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[Culinary tourism as a stimulator of local agrifood production: the actual status and potential prospects in the island of Santorini]

Small Cycladic islands have historically been places forced to attain food autonomy, as they are circumscribed territories subject to poor soils, scarce water resources and strong winds. Islanders depended on their ingenuity and hard work to produce staples that could adjust to the harsh local landscape. This was certainly the case for Santorini, a small and remote island of the Aegean Sea. The island has a long standing specialization to a limited number of crops marked by its terroir, mainly viniculture, fava and cherry tomatoes, that provided a poor, marginally adequate, diet for the local population.

Since late 1970s Santorini has become one of the major tourist destinations in the Mediterranean. In this framework, low productivity agricultural land has followed a spectacular reduction in favour of profitable tourist-related activities. Needless to say that the reduced local agri-food production is unable to offer any kind of food autonomy in the island. The prevailing tourism model provides, to a large extent, international nutrition patterns making extensive use of cheap standardized imported goods close to the nutritional preferences of the 'average' international client. These developments have led to a notable disruption of longstanding agrifood productive systems, the abandonment of local specialties and the gradual loss of local identity, as well as, a critical degradation of the natural landscape and increased intraregional inequalities.

In this framework, one after another regional governments and local communities use food or culinary tourism as a powerful tool to regenerate rural economies, to sustain their rich agricultural heritage and preserve diverse regional identities. Culinary tourism can take several forms: visits to farms and local processing firms, food festivals, cooking classes, trails through the history of artisanal products, food tastings, or just a good meal in a local hotel or restaurant. The substitution of several imported agrifood products by locally sourced food is expected to stimulate the local productive base, revitalize forgotten local production systems and traditional skills and reduce food miles. Moreover, the exposure of tourists at local, authentic food and different cultures enhances their experiences and demotes global food homogenization and the erosion of local culture.

The presentation aims to shed some light on the current interface and the potential prospects between the local agriculture and tourism in Santorini. It is based on the results of extended field work survey with key-informants, local farmers, cooperatives and hospitality businesses implementing on the island.

The paper focuses on the following three group of questions:

It is widely accepted that local food and local gastronomy have become an integral part of the tourists' experience and a stimulator of rural development. What is the actual and potential

market for local food in Santorini? What is the appeal of local products to visitors? What are the perceptions of tourists to “local” products? Are there any notable variations related to the origin and the income of visitors? What are the views and priorities of the local hospitality related businesses?

What are the main forms of culinary tourism found on the island? Local food and culinary offering for who and what is the social impact for local communities? What are their actual linkages to the local economy?

The synergies between the two sectors remain limited. What are the main challenges and opportunities of the strengthening the ties between local agriculture and hospitality business in the island? What are the views of different stakeholder groups? Are there any collective actions on behalf of the farmers?

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