

Multifunctionality of Agriculture on Rural Development : A Case Study of Garfagnana in Tuscan Region, Italy

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Abstract

Based on case study and from participatory approach, this paper investigates the multifunctionality of agriculture on rural development in the Garfagnana area in Tuscan region of Italy. It shows farmers' involvement in multifunctional activities like agritourisms, organic farming, social farming, processing of farm products, cooperatives, regional brand of product and selling of products by short supply chain and employment creation. Most of the farmers have been involved in these activities especially in agritourisms. The selected area is also well known as historical places as well as beautiful landscapes. Due to agritourisms and historical places along with beautiful landscapes, most of the tourists are usually come here from the different parts of the world especially from different countries of Europe.

Introduction

Rural development is the vital and essential part of the national development. Our case study has also emphasized for the same and very specifically focused in the Tuscan region of the Italy. Basically rural development depends on agricultural activities like crop production, livestock production, fisheries, agro-forestry, and processing, marketing, employment in the agricultural sectors and so on. In the developing countries it is maximum where as in developed countries in minimum contribution to the GDP but very important part for the same.

Rural development and agriculture are very close relationship. Now a days, population pressure and environmental issues are the major global talk for food production especially for food security. According to USCB (2011), at present about 6.9 billion populations in the world and day by day it is increasing and by 2050 it will be about 9 billion. So that feeding the boosting population and others, agriculture would be taken the responsibility through its production and so on. Other than food production agriculture has also more functions that is called multifunctionality. Multifunctionality of the agriculture is one of the crucial issues for rural development in the world especially in the European Union (EU) rural areas. The role of agriculture has greatly influenced employment creation although its main role in the rural economy is declining in the EU territory. Primarily, agriculture is producing food and fiber and then has several functions like maintaining biological diversity, recreation and tourism, soil and water health, bio-energy, landscape, food quality and safety, and animal welfare, agro-tourism, on farm processing, organic farming, landscape management, high quality products and regional products or selling through a short supply chain and so on.

More than half (56%) of the population of the member states in the EU is living in the rural areas which encompass 91% of the territory, thus rural development is one of the major policy areas. The land is used mainly for farming activities as well as forestry which are vital for natural resources management in the EU rural's region. These are also essential platforms for socioeconomic diversification of development for rural area

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and country as a whole¹.

Basically, every member states follow the EU's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and under the CAP, rural development is the second and vital pillar for the development. The rural development has four axes which are: improving the competitiveness of the agricultural and forestry sector; improving the environment and the countryside; improving the quality of life in rural areas and encouraging diversification of the rural economy and the leader. So, in the rural development policy, agriculture and its multifunctionality has been emphasized. Therefore, it is necessary to investigate for the same issue in the rural development.

In this paper, I tried to make a discussion about the topic mentioned above with some theoretical background made by the different researchers and policy makers and then I tried to link with some practical experiences in connection with visit to different farms in Garfagnana in Italy. I tried to make discussion specifically on multifunctionality of the agriculture more specifically agrotourism, organic farming, social farming, processing of farm products, cooperatives, regional brand of product and selling of products by short supply chain and employment creation.

Methodology

The paper is prepared on qualitative approach, specifically participatory rural appraisal. Interview and observations tools are used for data collection from the selected nine farms of the Garfagnana area in Italy during 4-28 July, 2011. Photography has also been used for the same. Different reports, books, lectures, journals, internet and so on have been studied for developing the theoretical concepts related to the topic.

Theoretical concept of multifunctionality

Multifunctionality in agriculture means that agriculture has several other functions beyond in food and fibre production in natural resources management, conserve biodiversity and contribution to the socio-economic viability of rural areas. In EU common agricultural policy, multifunctionality is the vital part of the agricultural model of Europe. This approach provides several economic activities like agritourism, product processing and so on which are enabling the sustainable livelihoods and standard of life of the local people. (O'Connor et al., 2006). Considering multifunctionality, agriculture has been categorized into two complementary analytical dimensions where one is the degree of attention for market or public institutions as main governance mechanism for organizing the provisioning of goods and services by agriculture and the structuring of markets to valorize these, and the second is the main level of analysis ranging from approaches that principally focus on the regional level as unit of analysis to those that rather center on Multifunctionality of Agriculture (MFA) processes at the farm level (Renting et al. 2009). On the basis of these two dimensions, the diversity of the conceptual approaches to MFA has four main categories: market regulation, land-use, actor oriented and public regulation approaches and help to understand different aspects of the multifunctionality of agriculture in rural areas.

Now I tried to make link between theory and practical that we observed in the different farms related to multifunctionality of agriculture. Before that I also made a brief discussion regarding rurality of the study area.

