

HOW DO ORGANIC FARMERS VIEW TOURISM?

PERCEPTIONS OF FARMERS IN ALT EMPORDÀ (CATALONIA)

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ABSTRACT. The aim of this research was to relate the two very different sectors of agriculture and tourism through a study of the perceptions held by a specific group of farmers in the Catalan region of *Alt Empordà* (NE Spain). This group consisted of farmers whose farms were registered in the official organic farm register in Catalonia, whilst selection of the study area was directly based on the fact that this region constitutes the heart of the *Costa Brava* tourist area, one of the most emblematic territorial brand in the whole of Spain owing both to the number of visitors it receives and its long tradition in the tourism sector. Through semi-structured personal interviews focusing on a series of territorial issues, we aimed: a) to determine the current opinion held by representatives of this group of the phenomenon of tourism, b) to determine whether these actors think that rural tourism affects their farms and in what way; c) to ascertain whether these producers consider their production process a tourism resource, and d) to investigate the possibility of combining their current farming operation with an agritourism business. The answers to these questions were manifold, and ranged across the spectrum from those who were extremely critical and skeptical of the phenomenon and its principal actors, to those who had already begun to take the first steps towards combining both activities. **Keywords** Organic farmers, perception, tourism, Costa Brava.

RESUMEN. El presente trabajo pretende vincular dos sectores diferenciados como son el agrario y el turístico a través del estudio de la percepción que tiene un determinado colectivo de agricultores en la comarca catalana del *Alt Empordà* (NE de España). El colectivo referido es el de los agricultores y ganaderos que tienen sus explotaciones inscritas en el registro oficial de la agricultura ecológica de Cataluña, y la elección del marco territorial está vinculada directamente con el hecho de que esta comarca es el corazón de la marca turística *Costa Brava*, una de las más emblemáticas del conjunto de España por número de visitantes y por tradición. A través de una entrevista personalizada semiestructurada que trataba un conjunto de temas territoriales se pretendió: a) conocer la opinión que les merece el fenómeno del turismo a los representantes de ese colectivo; b) saber si esos actores piensan que el turismo rural influye en sus explotaciones y en qué manera; c) averiguar si esos productores consideran sus producciones como un recurso turístico; y, d) indagar acerca de la posibilidad de compatibilizar su explotación actual con un negocio de agroturismo. Las respuestas a estas preguntas fueron múltiples y abarcaron todos los espectros desde los más críticos y escépticos con el

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fenómeno y sus protagonistas, hasta los que ya habían comenzado a dar los primeros pasos para compatibilizar ambas actividades. **Palabras clave.** Agricultores ecológicos, percepción, turismo, Costa Brava.

RESUMO. O presente trabalho pretende interligar dois sectores diferenciados – agricultura e turismo – através do estudo das percepções veiculadas por um coletivo de agricultores do concelho catalão de *Alt Empordà* (NE de Espanha). O coletivo referido é o dos agricultores e ganadeiros que possuem as suas explorações inscritas no registo oficial da agricultura ecológica da Catalunha, e a escolha desta unidade territorial está diretamente relacionada com o facto de que este concelho ser o coração da marca turística *Costa Brava*, uma das mais emblemáticas de Espanha pela sua tradição e número de visitantes. Através de uma entrevista personalizada semi-estruturada, centradas num conjunto de temas territoriais, pretendeu-se: a) conhecer a opinião dos agricultores e ganadeiros sobre o fenómeno do turismo; b) saber se esses atores pensam que o turismo rural tem influência nas suas explorações e de que maneira; c) averiguar se esses produtores consideram as suas produções como um recurso turístico; e, d) indagar acerca da possibilidade de compatibilizarem a sua exploração atual com um negócio de agroturismo. As respostas a estas perguntas foram diversificadas e abarcaram todos o espectro, desde as mais críticas e séticas face ao fenómeno e seus protagonistas, até aos que já começaram a dar os primeiros passos para compatibilizar as duas atividades. **Palavras chave.** Agricultores ecológicos, percepção, turismo, Costa Brava.

