

Sustainable development for rural areas: a survey on the Agritourism Rural Networks

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Abstract. The topic of sustainable growth is becoming central in the debate over the rural development policies. Rural communities can completely fulfil the new challenges in the area of sustainability only with the implementation of innovative forms of collaborations among their business networks. In this work, we consider a particular form of business collaboration arising within rural communities, namely Agritourism Rural Network (ARN). In an ARN, a farm, providing agritourism activities, represents a touchpoint between a network of business and organizations in a rural area and tourists interested in enjoying the local territory. With the aim to deeper the extend of the agritourism phenomenon in a rural region and the potential of the related ARNs in being means of sustainable development, we report main results of an empirical survey carried out in 2016 on a sample of 105 agritourism farms all belonging to the same region (Calabria, Italy). Results confirm our intuitions about the importance at farm level of setting agritourism activities and their impact for the ARN related to the farm and for the sustainable development of a local community as a whole.

Keywords: Sustainable development; Agritourism; Collaborative network; Agritourism Rural Network; ICT