Discussion of the paper

The Garfagnana area and its rurality

¹ http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/rurdev/index_en.htm

Here I tried to discuss about my personal experiences during my staying at Sillico village in Garfagnana of Tuscan region in Italy. Actually I observed and personally talked to the local peoples (interview) regarding this area as a whole. And these have really helped me to discuss more accurately related to multifunctionality of agriculture towards rural development in this area. Basically Garfagnana is marvelous area for tourists not only in Tuscan region but also in the Italy. There are many people came to here as tourists not only from different parts of Italy but also from other part of the world. Tourists are enjoying here more as beautiful landscapes, mountain, castle, historical places and so on. In Garfagnana, there is marketing facilities as they have supermarket and train station to link to big city like Lucca and Pisa.

Rurality of the Garfagnana varies from one place to another, as different villages of this area are located at different height and therefore farming activities also vary for that. Sillico where I lived it is almost 700 metre above from sea level, where Cerasa farm that we visited is located about 1000 meters above from the sea level. So that temperature as well as rainfall may vary and therefore agricultural activities may also different. Generally people of this area especially high mountain areas does not like to stay however, government support specifically Mountain Community support them, therefore they are staying and conserving their heritage also. CAP of EU provides several supports for farming activities especially for those are involved in multifunctionality. In this rural area, farming is characterized by diversified rather than intensified practices. Because land is here high topography and marginalized rather than plain. Most of the farms are integrated (producing more than one product like crops, animal, nonfarm activities and so on).

From theory we know farming is a risky business as it is always fighting with climatic change, environmental degradation and so on (D'hase, M. , 2011) but here it is no so danger as weather relatively good, no flood, drought, no excessive rainfall and so on. Farming is also characterized by mechanization. So therefore, no need more labour. Most of the farm basically leaded by family labor and in very few cases are hiring labour. Functional, political-economic and social construction are the significant concepts that have influenced in constructing conceptualizations of rurality for better understanding the rural areas (Cloke et. al. 2006). During case study, we found that multifunctional activities (agritourisms, organic farming, product processings etc.), political intervention like mountains community serve several interventions and norms, values, trust are the social capital of the rural area like Garfagnana are working as a whole for rural development.

Multifunctionality

Agriculture has multiple functions beyond of food productions in the garfagnana, some of which are briefly discuss below:

Agritourism

Garfagnana in the Tuscany region is absolutely the wonderful place for those who love nature and so on during vacation. Naturally, this place has beautiful landscapes, silence, and is surrounded by beautiful forests and mountains. In this area lot of resources are specially related to agriculture, therefore agritourism is becoming increasingly well-known year after year, and not only in Italy. People come here as there are castles, historical places and beautiful landscapes and so on. Agritourisms in this area are also a great contribution to the local economy. Visitors get the opportunity to enjoy like their home and offers organic



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food and others venues for sports such as biking, volleyball, football, table tennis and more. In Garfagnana, almost every farm has the opportunity of agritourisms but not facilities for bedding. Farmers provide good services to the tourists such as swimming pool, accommodations, quality food especially organic food and different types of food, as tourists are coming from not only Italy but also from different countries in the world. I also personally talked to tourists who were coming from the Scotland and France. They felt very charming as the local people are very friendly and cooperative and the local food is delicious. I also personally talked to the owner of the agritourism Filippi, he told me has the well



accommodation but had no swimming pool. Now he is constructing swimming as high demand raised from the visitors. He is also enlarging his accommodation for increasing number of beds. On the other hand, Stefano Antonio, the owner of La Betulla farm, has agritourism with accommodation (4 apartments) with no swimming pool to avoid change in environment, high expense in maintenance (employment of life guard, etc). Cerasa farm has been on TV and around 4 million peoples watch his farm and at the same day he received 300 calls him in the evening to visit his farm. So that he was able to create market opportunities even during the winter season. He warned the TV programmers to tell only the truth, because he doesn't want people to be deceived about his farm.

Organic farming

USA has been emphasized genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) but EU is totally against GMO rather they are highly encouraged organic product both producing as well as consuming. In Italy the organic food has been producing and day by day it is increasing as market value of this food is high. About 1.45 billion euro has been estimated for the organic food in Italy (D'Amario et al, 2005). Farmers in the Garfagnana have been producing organic food for about 20 years and they especially produce farro, millet, lentil, chicken peas, beans, honey, Apple, cucumber, tomato, grapes etc. But question is that more or less all farmers in this area are producing



organic product but most of them have no organic certificate because of expenses (400 euro /year) and bureaucratic problems. During the stakeholders discussion, one of the farmer explained it. Another constraint of the organic certification is small farming. On the other hand, we all visited germplasm centre where all crops are producing through organically but no selling only for preserving. La Betulla, Stefano Antonio said that he has organic certification but he is not satisfied due to low value.

Social farming

Farmers are doing SF as essential part of farming activities and it is connected to a large number of issues related to rural development such as organizations of local services, farmers' attitudes to local communities, introduction of new components of cohesion. SF activities consider the large number of beneficiaries in both urban and rural areas such as young people, older people, people with disabilities, migrants, prisoners, people recovering from alcohol or substance abuse (Di Iacovo, F, 2006). Basically, this social farming also provides treatment services for physical disability, autisms, alcohol and drug addicted people, prisoners, psychiatric and so on for their improvement. It is also the learning place under multifunctionality of agriculture that is very useful in the rural development. In this farm a group of people are staying and working together with family members and social employees. Social farming can be also the didactical farming where learning is conducting especially for the children. We all visited a didactical farm and observed how children are staying and learning by playing. Children are also getting scope to know how nature works and farming activities as well. They are coming once at morning and leaving in the evening. This didactical farm has been established by a trained couple as they have dream for the same. Through this farm agricultural resources has been organized for their local social needs, as the Social farming has the same basic theme (Di Iacovo, 2009).



