

Evaluating the Current Developments and Future Prospects of Agritourism: The Case of Cyprus

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Abstract: This paper aims to investigate the prospect of agritourism in the island of Cyprus. For this purpose, primary research was carried out by collecting data through face-to-face in-depth interviews with managers/owners of a representative sample of agritourism establishments. Particular focus was placed on current developments and future scenarios of how agritourism can become an alternative sustainable form of tourism in the Cypriot tourism industry. Note that Mass tourism is currently frowned upon due to its negative effects. On the other hand, special interest or alternative tourism, could have fewer negative impacts on tourist sites and help battling the negative effects impact of mass tourism. In the case of agritourism tourists or otherwise visitors stay on farms, while at the same time participating in work related to agriculture or agricultural activity. It was found that this type of tourism can contribute both to the strengthening of the countryside and the elimination of some of the regional disparities. It is thus a form of sustainable tourism and it has now part of the development strategy of the European Union to support disadvantaged rural regions in countries where agriculture and farming occupy a small part of the GDP. The findings for the case of Cyprus provide entrepreneurs and tourism institutions, suggestions for the effective development of agritourism, that could also fill in the gap during the low demand seasonality periods and further support neglected rural communities.

Keywords: Cyprus tourism, Agritourism, Alternative tourism, Special interest tourism, Sustainability, Hospitality management

1. Introduction

Although Cyprus is primarily known for its summer attractions, the island's diverse/rich landscape and environmental biodiversity offers opportunities beyond its coastal and climatic appeal. Specifically, agritourism provides both locals and visitors with an alternative way to experience Cyprus, highlighting its rural heritage and sustainable tourism potential. Unlike the seasonal nature of coastal tourism, agritourism extends throughout the year, allowing for a deeper engagement with the island's natural/cultural landscape.

Particularly, agritourism could play a crucial role in Cyprus by fostering rural development, preserving cultural heritage, and promoting sustainable tourism. As a country with a rich agricultural tradition, Cyprus has significant potential to leverage agritourism as a means of revitalizing rural communities, diversifying the tourism sector, and reducing the dependence on mass tourism. By integrating farming activities within tourism experiences, agritourism supports local economies, encourages sustainable practices, and enhances the visitor experience by offering authentic, eco-friendly alternatives. Moreover, in the context of global sustainability goals, agritourism can serve as a vital tool for conserving biodiversity, promoting responsible land use, and ensuring long-term environmental and economic resilience. As Cyprus seeks to diversify its tourism offerings beyond its renowned beaches, agritourism emerges as a vital component, attracting visitors year-round and contributing to the sustainable development of rural communities (fastforward.com.cy, 2023).

On the other hand, agritourism in Cyprus faces several key challenges in transitioning toward sustainable development model. According to Boukas (2019), these include seasonality, regional disparity, and/or unsustainable development, limited infrastructure, lack of collaboration among stakeholders, and insufficient knowledge and awareness of sustainable tourism practices. Moreover, the overconcentration of tourists on coastal areas, leave other peripheral ones, such as mountainous and rural, out of the developmental equation. This situation leads to many lost opportunities (Boukas, 2021) for sustainable development. Addressing these challenges requires comprehensive strategies, including fostering integrated rural tourism, enhancing stakeholder education on sustainability, providing financial and policy support to small enterprises, and aligning tourism practices with global sustainability frameworks. Specifically, this paper evaluates the current sustainable development and future prospects of agritourism in Cyprus, as an alternative to (mass) tourist destination with

its evident traces of negative effects of over-mass-tourism and neglected peripheral development (Boukas and Marneros, 2024).

This paper aims to fill-in a critical gap in the existing literature by introducing a comprehensive framework designed to assess the influence of agritourism on local development, with a particular focus on Cyprus economies. Given the unique socio-economic/environmental challenges faced by island communities, the proposed framework provides a systematic approach in evaluating how agritourism contributes to sustainable rural development, economic diversification, and cultural preservation. By doing so, this research study enhances the understanding of agritourism's role as a catalyst for local resilience and long-term sustainability in Cyprus.