INTRODUCTION

In this study, we attempted to link two *a priori* separate worlds; agriculture, and more specifically, organic farming, and tourism in an intensely anthropized area, represented in this case by the Catalan region of *Alt Empordà*, a benchmark space within the *Costa Brava* tourist resort, one of the most internationally famous tourism regions of all Spain. Before entering into the main subject of this paper, it should be noted that within the context of European countries, Spain has the most declared organic agricultural land, with over 1,650,000 hectares (Spanish Ministry of Agriculture, 2011) devoted to this mode of production. At the same time, Spain is second only to France in the number of international tourists received, with more with more than 52 million in 2010 (UNWTO, 2011), and is also the country which receives the most income from this activity.

This paper is organized as follows: first, we present an introduction focusing on the link between agriculture and tourism, followed by a schematic description of the main geographical characteristics of this region, so attractive from a tourism point of view. Next, we will give a brief explanation of the phenomenon of organic farming in terms of its territorial significance in the study area. This information is contextualized at local, regional and country level in an attempt to demonstrate the growing importance of an economic sector that is of great territorial significance. In the following section, a description of tourism in the study area is given, demonstrating that this is not an isolated phenomenon in the present configuration of the region, but on the contrary, is the principal socioeconomic activity. In the main section of this article, we report the results obtained from fieldwork conduct-

ed with organic farmers concerning their perspectives and views on tourism. Lastly, we will present the conclusions drawn from this study.

The relationship between tourism and agriculture is not new. For several years now, these two sectors have competed for use of land in rural areas with a highly attractive landscape. The mode of tourism known as agritourism¹, which could be considered one of the positive examples of a marriage between both sectors (Telfer & Wall, 1996), first emerged as a notable phenomenon in Europe in the decade of the 70s (Bourlet, 2002), although similar practices in nineteenth century Britain may be considered pioneering experiences, and was eventually consolidated under the general umbrella known as rural tourism in the 90's. Indeed, the forms of tourism encompassed within the concept of rural tourism, of which agritourism is just one, have for some time constituted one of the cornerstones of Rural Development policies promoted for and by the EU. These policies can be understood in the context of a process of change in which European rural societies have moved from a traditional pre-productivist model to industrial productivism and from this latter to postproductivism, leading to the introduction of multifunctionality and the tertiary sector in rural areas (Bielza, 1999). In addition, agritourism is sometimes viewed as a means of revitalizing marginal areas from an economic point of view, although its success is conditioned by factors of access to the market and the inherent characteristics of the agricultural business (Jafari, 2002). In this respect, it could be said that agritourism, in addition to being seen as an opportunity for diversification in agriculture, can also be interpreted as an experience associated with the concept of entrepreneurship in rural areas (Polovitz Nickerson, Black & McCool, 2001).

For the consolidation of agritourism, the following conditions must be met (Kasperek, 2004):

- The existence of a largely natural landscape or a cultural landscape comprising small, well structured spaces;

- In addition to the beauty of the landscape, other attractions such as those of a cultural, historic or natural history nature must also be present;

- The location must be easily accessible, possessing good connections with the principal transportation routes;

- Certain infrastructures (transport, accommodation, restaurants, etc.) must be available;

- Political stability in the region is a fundamental prerequisite;

- The acceptance of such initiatives among the local population is essential.

Indisputably, all of these conditions are met in the region of *Alt Empordà*, as will be seen from the geographical description given in the following section.

The main geographical characteristics of Alt Empordà

The *Alt Empordà* district is located in the northeast corner of the Autonomous Community of Catalonia, in north eastern Spain. It covers a surface area of 1357 km², bordering France to the north and two other Catalan regions, the *Garrotxa* and *Pla de l'Estany*, to the west. To the east it forms the northern half of the Costa Brava tourist area, bounded by the Mediterranean Sea, while its neighboring districts to the south are *Baix Empordà* and *Gironès* (Fig. 1).

Figure1. Location of the study area



From the physical point of view, three main factors should be emphasized which together help to endow this region with a very distinctive character. The first of these is the mountainous terrain to the north and west forming part of the Pyrenean foothills, which extend as far as the Mediterranean Sea itself. This phenomenon is largely responsible for a coastal morphology where cliffs abound, conferring the basic characteristic for which this region is famed as a tourist resort. Alluvial plains predominate to the east and south, colloquially known as the *Plana del Empordà*. And lastly, there are the areas adjoining the highest mountainous terrain in the north, traditionally known as the *Aspres*, and the rolling terrain, or *Terraprimers*, in the southwest. In addition, the Muga and Fluvià Rivers, two of the most important rivers in the Catalan Mediterranean coastal area, flow through this region. As regards climate, the region can be defined as Mediterra-

