“Promoting Sustainable Agrifood Value Chains through linkages with tourism”

Roadmap to scale-up the linkages between small-scale agriculture and tourism in Montenegro

2020-2022
Introduction

Montenegro has a long and storied culinary heritage, linking tradition and agriculture for centuries. Today, these traditional food production practices and local cuisines are untapped resources for enriching tourism opportunities, especially in light of consumer demand that signifies high growth potential in rural hospitality activities and high-quality Montenegrin-specific foods placed in hotels and restaurants. This unrealized opportunity provides numerous prospects for economic, cultural and natural resources to provide a basis for sustainable tourism throughout Montenegro.

Since early 2018, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), in collaboration of the Ministry of Tourism and Sustainable Development (MTSD) and the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD), have worked together to enhance linkages between agriculture and tourism in Montenegro. Both Ministries are enthusiastically supportive of strengthening the link between the two sectors because, by promoting local gastronomy and traditional food as tourism experiences, benefits emerge in both the agrifood and tourism sectors. Linking the sectors supports the distribution of value additions more broadly through the country’s territory and can help limit the environmental impact of the supply chain through encouraging protection of resources that make the experiences and products unique. It also has a series of social benefits through the involvement of local stakeholders and empowerment of women in their role as the guardians of traditional food heritage, ultimately resulting in improved livelihoods of rural households and strengthened rural communities.

Building Blocks for the Roadmap

The roadmap aims to strengthen the links between agrifood producers and tourism market players, and build on the progress made and lessons learned from the pilots. This way, complementarity between this roadmap and the Ministry of Tourism’s already adopted “Program of Rural Tourism Development of Montenegro with the Action Plan 2019-2021” is ensured.

The project activities have achieved some notable results, namely: the identification of territories to support in the development of agritourism, concrete linkages to the tourism market by supporting commercialization through improved packaging and labelling, food safety analyses and product declarations, and Ministerial registrations of processed agricultural products and rural tourism households. The current legal and institutional frameworks (Law on Tourism with elements for rural tourism, MTSD National Rural Tourism Program, MARD Agrobudget rural development measures) were informed by the gap analysis, the technical knowledge exchanges in Austria and Italy, and several national workshops:

- National workshop on linking small-scale food producers to hotels and restaurants
- National workshop on issues and prospects for the successful linkage of local gastronomy and rural tourism featuring international experiences of Croatia, Slovenia, Austria and Slow Food International
- National workshop and policy dialogue on Katuns and Tourism – Opportunities and Obstacles

Since the legal and institutional frameworks are now in place, both from the tourism and agricultural and rural development sides (framework on quality schemes and harmonization of incentives for rural development and agritourism), the roadmap will define the way forward in terms of addressing remaining gaps. From the supply side, this includes developing producers’, especially smallholders, capacities to connect and market or provide agritourism services. From the demand side, there are persistent

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1Reports can be found at [http://www.eastagri.org/projectcorner/index.php?id=139](http://www.eastagri.org/projectcorner/index.php?id=139)
constraints regarding the tourism market expectations and requirements in relation to both HORECA sector and rural tourism.

Main stakeholders

The engagement of key stakeholders, especially in the private sector, is instrumental to successfully implement the roadmap.

The following stakeholders are on board to implement the roadmap:

- **Private sector:** This includes HORECA (hotel, restaurant and catering) segment actors throughout Montenegro, GI associations, producer associations, local IT enterprises such as Seljak.me, rural households and small-scale producers of quality and traditional agricultural products, tour operators both in Montenegro and abroad, relevant sector business associations in Montenegro such as the newly-formed national Rural Tourism Association (RTA). RTA is a key stakeholder not only in terms of its membership body, but also because of its critical role in advocacy and strengthening the drivers of successful rural tourism: coordination, cooperation and networks.
- **Civil society:** local and regional tourism organizations such as EUROGITES and Campagna Amica, non-profit development partners such as the Regional Development Agency of Bijelasica, Komovi and Prokletije in Montenegro and , and expert networks throughout the Balkans, European and Caucasus regions.
- **Public authorities:** MARD, MTSD and municipal administrations.

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“By ourselves we go fast, together we go further.”

Owing to the continuous evolution of the enabling institutional environment that is in place, opportunities and potential for small-scale producers and rural households to access the tourism sector are growing every day. Still, a lot remains to be done to strengthen capacities of small-scale and traditional farmers to benefit from this context. Actions should address improving the forward and backward linkages to this potential expanding market. In complementarity to the initiatives under the MTSD Program of Rural Tourism Development, MARD quality and rural development policies, the following paths for action and recommended tasks have been identified to better link smallholder agrifood producers engaged in quality production to the tourism sector and ensure sustainable benefits.

1. DEVELOP CAPACITY IN RURAL TOURISM FOR SMALL-SCALE PRODUCERS, RURAL HOUSEHOLDS AND ASSOCIATIONS.

   a. Through learning from the innovative experiences of rural tourism associations in the Balkans, European and Caucasus regions:

      Tasks
      1. Develop the capacity of the national RTA to better support members still facing grey zones in registration procedures, on food safety and hygiene standards for rural households serving guests, and on some sectoral regulations (e.g. collection of herbs and non-wood forest products) important for local gastronomy and tourist experiences.

      Main Stakeholders for Implementation
      2. RTA and membership, local and regional network of experts and development partners such as the Regional Development Agency of Bijelasica, Komovi and Prokletije, local tourism organizations and and regional tourism associations such as EUROGITES or Campagna Amica agritourism network, MARD (including rural development and food inspection directorate) and MTSD.

      Main Activities:
      3. Field visits, knowledge exchanges and technical workshops.