2. Review of Related Studies

2.1 Agritourism as an Aspect of Alternative Tourism

Alternative tourism refers to a form of tourism that emphasizes sustainable practices, cultural authenticity, and meaningful interactions between tourists and local communities, while minimizing environmental and social impacts. Unlike mass tourism, alternative tourism prioritizes small-scale, low-impact activities that promote cultural exchange, environmental awareness, and local economic development (Papageorgiou and Lytras, 2015). This type of tourism encompasses various subcategories, such as ecotourism, agritourism, adventure tourism, and cultural tourism. According to Weaver (2020), alternative tourism seeks to create a balance between the needs of tourists, host communities, and the environment, thereby fostering long-term sustainability in the tourism sector. Similarly, Smith and Eadington (1992) describe alternative tourism as a niche-oriented approach that provides a counterbalance to the commodification and environmental degradation associated with conventional tourism models. According to Spanaki (2018), modern agritourism emerged in the United States during the 1960s as "Farm and Ranch Hospitality," encompassing variations such as Agricultural Tourism (farm/ranch-based) and Rural Tourism (hotel/resort-based). Over time, it has developed into a structured tourism sector, supported by a robust network of firms, improved infrastructure.

Specifically, agritourism is a specialized form of alternative tourism that focuses on agricultural activities and rural settings, offering visitors opportunities to engage with farming practices, local culture, and traditional lifestyles. It is defined by the interaction between tourism and agriculture, where tourists participate in farming activities, such as harvesting crops, feeding animals, or producing local products, while experiencing the rural way of life. According to Kokkosis et al., (2011), agritourism promotes sustainable development by utilizing rural resources, preserving cultural heritage, and providing supplementary income to farmers. Similarly, Barbieri and Mahoney (2009) highlight that agritourism contributes to rural economic diversification, fosters community engagement, and enhances environmental awareness among visitors. This tourism model emphasizes a balance among recreation, education, and conservation, making it an essential component of sustainable rural development.

In related studies, the term "agritourism" is interpreted in various ways and is often used interchangeably with related concepts such as "agritourism," "farm tourism," "farm-based tourism," and "rural tourism." Santeramo and Barbieri (2017) define agritourism as "visiting a working agricultural setting—usually a farm or ranch—for leisure, recreation, or educational purposes." Similarly, Tew and Barbieri (2012) describe agritourism as "any activity in which a visitor to the farm or other agricultural setting contemplates the farm landscape or participates in an agricultural process for recreation or leisure purposes." Additionally, Kizos and Iosifides (2007, p.4) define agritourism in Greece as "any farm-based business offered for the enjoyment and education of the public, to promote the products of the farm, and thereby generate additional farm income". These definitions highlight the multifaceted nature of agritourism, encompassing recreational, educational, and economic dimensions while reinforcing the role of agricultural settings as both productive and experiential spaces.

2.2 Agritourism and Sustainability

Within the broader context of agritourism, sustainability has been identified as a key challenge, given its potential benefits across social, environmental, and economic dimensions (Ammirato et al., 2013). A recent study specifically examined sustainability in oleotourism, a niche form of agritourism focused on olive-related experiences, identifying both sustainable practices already in place and areas requiring further development (Trequa et al., 2018). Moreover, the anticipated expansion of oleotourism is closely tied to various sustainability-related factors, reinforcing its relevance within the broader discourse on sustainable tourism. Ciolac et al. (2020), argue that sustaining rural communities often emphasize improving quality of life, with agritourism emerging as

a key strategy. Agritourism presents a valuable opportunity for the sustainability of mountain rural areas due to its multiplier effect on both economic and social aspects of local communities.

Another study by Songkhla and Somboonsuke (2013), examines the relationship between agro-tourism and local agricultural resource management to identify sustainable agro-tourism practices. The research highlights key activities, including agricultural processing demonstrations, farming practices, farm product distribution, and agri-business guidance, contributing to sustainable resource use in tourism. Garau (2015) explores strategic actions for effectively disseminating cultural resources to support cultural planning. The findings highlight key insights into smart, sustainable rural tourism development, emphasizing the need to balance globalization, nature, tourism, local places, and communities.

