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ASPECTS OF TOURISM SUSTAINABILITY ON ORGANIC FARMS IN SLOVENIA

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Abstract: In 2020, 957 tourist farms in Slovenia were offering accommodation and/or food and beverages. Due to the legal framework (the law requires a high minimum percentage of own production), the offer of Slovenian tourist farms is strongly linked to their own agricultural production and the local rural environment. The paper addresses various aspects of sustainable rural tourism, focusing on organic tourist farms. The research's goal was to find out whether Slovenian organic tourist farms are more sustainable than other (non-organic) tourist farms in terms of the presence of various elements (environmental friendliness, biodiversity preservation and nature conservation, equity and social justice, economic success) of sustainable tourism. These elements were selected to address all the three dimensions of sustainability—environmental, social, and economic. The research used secondary sources data on organic production and various sustainable tourism practices on tourist farms (accessible tourism, sustainable tourism labels, links with protected areas, etc.) and some other relevant characteristics of these farms (the production of native and traditional crop varieties). In addition, a survey was conducted on a random sample of 129 tourist farms. The results have shown that the assumption of greater sustainability of organic tourist farms is valid, not only in the system of agricultural production, which is the legally established basis for labeling the farm as organic, but also from some other aspects (greater representation of sustainable labels, greater presence of native/traditional varieties and breeds, more frequent links with protected areas, etc.).

Keywords: tourist farms; sustainable tourism labels; accessible tourism; traditional varieties and breeds; protected areas

1. Introduction

The second half of the 20th century was characterized by the rapid growth of tourism on a global scale, which contributed to the emergence of various negative impacts, both environmental and social, in many overtourism destinations. Among other things, this influenced the reflection on how to develop tourism in a way that would be acceptable in the long term, with as few undesirable impacts as possible. Thus, the paradigm of sustainable development became established in the field of tourism and the term "sustainable tourism" began to appear very frequently in professional literature and in strategic and development documents in the field of tourism (Liu, 2003; Sharpley, 2009).

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Discussions of sustainable tourism involve three dimensions: environmental, social, and economic. Another way to construct the relevant domains is to refer to the tourist (visitor), the visited (society and nature), and the mediator (tourism industry; Kuhn, 2007). World Tourism Organization (2005, p. 12) defines sustainable tourism as tourism "that takes full account of its current and future economic, social, and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities".

Sustainable tourism is not limited to individual types of tourism. According to Liu (2003), sustainable tourism can be defined as all types of tourism that are congruent with sustainable development or contribute to it. Nevertheless, some types of tourism are usually associated with sustainable tourism to a greater extent. For example, the definition of ecotourism in the Québec Declaration on Ecotourism (World Ecotourism Summit, 2002) states in the introduction that ecotourism includes the principles of sustainable tourism. Another type of tourism that is often associated with sustainable development is farm tourism, which is an important factor in local development or rural development (Hardy & Beeton, 2001; Kerma et al., 2014). It enables the preservation of agriculture and thus of the cultural landscape and ecosystems (McGehee, 2007). It contributes to the preservation of the rural lifestyle and offers the possibility of ensuring sustainable tourism (Privitera, 2009). On Italian farms Mastronardi et al. (2015) found that tourist farms are better than other farms from an environmental point of view as they use more environmentally orientated farming practices, which has various positive impacts (on landscape, biodiversity, etc.). For agriculture and rural development, farm tourism is not only an activity that complements basic agricultural production and supports the implementation of other subsidiary activities, e.g., processing of agricultural products (Potočnik Slavič et al., 2016), but it also expands the possibilities of selling agricultural crops and products (Kerma et al., 2014) and, in particular, increases the farm's resilience and adaptability in the face of unexpected changes (Lampič & Potočnik Slavič, 2017).

Compared to mass tourism, farm tourism is marked by some special characteristics, e.g., the interrelationship between the farmer's private life and the visitor's experience (Nilsson, 2002). The characteristics of farm tourism vary greatly among countries. This is true for the social, legal, and spatial settings in which it takes place, as well as for the characteristics of supply and demand (Dubois & Schmitz, 2013; Sidali, 2011). In general, farm tourism has a relatively modest importance in the context of overall tourism in each country (Nilsson, 2002; Solsona Monzonís, 2006), but its impact can be very important in individual rural areas. Tourists' motivations for visiting tourist farms are very heterogeneous, which is also related to the aforementioned differences in the characteristics of farm tourism in each area. Among the more common motives are contact with nature, local food, and beverages, features of the rural landscape, desire to escape the urban environment, a more personal relationship between host and guest, low prices, leisure activities that can be done in the rural environment, etc. (Cigale et al., 2013; Flanigan et al., 2015). Motives directly related to farming activity are often less important (Cigale et al., 2013; Flanigan et al., 2015; Fleischer & Tchetchik, 2005).