nean maritime, although with subtle distinctions in the highest parts, where the relief reaches a maximum elevation of 1,443 m, and the climate in these areas could be defined as pre-Pyrenean eastern Mediterranean. The summers are usually hot and dry and winters are usually mild, with average temperature of just over 15 ° C in the warmest areas, and 12 ° C in the coldest, highest parts of the district. Rainfall is irregular throughout the year, with maximum precipitation normally occurring in spring and autumn, and ranges from 500 mm annually in the far south to over 1,100 mm in the mountains to the north (Clavero, Martín Vide & Raso, 1997). From a climatic point of view, one of the most remarkable features of *Alt Empordà*, and one which exerts a strong influence on the district, is the *Tramuntana*, a strong wind from the north or north west which has traditionally conditioned the life of the inhabitants there, and which is exploited for those sports that depend on the existence of sustained winds. The natural vegetation occurring as a consequence of these climatic gradations presents a predominance of Mediterranean taxa together with a fair number of Euro-Siberian species in transitional climate areas.

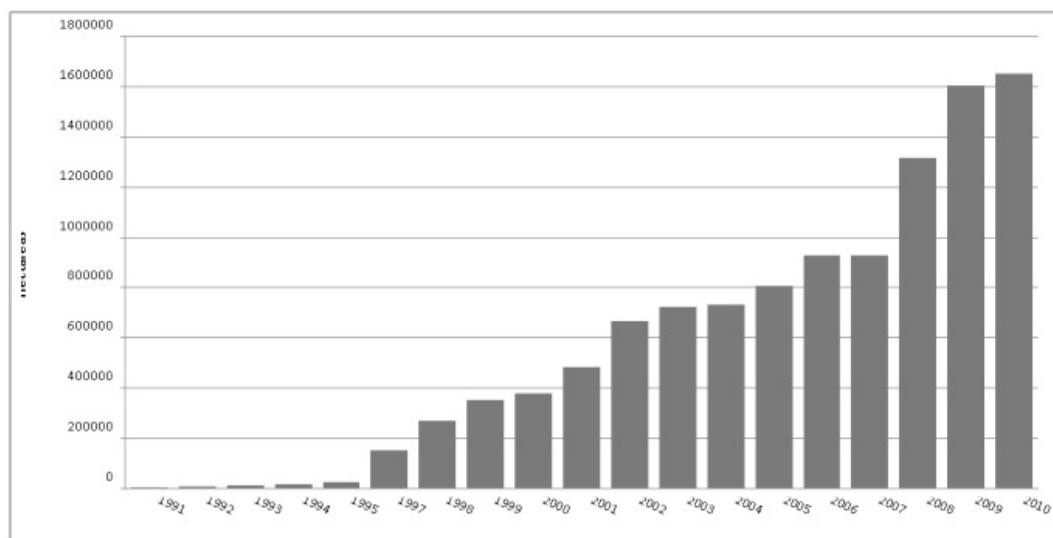
The most noteworthy aspects of the human geography of the district can be summarized by a few figures referring to the population and the economy. Thus, in 2010 the *Alt Empordà* district had a population of 140,262 inhabitants (103 inhabitants/km²), 40% more than in 1986, and 53% more than in 1900. A preliminary interpretation of these data suggests that this is one of the Catalan regions that have experienced the most demographic expansion in the last 15 years. Several factors help explain this, all related to the region's scenic attractions and / or socioeconomic development. The district capital of Figueres has a population of 44,255 inhabitants (31% of the district total).

As regards the economy, the service sector is the strongest economic sector, representing 72.5% of Gross Value Added (GVA), followed by the construction sector, representing 15.2%, industry (8.7%) and lastly, agriculture (3.6%). The proportion of the population employed in these sectors is fairly similar to the GVA figures.

Some data explaining the importance of organic agricultural production in Catalonia

Organic farming in Catalonia is a booming sector (Armesto, 2008). Implementation in the region has not stopped its upward trend since data began to be collected towards the end of the 80s (Fig. 2). At present, a total surface area of 83,506 ha is registered with the Catalan Council of Organic Agricultural Production (CCEAP), representing 5% of all agricultural land.