Agritourism offers both opportunities and challenges in achieving sustainable tourism. Recent studies highlight its potential to address global challenges (Kataya, 2021; Popescu et al., 2023; Papageorgiou et al., 2023), yet significant research gaps remain. Notably, there is limited understanding of how to develop and manage sustainable agritourism models and ensure their long-term viability (Panிக்கா & Baiocco, 2021). A current study by Ammirato et al. (2020), seeks to offer a comprehensive overview of the various perspectives in scientific literature regarding agritourism as a tool for supporting the sustainable development of rural areas.

A more detailed and critical review of current studies on agritourism's role in the sustainability agenda of tourism is necessary to assess its actual contributions and limitations. While agritourism is widely recognized for its potential to support sustainable rural development by fostering economic diversification, preserving cultural heritage, and promoting environmental conservation (Barbieri, 2013; Tew & Barbieri, 2012), existing research often lacks a comprehensive evaluation of its long-term sustainability impacts. Many studies focus primarily on its economic benefits, such as income generation for farmers and job creation in rural areas (Philip, Hunter, & Blackstock, 2010), but fewer critically examine environmental concerns, including land degradation, excessive water consumption, and biodiversity loss. Moreover, research on the social sustainability of agritourism—such as its influence on community resilience, social equity, and rural depopulation—remains fragmented and requires further empirical investigation. A systematic and critical synthesis of these studies is needed to identify gaps in knowledge and provide a more nuanced understanding of agritourism's role in achieving broader sustainability goals.

Additionally, variations in policy frameworks, governance structures, and consumer behavior across different regions highlight the need for comparative and longitudinal studies to evaluate best practices in sustainable agritourism. While some regions have successfully integrated agritourism into sustainability policies, ensuring responsible land use and community participation (Hjalager, 1996), others lack regulatory mechanisms, leading to over-commercialization and environmental degradation. Furthermore, consumer demand for sustainable tourism experiences is growing, but research on how visitor motivations and behaviors influence agritourism's sustainability outcomes remains limited (Sonnino, 2004). By critically reviewing empirical studies that examine the intersection of agritourism, governance, and consumer trends, future research can offer evidence-based recommendations for policymakers, tourism planners, and agritourism operators. Such a review would not only enhance academic understanding but also contribute to the practical development of agritourism as a key component of sustainable tourism.

2.3 Factors Contributing to the Growing Interest in Alternative Tourism in Cyprus

While Cyprus is a traditional Mediterranean destination, it has mainly been development under the conventional, mass tourism form, without any emphasis on sustainability (Boukas, 2019). Nonetheless, a series of factors collectively highlight the strategic importance of transitioning to more sustainable and diversified tourism practices in Cyprus. Towards this goal, interest in alternative and special forms of tourism on the island, has intensified particularly in the last two decades. Deputy Ministry of Tourism, as well as development companies and organizations (Agritourism 2025) are trying to promote their implementation by drawing up programs. Private sector investors are also taking the necessary business and investment initiatives. Cyprus is strategically shifting from its traditional sun-and-sea tourism model toward a more sustainable and diversified approach, incorporating agritourism, nature-based tourism, and cultural experiences (Koutra and Karyopouli, 2013). This transition responds to environmental concerns and evolving tourist preferences while promoting year-round and regionally balanced tourism development. A notable initiative in this effort is the "Colorful Villages" certification, which recognizes lesser-known villages for their sustainability, authenticity, and natural beauty.

Further, Cyprus has expanded its air connectivity to attract a more diverse tourist base, mitigating the decline in visitors from traditional markets like Russia. This strategy aligns with global tourism trends favoring independent travelers, who explore destinations more extensively and distribute tourism demand more evenly. By prioritizing the development of rural areas and reducing dependence on coastal resorts, Cyprus aims to establish a sustainable tourism framework that minimizes environmental impact while fostering economic and cultural benefits for local communities (Bramwell, 2004).