      Timeline: throughout 2020-2022

   b. Through improving business and marketing skills of rural tourism households and small-scale producers:

      Tasks
      4. Support the capacity development of new and existing producer associations/groups (including GIs) and their members to prepare bankable business plans to finance
investments, and to strengthen capacity in association financial management to increase transparency and trust.

5. Develop the capacity of local producers and other local stakeholders to develop and run gastronomic experiences that enrich the touristic offerings of the targeted destination, by offering other activities in addition to the accommodation and meals. These include ideas such as visits to production facilities, taste workshops, “do it yourself”, i.e. harvest and food preparation activities for tourists, trekking to katun pastures to visit production facilities, etc., and include support in going through the legal and administrative procedures.

6. Continue to strengthen the gastroroute developed under the project, build on lessons learned and good practices to scale up and develop a new gastroroute from one of the project identified destinations. This involves building a solid network amongst traditional food producers and differentiation of each gastronomic offer from one another, so as not to compete over the same tourists. By each producer specifying their offer and making it a truly unique experience the overall offer of the targeted destination and length of tourist stay and consumption should improve.

Main Stakeholders for Implementation

7. Producer and GI associations, EBRD Advice for Small Businesses, RTA and membership, local chefs, local and regional network of experts and development partners such as the Regional Development Agency of Bijelasica, Komovi and Prokletije, local tourism agencies, local tourism organizations, municipalities, MTSD, MARD.

Main Activities:

8. Field visits, coaching, knowledge exchanges and technical workshops; design and dissemination of promotion materials and signalization.

Timeline: second semester 2020-2022

2. SUPPORT BACKWARDS LINKAGES TO THE HORECA SECTOR

Tasks:

9. Develop capacity of HORECA buyers in local sourcing through meetings and development of guidelines and infographics for HORECA/retail managers that promote backward linkages and inclusive sourcing of traditional quality products.

10. Develop capacities of chefs nationally through training in the preparation of traditional dishes and creative integration of local specialties in menus and support design and dissemination of related materials.

11. Support the alliance of cooks and chefs committed to using local, artisan, and traditional products in their menus.

12. Promote direct exchanges between registered producers and the HORECA sector through business matching and facilitating B2B linkages on a web platform and through local fairs, workshops, discussions.

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3 FAO/EBRD “Identification of rural gastrotourism destinations in Montenegro” report available upon request
13. Provide technical and business advice to small-scale producers and associations to strengthen the competitiveness and quality of value added products.

**Main Stakeholders for Implementation**

14. Producer and GI associations, local IT enterprises such as Seljak.me, HORECA associations such as the Montenegro Tourism Association, HORECA procurement managers, corporate affairs representatives and chefs (e.g. Regent Porto Montenegro, Davidovic bakeries, Chedi Lustica etc), EBRD Advice for Small Businesses, RTA and membership, local and regional network of experts, national Chefs Association, hospitality educators and chefs/hotel managers in training.

**Main Activities:**

15. coaching, training, and technical workshops; IT services; design and printing of promotional material (menus, packaging, brochures)

**Timeline: second semester 2020-2022**

3. **INTEGRATE AND PROMOTE GEOGRAPHICAL INDICATIONS AS PART OF THE DESTINATIONS**

**Tasks:**

16. Strengthening of existing and new GI associations to facilitate synergies between GI associations, i.e. create a network of GI associations, develop a joint promotional campaign on GI and the territories, support the creation of baskets of GI products both B2C and B2B.

17. Work with GI associations to develop specific packaging, branding and organization of events (e.g. local festivals) and/or products roads (gastronomic roads and travel tours) that promote specific products/value chains in tourism markets, i.e. organization of a GI fair in the coastal region or GI route.

18. Support GI associations to develop an approach to promotion and consumer education, including the development of association websites and social media strategies.

19. Negotiate with local tourist attractions, restaurants, hotels and shops in the relevant territory for better product placement and promotion of the GI labels, as well as consumer education products.

20. Collaborate on a strategy with the national rural tourism association to develop information and tourism products based on GI products and gastronomy i.e. excursions, site visits and souvenirs.

**Main Stakeholders for Implementation**

21. Local and regional GI associations, HORECA associations such as the Montenegro Tourism Association, EBRD Advice for Small Businesses, local IT enterprises for website development and Seljak.me for B2B promotion of geographical indications, RTA and membership, local and regional network of experts, local tourism agencies, local and regional tourism associations.

**Main Activities:**

22. field visits, coaching, knowledge exchanges, technical advice and workshops
4. **SPREAD THE WORD! RAISE AWARENESS AND PROMOTE LOCAL FOOD AND AGRITOURISM**

**Tasks:**
23. Coordinate among NGOs, local tourism operators, Rural Tourism Association, GI associations and producer associations to support a unified approach to product development, enhancement, marketing and promotion.
24. Work with small-scale and traditional food producers to raise consumer awareness and add value through improved narrative labelling of traditional products, emphasizing features such as their unique characteristics, link to origin, traditional know-how and/or production process.
25. Raise awareness of traditional gastronomy and agritourism activities at the regional level through engagement of social media influencers and press familiarization tours, such as “good, better, homemade”.
26. Raise awareness of traditional gastronomy through participation in local, regional and international food fairs and online media.

**Main Stakeholders for Implementation**
27. Producer and GI associations, RTA and membership, local and regional network of experts, the Regional Development Agency of Bijelasica, Komovi and Prokletije, local tourism agencies, local and regional media, local and regional tourism associations such as EUROGITES or Campagna Amica and Coldiretti network, MARD and NTO.

**Main Activities:**
28. field visits, organization and participation in food fairs and press familiarization tours, coaching, technical advice and technical workshops

**Timeline: second semester 2020-2022**