Figure 2. The development of certified organic agricultural land (ha) in Spain (1991-2010)



Within the context of Spain (Table 1), Catalonia is the fourth region in terms of surface area registered for organic agricultural production, surpassed only by much larger Autonomous Community regions such as Andalusia, Extremadura and Castile - La Mancha. The somewhat more than 83,500 ha of certified organic agricultural production in Catalonia represents 5% of total agricultural land. Just as Catalonia is notable for the extent of its organic agricultural production, so too it is notable for the number of agents involved in the processes of production (occupying fifth place for the whole of Spain), processing (second), importation (first) and marketing (second) of the resulting products.

In terms of the study area (*Alt Empordà*), there is a total of 3,987 ha of certified organic agricultural land, principally given over to pasture, meadow and forage crops and farmed by a total of 29 producers. Of these, 9 rear livestock, mainly cattle.

Schematic notes on the concept of rural tourism and agritourism in Catalonia

Focusing on the importance of the tourism sector in the district, the data speak for themselves; of the 1,199 tourist accommodation units available in the Costa Brava resort, 378 are located in the study area. There are 210 hotels in the district, 34 campsites and 134 rural tourism establishments (representing 36% of the total tourism offer).

In Decree 313/2006 of 25 July regulating rural tourism establishments, the autonomous government of Catalonia (*Generalitat de Catalunya*) established its own classification of rural tourism accommodation, consonant with the territorial reality of the country. The Decree defines what is considered a rural establishment in Catalonia: “(...) those habitually providing and charging for accommodation for tourists in rooms or rural dwellings.” These must be located in rural areas, in or

outside villages of less than 1,000 inhabitants, and must be in buildings constructed before 1950 which respect the architectural style of the area. Rural tourism establishments are classified into two main types:

a) *Cases de pagès* or agritourism establishments: those in which the owner or farmer obtains his or her income according to the standard criteria of the Department of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries of the *Generalitat de Catalunya*, enabling users to learn about the tasks and activities carried out on the farm with which they are associated.

b) Rural accommodation: those in which the owner is not required to obtain his or her income from agriculture; however, depending on the model, residence in the house or district in question may be a requirement.

Table 1: Size and number of organic farms in Spain (2010)

	Organic Farming Surface Area (ha)	Number of organic farms	Organic surface area/organic farms (ha)
Andalusia	879,859	9,923	88.67
Aragon	70,440	757	93.05
Asturias	18,283	348	52.54
Balearic Islands	28,000	501	55.89
Canary Islands	3,669	746	4.91
Cantabria	6,260	148	42.30
Castile-La Mancha	259,419	4,730	54.85
Castile and León	26,356	368	71.62
Catalonia	83,506	1,247	66.97
Extremadura	95,417	3,603	26.48
Galicia	14,163	484	29.26
Madrid	6,355	214	29.70
Murcia	61,398	2,272	27.02
Navarre	30,771	586	52.51
La Rioja	8,542	234	36.50
The Basque Country	1,770	251	7.05
A.C. of Valencia	56,628	1,465	38.65
TOTAL SPAIN	1,650,866	27,877	59.22

In Catalonia today (Catalan Institute of Statistics, 2011), the number of rural establishments amounts to 2,034, a not inconsiderable figure compared to the same figure twenty years earlier, in 1990, when only 109 establishments were declared as such. Thus, it can be stated that during this period there has been a veritable explosion of the phenom-

enon in Catalonia (Cors, 2010b). It was between 2000 and 2006 that this remarkable increase occurred, caused by widespread registration on the scheme of owners in the districts surrounding Girona, including most of those involved in this activity in the area of *Alt Empordà*. It is in this area that distribution of the different types of rural accommodation is most balanced (Cors, 2010b). This situation is not unique to Empordà or Catalonia, but has also arisen in many other rural areas of Spain (Pulido & Cárdenas, 2011).

In the present research, as mentioned earlier, stakeholders in the agricultural sector were not only asked for their views on ecological tourism as a phenomenon in a broad sense, but were also questioned about the possibility of diversifying their agricultural business by introducing the first of the rural accommodation models defined in the above-mentioned legislative Decree.

The perception of tourism held by organic farmers in the alt empordà

An analysis of the interviews reveals a variety of opinions, sometimes contrasting, on the nature of tourism in *Alt Empordà*. In this section, we present the results obtained from encoding and analysis of the interviews conducted with selected organic agricultural producers in the study area.