2.4 Agritourism: General Overview and its Development in Cyprus

The annual growth rate of agritourism in Cyprus since 2018 is 20% (Cystat, 2025). There are 150 registered agritourism establishments across the island, offering diverse and immersive experiences. The estimated annual contribution of agritourism to the Cypriot economy is about 40 million euros. The number of individuals employed directly or indirectly in the agritourism sector are 1500 plus jobs. The proportion of agritourism establishments integrating sustainable practices, such as water conservation and renewable energy is 60%, and the estimated reduction in carbon footprint for travelers choosing agritourism over conventional tourism options is 30%.

Cypriot agritourism accommodations offer high-quality services, including modern amenities. Guests can enjoy unique experiences, such as interacting with locals, visiting wineries, dining in traditional taverns, and participating in activities like hiking, cycling, and cooking classes. This tourism model emphasizes the people, culture, and natural environment of Cyprus, fostering a deeper connection between visitors and rural life (agritourism.com.cy). Particularly, Grillini et al. 2025, describe agritourism as a tourism model where visitors stay in rural or farm accommodations, often participating in daily farming activities, consuming local food, and engaging in rural traditions. This form of tourism bridges the gap between the tourism and agricultural sectors, promoting local sustainability, resource utilization, and cultural preservation. It also highlights the importance of infrastructure, such as road networks and transportation, to facilitate access to rural areas.

Agritourism provides "rural experiences" that combine agricultural settings with tourism activities, generating income for farmers and local communities (Willaddara et al. 2024). These experiences require open spaces, minimal urbanization, and opportunities for visitors to engage with agricultural practices, local crafts, culinary traditions, and cultural heritage, causes of increasing interest in alternative forms of tourism in Cyprus.

In Cyprus, agritourism is characterized by:

- The small and scattered size of rural settlements compared to other European countries.
- Integration with the agricultural sector, offering farmers supplementary income.
- The development of small and medium-sized enterprises that preserve and promote cultural heritage.
- Opportunities for urban dwellers to experience peace, contribute to the local economy, and engage with rural culture.
- Its role as a key component of the rural economy.

Overall, agritourism in Cyprus capitalizes on natural, cultural, and human resources to meet the demands of contemporary tourists while supporting small-scale, family-operated businesses.

3. Methodology

The methodological approach employed in this study was primarily exploratory in nature, involving a review of various official documents and conducting face-to-face, in-depth interviews with a representative sample of seven owners, policymakers, of agritourist establishments in Cyprus from the areas of Nicosia, Limassol, Larnaca and Paphos (see Table 1). Each interview lasted approximately one hour and took place at the respective establishments of the interviewees. The interviews were conducted between November and February. The evaluation was carried out based on a semi-structured discussion with the selected interviewees on the following questions:

- How do you evaluate Agritourism in Cyprus?
- Through your own experiences can you tell me what are the positive/negative economic dimensions of the phenomenon of Agritourism in Cyprus?
- Through your own experiences can you tell me what are the positive/negative social dimensions of the phenomenon of Agritourism in Cyprus?
- Through your own experiences can you tell me what are the positive/negative environmental dimensions of the phenomenon of Agritourism in Cyprus?

- Do you consider the implementation of sustainable development practices and environmental certifications (eco-labels) to be a key factor influencing tourists' or customers' choice of your accommodation?
- Do you agree that the development of agritourism in Cyprus has resulted in increased environmental protection and the preservation of local architecture and culture?
- Do you think agritourism in Cyprus made a significant contribution to sustainable development?
- Which factors are driving the growth of agritourism in Cyprus?
- What steps are taken from owners of agritourism establishments to protect the environment?
- Do you believe that promoting policies and actions will help to protect and improve the local natural environment?