Within agriculture, organic farming is the one that encompasses the most sustainable methods of farming (Rigby & Caceres, 2001). Organic farming has many positive environmental and other impacts (Bavec et al., 2019; Lampkin, 1994; Mäder et al., 2002; Slabe et al., 2011). The income effectiveness of converting farms to organic production while introducing various forms of subsidiary activities on the farm has also been demonstrated (Cigale et al., 2013; Lampič & Potočnik Slavič, 2017; Potočnik Slavičet al., 2016).

In recent decades, consumers have begun to show interest in healthy and sustainable food (Pırnar & Çelebi, 2019; Privitera, 2009). The production of environmentally friendly and healthy

products and services offered to environmentally conscious consumers has increased (Pırnar & Çelebi, 2019). Organic tourist farms can also be placed in this context. The links between organic agriculture and tourism have already been studied in some cases (Choo & Jamal, 2009; Kerma et al., 2014; Privitera, 2009). The combination of tourism and organic production has many advantages in the environmental, economic, socio-cultural, and health areas (Kerma et al., 2014; Kuo et al., 2006), so it deserves attention from the perspective of sustainable tourism and sustainable development in general. Nevertheless, this field is very poorly researched, which is especially true for the comparison between organic and conventionally producing tourist farms. The paper thus contributes to the study of farm tourism and sustainable tourism and at least partially fills the gap in the field of farm tourism research from the point of view of the differences between organic and non-organic tourist farms and the sustainability of farm tourism.

This paper deals with tourism on farms, especially on organic tourist farms, using Slovenia as an example, taking into account various aspects of sustainable tourism. Since organic farming is the most sustainable from an agricultural point of view (Bavec & Bavec, 2015; Gomiero et al., 2011; Rigby & Cáceres, 2001), tourist farms are compared with each other according to whether they practice organic or conventional farming. The previous studies (Kerma et al., 2014; Kuo et al., 2006; Podmenik et al., 2012) suggested that organic tourist farms may be better in terms of sustainability. However, the question arises whether the supposedly greater sustainability of organic tourist farms is related only to organic production or whether they also differ from conventionally producing tourist farms in other areas. Thus, the paper's goal was to find out whether Slovenian organic tourist farms are more sustainable than other (non-organic) tourist farms in terms of the presence of various elements (environmental friendliness, biodiversity preservation and nature conservation, equity and social justice, economic success) of sustainable tourism. These elements were selected to address all the three dimensions/pillars of sustainability—environmental, social and economic.

2. A short overview of sustainable tourism and farm tourism in Slovenia

2.1. Sustainable tourism in Slovenia

In Slovenia, just as in the global context, there was a noticeable long-term growth of tourism in the period after World War II. The growth of tourism in Slovenia in the 21st century and global tourism trends have contributed to the gradual rise of the concept of sustainable development in relation to tourism in Slovenia. The Promotion of Tourism Development Act (2004) stated in the introduction that the development of tourism in Slovenia is based on the principles of sustainable development, which consider economic, social and environmental components of development. The Strategy of Slovenian Tourism for the period 2012–2016 (Tomin Vučković et al., 2012) went even further and stated that, in 2016, tourism in Slovenia would be based on sustainable development and contribute to a large extent to social welfare and country's reputation. Also, the currently valid Slovenian Tourism Strategy 2022–2028 (Ministry of Economic Development and Technology, 2022) puts the concept of sustainable development in the foreground, while also mentioning some discrepancies between such a vision and the actual situation.

In the last decade, Slovenia has managed to create an image of a sustainable tourist destination at the international level. Thus, according to the World Economic Forum's (2019) assessment of the environmental sustainability of tourism, Slovenia ranks 8th out of 140 countries for which this data is available. It also often appears in the media in connection with sustainable tourism. For example, in the list of Global Green Destinations (maintained by the Green Destinations Foundation based in the Netherlands) in 2020, as many as nine Slovenian

destinations were among the top 100 (Green Destinations, 2020), and National Geographic Traveler magazine mentioned it as the World's Most Sustainable Country (Christ, 2018).