NOTES ON METHODOLOGY

The unit of analysis for this study was the farmer, and consequently the farm, although the objective was to identify characteristic traits of the perception of tourism in the agricultural district of *Alt Empordà*. The farmers on which this study focused were administered an in-depth, semi-structured interview which combined open and closed questions, and no pre-determined time limit was set for completion.

Farmers were interviewed, their farms visited and the area was inspected individually and independently of the farmers. In addition to providing data on the subject of the study, these interviews with the farmers also yielded information concerning their attitudes and ideas about landscape, how the farm was managed and the history of the farm and the farmer. Once each farm had been characterized using a series of general items, the subject of the study presented here, tourism, was addressed in conversation. Fieldwork was conducted in the spring of 2011. Of the 24 potential subjects identified as producers within the study area², 14 participated, and these comprised the study sample. All the subjects were interviewed in situ on their farms, with the exception of one who attended the interview in a public building in the capital of the municipality where he resided. When selecting

the sample, the landscape category to which the farms belonged was taken into consideration in order for all categories to be represented, as far as possible. Nevertheless, to simplify the results and guarantee interviewee anonymity, the landscape categories in *Alt Empordà* were reduced to three: mountains, plains (*la Plana*) and hills.

Interviewee characteristics

All the farmers interviewed owned their farms, with the exception of one case where the interviewee was one of the sons of the owner and an active member of the family business. In total, five women and eight men were interviewed. On some occasions, the interview took place in the presence of other family members who also worked on the farm. These ended up participating in the interview, and thus three more people contributed a significant number of observations which were extremely pertinent to the study. Subjects were aged between 35 and 74.

Most of the interviewees were full-time farmers, although three reported working only part-time on their farms. The majority practiced exclusively organic farming on their farms, although again, three reported maintaining some conventional production. Three of the interviewees transformed their produce on their own farms. In general, the majority of the people working on the farm were family members, although four farms also employed contracted labor on either a full- or part-time basis.

Farms varied widely in size, ranging from 7 ha to over 1,000 ha, but the most common size was between 25 and 50 ha. The farms produced a wide range of products, but in general terms the most frequent types of production were forage crops, livestock (beef, sheep and goats), cereals, fruit and vegetables.

Tourism as perceived by organic farmers in Alt Empordà

In this section, we present the results of the field work. The section has been divided into four sub-sections in which we explain the findings of our research.

General opinion of tourism.

In answer to a question as generic as that with which the questionnaire on perceptions of tourism opened, “What is your opinion of the phenomenon of tourism?”, it would seem logical to expect a wide range of different responses. Thus, there were some interviewees who immediately responded with a question of their own: What kind of tourism? Therefore, a first conclusion was that a considerable number of the organic farmers interviewed clearly differentiated between types of tourism, or to put it another way, they had internalized a series of

tourism typologies. This was clearly based on two main factors. Firstly, the social importance and an understanding of the economic phenomenon behind the Spanish economic boom over the last fifty years and, secondly, the direct experience of the majority of the interviewees, whose farms were located in the immediate hinterland of what is perhaps the most scenic coastline, historically exploited by the agents and customers of Spain's sun and sand tourism model.

Once the question had been clarified by stating that what mattered in this case were their thoughts on the phenomenon of tourism in general, the responses were overwhelmingly positive. Eight of those interviewed did not hesitate to say that tourism had more virtues than faults, while only three openly declared themselves critical of tourism, probably influenced by very specific individual circumstances which clearly conditioned their negative response. At the same time, another three respondents could be said to have given an ambiguous response, differentiating between types of tourism; in this case, the sun and sand model was considered entirely detrimental, whilst the beneficial model fell within the broad category that is the concept of rural tourism.

Below, we illustrate each of these perspectives of the phenomenon with direct quotes from the interviews with organic farmers; "direct" in so far as the fieldwork was conducted in Catalan, the mother tongue of all the interviewees. Consequently, this language was used in order to create a most comfortable atmosphere in what is always a slightly stressful situation, the interview, and subsequently translated into English. Interviewees are identified below with a capital letter referring to the typology into which they fell on this question and with a random order number to preserve the anonymity of the interviewee.

Positive opinions.