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Interviewees

Respondent	Gender	Age	Area
1	Female	>35	Nicosia
2	Female	>40	Limassol
3	Male	> 40	Nicosia
4	Male	> 40	Nicosia
5	Female	> 55	Larnaca
6	Male	> 55	Limassol
7	Male	> 55	Paphos

An interview guide was developed to facilitate the interviews, which were conducted in English and Greek based on participants' preferences. All interviews were recorded, transcribed verbatim in both languages, and then translated from Greek to English for analysis. The data were analyzed iteratively (Miles & Huberman, 1994), using a constant comparison method (Glaser & Strauss, 1998) to identify emerging themes and their relationships. Once theoretical saturation was achieved, the authors compared their interpretations and coding to establish a consistent coding scheme that accurately reflected the data.

In addition to primary data collection, the researchers utilized the World Wide Web as a supplementary research tool. Promotional materials provided by the Cyprus Agritourism Company and the Deputy Ministry of Tourism were also reviewed. Furthermore, the researchers examined a variety of agritourism-related studies and literature, including books, online articles, and professional publications accessed through digital libraries. Official websites of rural accommodations in Cyprus were also utilized to gather relevant information for the study.

4. Main Findings

The main purpose of this section is to analyze the collected data from all the stakeholders and investigate the current developments and future scenarios of how agritourism can become a sustainable form of tourism in the Cypriot tourism industry. What follows is a discussion of these topics based on the responses of the sample of stakeholders participating in the study. The main survey findings are summarized below as per the semi-structured interview discussion questions.

4.1 How do you Evaluate Agritourism in Cyprus?

Agritourism in Cyprus has emerged as a sustainable alternative to mass tourism, contributing to rural development, economic diversification, and environmental conservation. However, its success and challenges must be evaluated based on economic, social, and environmental dimensions. According to Respondent A, sustainable development of agritourism means development that does not deplete our natural resources. Respondents C agrees that in the case of agritourism, sustainable development means preserving natural systems' ability to provide the natural resources and ecosystem services on which the economy and society rely, while meeting human development objectives. Furthermore, the final outcome is a state of society in Agritourism in which living conditions and resource use continue to meet human requirements while protecting the integrity and stability of natural systems. Respondents D and E believe that sustainable development means providing a sustainable income to those who produce agritourism.

4.2 Through Your own Experiences can you tell me What are the Positive/Negative Economic Dimensions of the Phenomenon of Agritourism in Cyprus?

According to Respondent A, some favorable economic benefits include more revenue for businesses, more job opportunities, and a higher standard of living in the area. Respondents B and C concur on these favorable economic consequences, with Respondent C adding that revenue for the entire country is a significant economic benefit. Similarly, Respondent D believes that the sustainable growth of agritourism generates significant revenue for the agritourism industry. When asked about the negative economic repercussions, all of the interviewees responded negatively, stating that there were none.

4.3 Through Your own Experiences can you tell me What are the Positive/Negative Social Dimensions of the Phenomenon of Agritourism in Cyprus?

As indicated by Respondent A, some social positive impacts of agritourism on sustainable development include improved living and working conditions for locals, rejuvenation of small villages, and the return of younger people back to the community, while negative social impacts include increasing competition between local people and their establishments. Similarly, Respondents C and D state that there is an improvement in the villages since many agritourism establishments are being restored by young people returning to work, and the hamlet is once again full with youth and life. As a result, negative competition among enterprises emerges. Respondents E and F argue that the villages' communal growth is driven by socioeconomic opportunities, and that the sustainable development has no negative social consequences.

4.4 Through Your own Experiences can you tell me What are the Positive/Negative Environmental Dimensions of the Phenomenon of Agritourism in Cyprus?

Respondents B and C indicated that there are numerous environmental benefits, including environmental protection and the preservation of local architecture and culture, support local biodiversity, farmers adapt sustainable farming methods, environmental education, as well as the promotion of local agricultural products such as wines, bread, and handicrafts. While agritourism is generally low-impact, the construction of new accommodations, roads, and recreational areas can contribute to habitat fragmentation and soil erosion.