Processing of farm products

Another vital activity in the area is Processing of farm products that are produced in the farm for increasing its quality so that they can get better market price. This good quality of product really acceptable by tourists which come here as part of agritourisms. On the other way, processing of the product also creates the employment opportunity in the area which contributes the job market as well. Farmers have been processing farro, cheese, wood, wool of sheep, meat, milk and so on. We have seen in the Paolo farro processing farm, he is cleaning the farro and packaging and then sell it where as in the Cerasa farm, Mario is processing sheep wool and making sweaters and carpet as well and also making cheese through processing sheep milk. He has been rewarded for making the best cheese. But, La Betulla farm, we looked at that Stephano Antonio is processing wood and sell it as building materials.



Regional brand of product

In Tuscany regions, they have special label for different quality of products. For example, in Sant'Anna farm they own agri-qualita label, given to them by Toscana region, symbolized by logo of butterfly and lot number 25. Since, they follow low

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external input organic agriculture and always get higher price for their product than normal wheat. They get fund from EU to follow low input agriculture. For that it is not difficult to follow low input organic agriculture. They get only 0.70 euro extra for 100 kg of wheat, But, if EU stops funding, they think, it will be difficult for them to follow this kind of agriculture. Another example, of regional products like Cheese, with the names of Pecorino San Martino, Grand warrior and Pecolino Marzolin Grand Warrior and Pecorino Marzolino produced by the San Martino farm. But it is not possible for all farms to getting label although they follow organic production. For example, the Bio Agriturismo Zoccolino – Chianina farm, they are organic farm but their meat is not certified as organic production because they can not follow other requirements such as grazing animal. It is not possible in winter here.



Selling of products by short supply chain

In Tuscany region, some farms sell products at farms level, local group and cooperatives. In the case of Bio Agriturismo Pratini Rosario Floriddia farm, products of the farm are sold at farm, to local bakery, local groups and to the cooperative. Selling the products at the farm fetches more money than others.

Cooperative

Cooperative is an association of farmers that provide its members a range of services and benefits, like collection, storage and marketing of products; also field mechanical operations, provision for fertilizers, seeds, feed, lubricants and processing of product. In Tuscany, Cooperativa "Santa Luce" was established in 1959 at the initiative of the Maremma followed by the Agrarian reform. It covers an area of 5000 ha with 359 associates. The farmers from Livorno, Rosetto and Pisa province are the members of the cooperative. They have to pay 260 euro once in a lifetime and should follow rules and directives of co-operative to become a member. They collect the products from the farmers on the basis of protein content, weight and humidity and checking the quality of the grains by special arrangements and storage the products. They have started olive oil processing and the olives used in the production come solely from the members of the Cooperative.



EU was given 20 percent of the support to olive processing mill and 80 percent was taken as loan to start the oil processing mill. They have also started pasta production one and half years ago with durum wheat produced by the Pisan Hills farmers under cooperative. The cooperative have own label for their product-

“Terra Di Luce”. Every aspect of the product specification for the PGI (Protected Geographical Indication) “Toscana” is taken into consideration here. Sant’Anna farm are part of the cooperative association for stock the cereals at low cost and getting higher price. But recently, the cooperative is facing some problem due to fluctuation of wheat price.

Employment Creation

In developing countries, agriculture has been creating large numbers of employment where as in developed countries are low relatively. In the farm, there are lot of activities like ploughing, seeding, transplanting, spraying, weeding, mulching, irrigating, harvesting, cleaning, threshing, storing and so on. Therefore, many labour to be needed for the completion of the above activities. But in developed countries, maximum activities are done by the machineries, therefore they need only few labour however, it has been creating job opportunity. Farmer Paolo



said he has three workers (1000 euro/month/worker) in his farm; on the other hand Stefano also told us that he is working with other farmers. Filippi is working with family members as well as others farmers. In the Cerasa farm, A Brazilian girl working there as per time worker.

Conclusions

Multifunctionality of the agriculture is the vital part of the rural development as it has several economic activities that lead economic sustainability of the Garfagnana area. It’s improving the quality of the life as well as contributing to the national economy. Many employment opportunities have been created by this way. During visiting the farms in the study, I critically observed that they are more diversified rather than intensified agriculture. Farmers are getting different support from Mountain Community, EU and so on. However they have some problems like organic certification, low returns of organic products, landslides, disappearing small shop due to supermarket etc. Local stakeholders, Mountain Community, Governmental policy will be taken decision combinedly for finding solution in a sustainable way.

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