

The Success of the Austrian Farm Holidays Project

With an average of thirteen farms closing every day in Austria, there is a need for a sustainable agro-tourism to counter the rate of enterprise contraction. This need is felt and addressed by the farm holiday and agricultural tourism marketing and developmental group called Austrian Farm Holidays. The group is a private non-profit organization that runs with the partial support of the Ministry of Economy, Family and Youth and the Ministry of Agriculture, and that of its member farms. The results of their promotional efforts have been enormous, suggesting that their model could be successfully adapted across Europe for farm holidays.



Urlaub am Bauernhof

The “Urlaub am Bauernhof” project had its inception in 1991, with the intention of bringing together several regional groups into one entity. This resulted in an agritourism marketing association that was far more powerful and professional, and national in nature.

The purpose of the project is to support agricultural tourism and areas that depend on agriculture, by simultaneously creating attractive farming vacations to sustain these agricultural areas. With the support and funding from the two ministries (50 %), of which the Ministry of Economy, Family and Youth draws out Austria's tourism policies, and the rest of the funding from the basic fees charged of its 2750 members, the Austrian Farm Holidays project has come a significant way in making a positive difference to local farms and tourism.

The Benefits

Members of the association pay a basic fee of 35 Euro per bed per year, VAT extra. Additional fees are charged based on the brochures in which the participating farm wants to be featured in.

Other benefits of membership include:

- 2 websites and social media activities
- A national organization and regional system for discussion and advice
- Quarterly newsletters and statistics regarding the performance of participating farms

· Representation for member farms at trade fairs across Austria, Hungary, Germany, the Netherlands and Czech Republic



- Access to valuable market research
- Event sponsorships and joint marketing
- Media work such as on paid prime time TV spots, editorial, press etc. In 2012, the association offered media promotions on two trains running between Salzburg and Klagenfurt, and Vienna and Bregenz
- Access to training courses supported by the Chambers of Agriculture
- Support for government lobbying

The association also offers a range of brochures for equestrian holidays, holidays for babies, organic farm holidays, holidays for those with special needs among others.



The Results

The project has been very successful in Austria. Its members have around 36,000 beds, one of seven Austrian beds available each year. 2 million visitors take a farm holiday annually, and fifty percent are repeat bookings. The total income of the association is about 1.25 million Euros, of which 842,000 Euro is spent on marketing and promotions. The gross income of the farms from the project is around 1 to 1.2 billion.

The success of the project is considered largely to be because of the available funding and project model. It regularly publishes performance reports with statistics on how bed occupancy is changing in member farms; the increase has been by 20% in 20 years. Changing prices are also published, with prices up by 120% at double the inflation rate over that time.

The association's focus on staff training, product development, quality improvement and other strategies to improve business, as recommended in the Strategy for 2011–2020, is likely to keep the impact of the

association on local farms and agriculture positive for a long time.

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