Respondents F and D agree that agritourism establishments are highly developed; they have begun to take better care of the environment; nevertheless, as a result of this development, some have abused the environment by cutting down trees to build new agritourism businesses. Respondents A, E, and G, claim that some environmental impacts include water consumption and waste generation. Agriculture and tourism are both water-intensive sectors. Agritourism, especially in arid areas of Cyprus, may exacerbate water scarcity issues, particularly if irrigation demands increase. The expansion of agritourism facilities (e.g., guesthouses, restaurants) can lead to increased waste production, pollution, and improper disposal of agricultural by-products.

4.5 Do you Consider the Implementation of Sustainable Development Practices and Environmental Certifications (Eco-Labels) to be a key factor Influencing Tourists' or customers' Choice of your Accommodation?

Nonetheless, all respondents indicated that sustainable development practices and eco-label certifications are increasingly becoming decisive factors in tourists' choices for agritourism accommodations. According to the respondents the key are: Growing Environmental Awareness; Market Demand for Authentic Experiences; Regulatory and Certification Influence; Competitive Advantage; Social Media & Word-of-Mouth Impact and Cost Savings & Operational Efficiency.

4.6 Do you Agree that the Development of Agritourism in Cyprus has Resulted in Increased Environmental Protection and the Preservation of Local Architecture and Culture?

All respondents agree that the development of agritourism in Cyprus has played a significant role in enhancing environmental protection and preserving local architecture and culture for the following reasons:

1. Environmental Protection
 - Sustainable Farming & Land Use
 - Conservation of Natural
 - Preservation of Biodiversity

2. Preservation of Local Architecture
 - Restoration of Traditional Homes
 - Use of Local Materials
 - Government & EU Support
3. Cultural Preservation
 - Revival of Traditional Crafts & Practices
 - Sustaining Local Gastronomy
 - Community Involvement

Agritourism in Cyprus has encouraged a sustainable balance between economic development and cultural and environmental conservation. It has revitalized rural areas, provided economic opportunities for local communities, and helped maintain the island's rich traditions. While challenges remain, such as ensuring responsible tourism growth, the overall impact has been positive.

4.7 Do you Think Agritourism in Cyprus Made a Significant Contribution to Sustainable Development?

All respondents agreed that agritourism in Cyprus has made a significant contribution to sustainable development by fostering environmental conservation, economic growth, and cultural preservation. Agritourism aligns well with the principles of sustainable development by balancing environmental protection, economic viability, and cultural preservation. While challenges such as seasonality, infrastructure development, and maintaining authenticity exist, it was mentioned that agritourism has contributed positively to rural sustainability in Cyprus.

4.8 Which Factors are Driving the Growth of Agritourism in Cyprus?

According to Respondent A, the key development factors for agritourism in Cyprus is the interest on cultural and culinary tourism especially in local food and wine. Cyprus is known for its rich culinary traditions, and agritourism offers visitors the chance to participate in wine tastings, olive oil production, and farm-to-table experiences. Respondent B claims that the number of agritourism establishments in Cyprus and the rich culture are the primary reasons for its growth. Similarly, Respondent D claims that to escape from mass tourism, many travelers prefer peaceful countryside stays, making agritourism an attractive alternative. Respondent C mentioned that the main reason for agritourism in Cyprus is the desire for authentic experiences. Visitors are drawn to rural Cyprus for its traditional food, hands-on farming experiences, and cultural heritage. The combination of increased demand for sustainable travel, government support, and the natural and cultural appeal of rural Cyprus is driving the expansion of agritourism. While challenges, such as seasonality and maintaining authenticity exist, the sector is expected to continue growing as more travelers seek immersive and eco-friendly experiences.

4.9 What Steps are Taken From Owners of Agritourism Establishments to Protect the Environment?

Respondent A indicated that some of the environmental measures employed in his establishments include recycling, water conservation, electrical power, and heating. These utilities are measured on a regular basis, ensuring that resource consumption in tourism enterprises is proportionate to the number of guests. In addition, establishments can develop an environmental plan. Respondent B indicated that using renewable energy sources and recycling are environmentally friendly practices. Respondent C believes that using photovoltaic systems for energy conservation, recycling, and preserving our heritage can help to safeguard the environment. Similarly, Respondents B and C stated that the owners of such businesses can safeguard the environment by using renewable energy sources, recycling, conserving energy sources such as electricity and water, and providing staff with energy-saving training.