The producer from farm A1 said: "*Tourism is fantastic, it is the only driving force that remains*", in reference to the important role tourism plays in the local economy. Similarly, A4 considered tourism to be of "*great economic and cultural importance*". The farmer responsible for farm A5 also believed that tourism "*is the future of the area*". It should be borne in mind that the interviews were conducted during the spring of 2011, when the national and international economic context was characterized by an intensification of the crisis, giving rise therefore to uncertainty about the viability of the farmers' own businesses.

The producer interviewed on farm A2 said: "*The region has improved thanks to tourism*", making direct reference to improvements in road infrastructures and the provision of social services in places constituting a major tourist attraction.

The producer from farm A3 considered that “*tourism also gives us life*”, in reference to the marketing possibilities of organic products, since sales doubled in the summer months, precisely because of the greater influx of tourists. This opinion was also shared by three other producers.

Negative opinions.

The owner of farm B1 indicated that “*Tourism is a danger to the region*”, above all in allusion to the lack of awareness of the true meaning of “*rurality*” which she had experienced. With her remark “*We are not here for people to take photos of us*”, she summarized succinctly the complaint that farmers were considered as an endangered species confined to a reservation, which can be visited and disturbed as if they were a theme park attraction. She identified the origin of these “*annoying*” visitors as the large metropolitan area of Barcelona and non-Mediterranean countries such as Belgium, Holland and Germany, the main international countries of origin of Costa Brava tourists.

The respondent from farm B2 unwittingly reinforced the previous opinion, considering that tourism “*caused more trouble than good*”, and added in a clear sign of pragmatism that she was not interested in the phenomenon itself because it “*was not a source of any personal benefit*”.

More ambiguous opinions.

The owner of farm C1 held contrasting opinions depending on the type of tourist, although her initial premise was that every tourist is “*a little selfish*”. Thus, her ambiguity was exemplified in the argument that “*there are foreign tourists who know nothing of the region after coming to the same place for twenty years*”, whereas she considered that Spanish tourists were “*very good*” because “*these are the people who enable producers to earn money*”. Another of those interviewed, the owner of C3, agreed with this opinion, emphasizing that “*Hotel tourism and rural tourism are completely different*”, and classifying his own tourism as being always of the rural kind.

The influence of rural tourism on farms.

This second question was intended to elicit the interviewees’ opinion of the possible relationships between their organic farms and rural tourism. On the basis of their responses it is possible to gain an understanding of how the phenomenon of rural tourism affects the dynamics of their own farms. Initially, only two possible options appeared, affirmative, the response of nine of the respondents, and negative (the remaining five), but subsequent explanations revealed some interesting nuances that may help in interpreting these relationships.

Affirmative answers.

In turn, a distinction can be made between those who felt that rural tourism had a positive influence on their organic farms and those who believed that there were indeed some influences, but that these were of a negative nature. To illustrate this diversity, we will start with examples of the positive comments. Thus, the farmer from farm A6 alluded to the “*respectful attitudes of true rural tourists*”, attributing tourists who practice rural tourism with an instinctive positive authenticity which he felt predominated among them. This same farmer introduced a variable that could prove to be very interesting in a relational analysis between the two productive sectors, considering the “*educational aspect for the farmer*” of tourism, as a phenomenon capable of presenting the world differently from the basic concepts that might be held by farmers. Some farmers, such as the one from farm A1, went beyond the economic assessment made by the farmer from A2: “*Rural tourism has increased my farm’s sales*”. He linked his agricultural activity with the resurgence of traditional celebrations related to harvest cycles or livestock handling, from the perspective of the educational role played by the organization of festivals open to the public where these traditional skills were displayed. Another idea worth mentioning was expressed by the owner of C3, who felt that rural tourism contributed to the economic diversification of the family unit, thereby helping to “*maintain the practice of farming*”.

However, there were also a number of producers who did not consider the influence of rural tourism on their agricultural businesses to be as positive as the others. For the farmer from B1, rural tourism generated problems among neighbors (given that her farm bordered the property of a rural tourism business which was not involved in agritourism). Her main complaint was that owners of rural tourism establishments were often people who had no relationship with the land and therefore did not manage it beyond caring for the space adjacent to the building, usually used as a garden. The remaining property, which sometimes accounts for up to 75% of the land, was left abandoned: consequently, spontaneous regeneration of Mediterranean woods and scrub occurred, which in the absence of any management posed a great danger to society as a whole due to the risk of wildfire. Other examples of problems associated with rural tourism were expressed by the owner of A7, who stated that tourists caused him a lot of headaches because they often broke the wire fences surrounding his wooded property, where he grazed his flocks, in order to take pictures, or they opened gates but did not close them again behind them, thus allowing livestock to stray. On another two farms (A5 and A6), the respondents referred to specific problems arising from the misuse made by some visitors of the paths and fields on their farms. In both

cases, the complaints were the same, referring to the irresponsible use of motor vehicles, which in recent years have proliferated substantially (quads, mountain bikes and four-wheel drive vehicles).

