through the rediscovery of ancient arts and traditions, using traditional grains and techniques carefully handed down by previous generations to produce a range of flours and value-added products.

Based in the centre of Longi, the group was welcomed by the shop manager who was waiting for our group. A small shop front in the traditional village, the site opened up firstly with a front retail section and then moving towards the back, a small yet beautiful production area containing a traditional stone mill- the heart of the business.

A family run business, the mill was bought in 2007 when the mill and site were carefully renovated. The mill is made up of two heavy French stones, renowned for their hardness, turning in opposite directions grinding on each other to mill old highly traditional unprocessed grains from the region.

Seven different grains are used within the business, mostly used for their superior health benefits due to their older unaltered nature. The Tuminia grain holds a unique difference, harvested from the region of Trapaini, the Tuminia grain 30 to 40 years ago would have been lost was it not for a research project led by the slow food movement and the regional research institutions. This project was instrumental and has since led to a strong resurgence as large crops are seen and harvested across the island.

After the grain is ground, the flour passes into a sieve and is weighed into 1kg or 5kg sacks. The products have very short expiry dates, only 2 months due to being very natural products with no additives.

Two or three families use the mill for their own crops, otherwise the business buys the grain from various regional farmers. All the grain is wholegrain and therefore the finished products tend to be darker.

Packaging of flour and all value-added products highly communicates the origin of the grain and includes the three-legged symbol representing Sicily. The three legs embody the three points of the island as well as a grain symbol, representing the large-scale grain producer the island is since roman times.

### **Key Observations**

- Set up for tourists to visit, able to purchase on site, literature on site, they seemed used to guests rather than just trade visitors.
- Key branding used across the company to promote and make the most of the interest in provenance, underpinned by the use of the three-legged logo of Sicily.
- Social media handles and trip advisor logos and Slow Food membership badge seen at entrance to shop, highlighting their use of digital advertising to push visitors and trade.

- Key communications around USPs obvious on packaging regarding the use of an older heritage wholegrain which is good for the heart and diseases such as diabetes.
- Very ready with a consumer finished goods range, as well as larger pack sizes for foodservice and manufacturing.

### Key Learnings

- Very simple tour, personal, not oversubscribed and it gave the traditional touch.
- Although very small in scale the business was able to make the most of the opportunity tourism presented.
- Tourism is still a very small part of the business. First and foremost they are providing a good product for the local and wider Sicilian community, however they have also made it available for tourists to enjoy and feel comfortable and therefore the business will continue to enjoy the opportunities of business growth.



## Marullo Pistachio Company, Bronte

This is a family-owned business who process pistachios for sale around the world. [Bronte Pistachios](#) are holders of the mark DOP and renowned for their quality of taste and colour.

The pistachio trees grow in the fertile soil around Mount Etna and it is this volcanic soil with its inherent minerals that give the superior flavour and bright green colour. The pistachio trees are harvested every other year which allows for the improved quality of the nuts when they are harvested. The trees are harvested by hand. Marullo also process pistachios from other areas and countries, for example Turkey.

They make a range of pistachio products onsite alongside the raw and posted shelled nuts. These include, pastes, pesto, cream and chopped nibs. We were not able to visit the area where pastes and creams etc were made due to food security. All products made from Bronte pistachios are labelled with the DOP mark.

The SLICE group visited the primary processing area where the nuts are gathered, conditioned, de-shelled and sorted by hand by an experienced workforce. Some of the nuts are roasted and the discarded shells are used as a fuel for the roasting process.

Marullo also have a factory shop which sells a very good range of pistachio products. This is well organised for visitors as well as locals.

### Key Observations

- Long established family business
- Excellent Branding
- Clear DOP designation on products
- Good 'factory shop'.

### Key Learnings

- Good management of production by using imported nuts for processing when they run out of their own pistachios

Click on the image to play a video of our visit



- Accessibility to the public to purchase goods
- Value in processing for others even imported nuts to supplement domestic production.





## **Cavanera Etna Resort & Wine Experience**

Contrada Verzella,

Castiglione di Sicilia, 95012 (CT)

<https://cavanera.it/?lang=en>

Home of the production of Firriato wines, [Cavanera Etna Resort & Wine Experience](https://cavanera.it/?lang=en) is a beautiful estate by Mount Etna, 600 metres above sea level. Family-owned, with sister businesses elsewhere on the island, Cavanera comprises 84 hectares of vineyards, luxury accommodation, swimming pool, wine tastings and tours and a restaurant. Priding itself as “the custodians of an authentic terroir” guests are immersed in a true ‘taste of place’, experiencing the production and flavours of wine from the volcanic Mount Etna soil.