4.10 Do you Believe That Promoting Policies and Actions Will Help to Protect and Improve the Local Natural Environment?

All of the interviewees' responses to this question imply that supporting actions and policies will significantly contribute to the protection and enhancement of the local natural environment.

5. Discussion - Conclusions

Tourism today is among the most important sectors of economic development worldwide. Especially for the case of Cyprus, it generates multiple sources of revenue and contributes to its prosperity and growth. However,

it is necessary that any benefits of economic development are properly utilized, and ensure the sustainability of tourism growth. This can be achieved by implementing alternative forms of tourism in contrast to mass tourism. It seems that agritourism can bring a lot of benefits to the tourism product of the island and can play an important role to the differentiation of its tourist product. For the successful implementation of agritourism the right capabilities and competencies (Marneros et al., 2020; Marneros et al., 2021; Papageorgiou et al., 2023; Papageorgiou et al., 2024.) are in urgent need, which can only be developed with the close collaboration of the tourism/hospitality industry, the government and the educational system.

The main findings of this study show that agritourism in Cyprus has the potential to serve as a basis for sustainable tourism by preserving rural landscapes, promoting biodiversity, and educating visitors about environmentally friendly practices. As mentioned in the interviews there is an overall recognition that agritourism, under the appropriate development and management, may foster sustainability and diversify and enrich the islands' tourism product-service mix. In this regard, the specific study recognizes that Cyprus possesses both the resources as well as the opportunities to embrace agritourism. For instance, as Kokkosis et al. (2011) argue, agritourism supports sustainability by promoting rural economies, preserving cultural heritage, and minimizing environmental impacts. On the other hand, effective management processes are required to mitigate any potential negative effects, particularly regarding water use, pollution, and infrastructure expansion. For the case of Cyprus, implementing eco-friendly policies, such as water conservation measures, waste management systems, and responsible land-use planning, can help ensure that agritourism contributes positively to both economic and sustainable environmental needs. As Marneros et al., (2023) argue, proactive environmental management—particularly through life-cycle approaches and the conservation of water resources—yields multiple benefits within the hotel industry. Notably, these benefits contribute to a mutually advantageous outcome for both businesses and society, promoting sustainability while enhancing operational efficiency and corporate responsibility.

All respondents acknowledged that sustainable development practices and eco-label certifications are playing an increasingly crucial role in tourists' decision-making when selecting agritourism accommodations. As Font et al. (2007), sustainability certifications impact consumer decision-making and enhance the marketability of accommodations. In addition, Han et al. (2010) argue that 'eco-certifications and sustainable development practices influence consumer choices in the hospitality sector'. The study highlights that agritourism in Cyprus as a form of alternative rural tourism, could act as a catalyst for a series of chronic problems, such as unplanned development, high seasonality, and contribute to equal spread of tourist development's benefits to rural communities increasing at the same manner the multiplier benefits impact for them. Moreover, findings indicated that stakeholders in rural areas of Cyprus do recognize the importance of sustainability and are willing to follow the directions of policy making for a more sustainable rural tourism future through agritourism.

In this respect, Cyprus tourism policy makers need to pay more attention to agritourism, and support both the educational institutions and the tourism industry in this direction. Further incorporation agritourism in the overall tourism strategic plan of the island would constitute a firm step towards sustainable environmental and socio-economic prosperity. Such policy measures and strategic actions could contribute to environmental sustainability in tourism. Note that especially for the case of Cyprus, agritourism offers more than just a getaway—it provides an immersive experience that reconnects travellers with nature, preserves cultural authenticity, and allows them to appreciate life's simple yet meaningful pleasures. Choosing agritourism is more than a personal experience; it is a deliberate choice to endorse sustainable practices, which are so important in today's world. By selecting locally owned and operated establishments, visitors would then actively support the economic vitality of rural communities while fostering environmentally responsible tourism.

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