The negative responses.

In general, most of the negative responses regarding the influence of rural tourism on their farms were made by two kinds of producers: either those whose farms were located away from environments where rural tourism is a continuous practice (all acknowledged the sporadic presence of tourists), or those who were primarily engaged in the production of arable crops not for direct consumption by tourists (cereals, fodder, etc.). Two of the producers qualified their responses to the two options described in section a on this question. Thus, the farmer from B2 indicated his posture regarding rural tourism with the sentence “*there is none here and I do not want any to get in my way*”. In contrast, within the group of respondents who felt that rural tourism did not affect their farms, the farmer from A8 said “*rural tourists are very respectful and are good for the region*”.

Consideration of farm products as tourism resources.

In response to this question, discrepancy arose once again between those who answered in the affirmative (eight respondents) and those who did not (five respondents). One exception to the above was the answer from one of the farmers, which did not fit into either category, and neither was it an “I don’t know” response. Thus, the response of the owner of B3 was significant in that she did not limit her response to whether her products could be considered a tourism resource, but rather stated that “*It is the project itself which can be considered a tourism resource*”, referring to her holistic approach which not only included implementation of organic farming but also her efforts to restore the culture and heritage of the land she managed. Apart from this qualification, responses to this question were as follows.

Affirmative answers

An interesting opinion was expressed by one of the respondents (farm A6), who considered that the scenery on his farm was so attractive at certain times of the year (spring) that it could and should be considered as a tourism product. Another idea worth highlighting was expressed by the interviewee at farm A1, who explained that food products, and specifically those which he transformed in his company, comprised a highly important tourist attraction in a region which was internationally renowned for the quality of its cuisine. It should be borne in mind that one of the world’s most internationally famous restaurants

is located in Catalonia. Only 7 Spanish restaurants have been awarded the very highest category by the famous Michelin Guide, four of which are in Catalonia and the most famous of these is located in the study area. One of the most commonly expressed opinions among the interviewees who considered their products a tourism resource (mentioned by A2, A3, A4 and C3) was that their products should be seen as tourism resources because they were “*fresh*”, “*seasonal*”, “*local*” and “*organic*”, in brief, quality products. The last aspect to mention from this perspective is the link between the region and the products, and the consequent symbolism of the latter for the visitor. For the farmer from A5 “*The region is part of our product*”, and consequently, the product is of interest to visitors to the area.

The negative responses

Some interviewees did not provide a detailed explanation of why they did not consider their products a tourism resource. However, there were some respondents who gave interesting justifications for this idea. Having said that they did not consider their products a tourism resource, the farmers from B1 justified their opinion with the phrase “*This is what those from outside would like*”, in direct reference to the actors from outside the territory who make the decisions that shape the region. They added that their goal was to sell their products to “*people from the region*”, consistent with the idea that local consumption = responsible consumption. On the other hand, the owner of A8 believed that the reason his products were not directly consumed by tourists was that these mainly consisted of herbaceous polyculture.

The possibility of combining farming with agritourism

This was the final research question. Again, the answers can be divided into two common categories: affirmative and negative. The first response was the most frequent, being given by eight respondents who declared themselves open to this possibility, and in some cases it was already a reality, while the remaining six interviewees either rejected the possibility or expressed doubts in this respect.

Affirmative responses

The arguments ranged widely, from reasons that might be described as psychological to arguments which could be defined as being related to economic efficiency. In addition to other issues, the owner of farm C1 declared that for her, tourism is an escape, and consequently she would not mind combining both activities. The farmer from farm A2 considered that combining agritourism with agricultural production would yield economic improvements in agriculture, an argument with

which the farmers from B3 and C3 coincided, both farms on which the two activities had already been combined. In some cases the answer, although positive, hinted at a certain level of resignation and feeling of inevitability about the decline of the agricultural sector in Catalonia (farm A1). Lastly, another fundamental idea should be mentioned, which was expressed by two interviewees (from farms A5 and A2), referring to the educational role that agricultural production could and should play in agritourism.

