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## Tourism Development in Rural Areas: the case of the Etna Wine Route in Sicily

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### Introduction

Tourism has many potential benefits for rural areas: a) it can be an important source of jobs for rural communities and of additional income, especially for those that are economically underdeveloped; b) it can also enhance local quality of life by the creation of synergies for infrastructures and support services in the countryside; c) it can support the local culture by encouraging restoration of historic sites; d) it is a relatively clean industry and may foster local conservation efforts.

Tourism strategies must be consistent with local goals and be sensitive to sustaining a community's character and traditions. Developing tourism that works in harmony with nature, culture and heritage is a goal of sustainable development. That sustainability both contributes to human well-being and is symbiotic with the natural environment.

The efforts to promote tourism can offer existing heritage and cultural attractions the ability to increase the profile of their operations and augment the market size and demand for their products.

The development of cultural/heritage tourism through the regional agri-food products can help to alleviate imbalances in the distribution of arts and heritage products in urban versus rural area, enhance and support the traditional culture and quality of life for residents in that area.

In recent years there is an increasing attention on the link between the marketing and promotion of agri-food regional products and tourism development within rural areas. Regional agri-food products have a great potential in qualifying tourist offer. Actually, many promotional initiatives connected to these products are taken by groups of actors inside the regional product supply chain and outside it within a strategy of the local tourist offer. But successful initiatives require an organizational structure, modern entrepreneurial culture, investments and so on, of which, almost always, rural areas result particularly poor. That makes the binomial "rural tourism development – regional agri-food products promotion" rather complex and problematic to become a concrete and effective development factor.