### **Key Observations**

- The most premium of the visits the SLICE group undertook with clear investment – describes itself as a “restoration and enhancement project”
- Stunning location and facilities. View of Mount Etna truly magical from the whole of the vineyard
- Talented, charming host – personality shone through and captured the attention of the audience
- Clearly set up for visitors, with polished and professional tours
- A true food tourism/agritourism experience
- Video telling the story of the winery shown in the restaurant
- High quality wine tasting and local produce dinner

Click on the image to play a video of our visit



### Key Learnings

- Personality of the host is vital –natural charm; ability to tell the story & enthuse about the product/experience
- Opportunity to buy product – the tour should inspire visitors to purchase product and make it easy for them to do so
- Visitors are looking for a ‘taste of place’ and hear the story behind the product

## Reflections on Agri and Rural Tourism in UK

Consumer trends currently focus on a growing environmental awareness, individualism and experiential forms of tailor-made travel and an increasing desire to participate with locals for a more authentic experience. Rural tourism is very much multifaceted and incorporates a range of niches (agritourism, activity, heritage, adventure, wellness, food and drink etc) which allows multiple market appeal. Tourists are attracted to differentiation and a desire for distinctiveness which is perceived to be found in a rural setting and offers a richer experiential value (Salvatore et al, 2017).

Conventionally the main source of income for rural businesses has come from agriculture. The British farming sector contributes £120 billion to the UK economy and provides 64% of food eaten in the UK, and in recent times it faces increasing ongoing challenges with climate change (Gov.UK, 2020).

Many farms and rural enterprises have chosen to diversify their business over recent years. DEFRA (2017) reported 60% of UK farms have now diversified and a further 25% of Scottish farmers planned to diversify post-Brexit. Diversification activities include renewables, property and holiday letting, livery stables, outdoor leisure and farm shops. The key motives for farm diversification according to the NFU Survey (2018) was to earn extra income (62%), extend the business opportunities to include a partner or family member (26%), future-proof farm for future generations and utilise redundant buildings/land. As reported in FarmingUK (2021), the popularity of rural farm holidays and agri-tourism has increased by 45% since 2018. This can also be said across Europe with many of the traditional farms now offering accommodation and/or farm stays.

'[Scottish Agritourism](#)' is the official body for the agritourism sector in Scotland and is said to be one of the few sectors that was enhanced as a result of the pandemic, with the rise of people wishing to experience the countryside. The sector is estimated to be worth £250 million by 2030. Compared to neighbouring countries in Europe the sector is lacking in value in Scotland. With Scotland's land mass equating to 75% agricultural, there is significant potential and opportunity to grow the Scottish agritourism market further. It was also questioned by the group that, again, the variations in definition as well as dilution between rural tourism, food tourism, farm diversification and agri tourism was not necessarily helpful.

Ollenburg (2006) claims there are two main drivers in Agritourism:

1. Firstly, changes to the agricultural sector such as structural and market adjustments, have forced farmers to pursue additional sources of income, including from agritourism and food tourism ventures.
2. Secondly, there has been an increase in city-dwellers 'desire to understand more about rural life, including an increasing desire to explore the farming origins of food

Examples of these two main drivers were observed in Sicily and apply equally to the UK.

## Concluding Thoughts and Learnings

A study carried out in 2014 whereby researchers were examining agritourism in Sicily concluded that to preserve and give value to the rural environment, the promotion of tourism and specifically agritourism and culture should be actioned (Riguccio et al, 2014). The authors of the paper go on to suggest by promoting this form of tourism it would encourage people to remain living in the countryside. As we know in Scotland, depopulation of rural and remote rural areas continues to be an ongoing issue. *“An integrated network of values and land use could be created which would provide a sound basis for developing agriculture and tourism”* (Riguccio et al, 2014). The paper suggests networks should be created to allow for many Sicilian districts to stay connected and encourage a strategic synergy in the development of tourism.

Our SLICE learning journey group discussed the value of the rural environment, the connections between food, farming and people. It was felt that using a variety of labels such as food tourism, agri tourism, rural tourism, adventure tourism and other similar niche labels has the potential to dilute the benefits to the wider industry and to the wider community. Visitors don't label themselves and usually experience a wide variety of elements within one trip. The learning group related this to experiences in Sicily as well as comparable examples in their home country.

Good quality agritourism and rural tourism experiences increase positive visitor comments and enhance visitor intention to purchase farm products and improve the public interest in agriculture. Given the steady decline of agriculture over recent decades this can only be a good thing.

Each of the Sicilian businesses visited has great potential to expand and attract visitors, however it was a key learning that not all wish to do so. It is also true that if they continue to thrive as commercial operators, for example in food production, they don't have to attract the tourist visitor themselves but can work in collaboration to promote local produce in restaurants and markets as well as distributing more widely. Sicily's position as the place with the most concentrated number of Slow Food producers is a significant achievement and another element which could be used to promote the island and its strong connections between food, farming and visitors.

Throughout the SLICE learning journey, the passion and enthusiasm evident in each business was inspiring and uplifting. After a difficult two years globally with the COVID19 pandemic these businesses have strength and vitality to continue their growth journey. The potential for growth in authentic tourism in Sicily is significant and the learnings from this journey were immensely valuable for the SLICE participants to take back to their own businesses.



## **APPENDIX**

### **Links to further reading and resources**

<https://www.agriturismo.it/en/>

<https://www.globalwellnesssummit.com/trendium/trend-farm-livin/>

<https://scottishagritourism.co.uk/>

[www.slowfood.com](http://www.slowfood.com)

<https://www.unwto.org/>

<https://www.visitsicily.info/>

<https://worldfoodtravel.org/>

<https://sicilianfoodculture.com/slow-food-presidia/>