Negative responses

The arguments for not combining the two activities were primarily focused on the desire not to change occupation and concerns about what such an economic reorientation would mean for the farm. The farmers from farm B1 stated that maintaining an agritourism business was “*extra work*” that they had not chosen as their *modus vivendi*, in reference above all to the demands in terms of time made by such a business and which they were not prepared to meet, and to the nature of an activity conceived and led from outside the agricultural world. “*Agritourism was conceived for foreigners loaded with money, not for farmers*”, as a means of investing and speculating with income from other sectors unrelated, in principle, to the territorial realities of the rural world. In a similar sense, the respondents from A6 replied that they would become involved in agritourism when “*they change the rules about agritourism and stop speculation in the hotel industry*”. It is interesting to note that moral reasons for refusing to participate in this type of business also emerged:

“*Before letting them come into my house, I would give them a test (...) These days, there is a high percentage who use tourism to cheat on their wives (...). Agritourism should be about creating a kind of family, not for spending two days acting as beasts. It should be seen like visiting your aunt's house: everyone eating together, and gathering a few vegetables from the garden. That would be typical and healthy (...)*”

Linked to this approach, on another two farms the arguments revealed the character of the farmer, who did not want to give up their occupation and wished to maintain the primary production models unchanged. “*If they want a house, they should stay at home*” (farm B2), and “*because I do not want to serve anyone. I am nobody's servant*” (farm A7). Lastly, it should be noted that there was also a considerable group of producers who gave reasons of an operational and economic nature as their explanation. In the case of A8, it was fear of excessive changes to the running of the household (timetables, customs, etc.) which had stopped the farmer from taking the step towards this type of diversification. Meanwhile, the increased labor costs and consequent implications for management were the reasons given by the owners of farms A3, C2 and A4 for not having introduced this new activity.

CONCLUSIONS

In general terms, it can be said that the attitudes and perspectives on tourism of organic farmers in *Alt Empordà* were very diverse, in the same way that the roads that had led these producers to the world of organic agricultural production were also varied. The respondents generally agreed that tourism had been mostly positive, and in those cases where the opposite opinion was expressed, the arguments given were based on personal experiences that very clearly indicated the reason for this apparently, a priori, immutable opinion. Similarly, it was found that a large number of respondents identified more or less close relationships between their farms and the phenomenon of rural tourism, and were able to differentiate positive and negative influences. A considerable proportion of the interviewees considered their products as tourism resources which actively contributed to the brand image of the region. During field work, we identified three producers who combined their primary farming occupation with agritourism, whilst a fourth declared their intention of doing so in the coming year, in addition to another four who were considering this possibility for the distant future. A summary is provided in the following table.

Table 1: Array of responses from field interviews (spring 2011)

Farm	General opinion of tourism	Influence of rural tourism on farming	Consideration of products as a tourism resource	Compatibility Agriculture and Agritourism
B1	Negative	Yes	No	No
A6	Positive	Yes	Yes	No
C1	Ambiguous	No	No	Yes
A 1	Positive	Yes	Yes	Yes
A2	Positive	Yes	Yes	Yes
A3	Positive	No	Yes	Yes
C2	Ambiguous	No	No	Yes
B2	Negative	No	No	No
A8	Positive	No	No	No
A7	Positive	Yes	Yes	No
A5	Positive	Yes	Yes	Yes
B3	Negative	Yes	????	Yes
A4	Positive	Yes	Yes	No

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1 By agritourism, we refer to a set of leisure activities offered and provided by the owners and / or managers of farms within the context of a rural setting, and aimed at a mostly urban public (Cors, 2010a). The main feature is that in addition to traditional farming, these farmers have decided to offer a service (Bourlet, 2002) that may be a visitor's centre, accommodation, gastronomy, leisure and / or participation in agricultural tasks (Sayadi & Calatrava, 2001).

2 The official number given in figures published by the Catalan Council for Organic Agricultural Production (Consell Català de la Producció Agrària Ecològica) is 33, including producers, transformers and vendors. In this study, only those identified as producers or producer-transformers were interviewed.

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