The most influential example of organized efforts to implement sustainable tourism practices is the Green Scheme of Slovenian Tourism which unites sustainable tourism development efforts in Slovenia under the label SLOVENIA GREEN and enables destinations and tourism providers to evaluate and improve their sustainable efforts. The Slovenia Green label can be acquired in various areas. The status of recipients of the label in September 2022 was as follows: 58 destinations, 107 accommodations, four parks (which can be acquired by various types of protected areas), nine travel agencies, seven attractions, 42 restaurants, and two beaches (Slovenian Tourist Board, n.d.). However, these relatively modest figures testify to the rather limited scope of efforts in this area. Providers of accommodation and food and beverages (which include tourist farms) can receive the Slovenia Green label if they have previously obtained one of the environmental or sustainability labels recognized by the Green Scheme of Slovenian Tourism. Among the more widespread are Green Key, Travelife, and EU Ecolabel.

2.2. Farm tourism in Slovenia

In Slovenia, farm tourism is an activity that can be registered by the owner or any member of the farm household and carried out (with the help of other family members) as a subsidiary activity to the main agricultural activity. The legal framework (Uredba o dopolnilnih dejavnostih na kmetiji, 2015) conditions the close connection of Slovenian tourist farms with their own agricultural production, as it requires a high minimum share of own production. Four different subsidiary activities are possible, namely tourist farms with accommodation, excursion farms, wineries, and osmicas (establishments that can serve a limited number of food and beverage items for up to 20 days a year). In addition, tourism that does not offer accommodation, food, and beverages, but some other tourism services (e.g., horseback riding) also appears as a subsidiary activity, but this group of subsidiary activities is not addressed in this paper.

In 2020, 957 tourist farms in Slovenia were offering accommodation and/or food and beverages (Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food [MAFF], 2022a). These farms had a total of 1,219 registered subsidiary activities, namely: 589 tourist farms with accommodation (61.5% of tourist farms), 490 excursion farms (51.2% of tourist farms), 100 wineries (10.4% of tourist farms), and 40 osmicas (4.2% of tourist farms).

Data from the Register of Agricultural Holdings (MAFF, 2022a) indicate the growth of tourism on the farm. Positive trends in this area are also indicated by data from the Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia (n.d.), which refer to tourist farms with accommodation. Thus, in the period 2010–2018, the annual number of overnight stays on tourist farms increased from 114,739 to 271,894, while in 2019 there was a slight decrease (252,628). In 2020 and 2021, despite the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of overnight stays remained at approximately the same level (250,401 and 303,251, respectively), which points to the considerable resilience of this type of tourism offer to various crisis events. In fact, during the pandemic, the offer of tourist farms even turned out to be more attractive than other accommodation offers.

3. Methods and materials

The paper analyzes and presents some relevant features of Slovenian farm tourism, which indicate the degree of sustainability of farm tourism. To analyze the situation, we used data related to the characteristics of both activities, i.e., agriculture and tourism. With respect to

agriculture, data from MAFF (2022a) and data on the type and volume of production of native and traditional varieties of agricultural crops (Agency of the Republic of Slovenia for Agricultural Markets and Rural Development [ARSKTRP], n.d.) were used. With regard to tourism, we used data from the website of the Association of Tourist Farms of Slovenia (n.d.), where the characteristics of the tourism offer of individual farms are presented, and supplemented them with information from the individual websites of tourist farms. We also included data on sustainability labels acquired by tourist farms. In Slovenia, the labels within the Green Scheme of Slovenian Tourism (Slovenian tourist board, n.d.) are particularly relevant. We have also used some other websites presenting relevant tourism offer (Brez ovir, n.d.; Premiki, n.d.).

Regarding the linkage of farm tourism with various elements of tourism sustainability, we focused on a few aspects where the criterion—besides the relevance of the content—was mainly the availability of data. Thus, the following data were collected and taken into account:

- The presence of sustainable tourism labels

Sustainable and ecolabels are unique indicators of sustainable or more environmentally friendly behavior that can be useful to both tourism providers and consumers (Buckley, 2002). The labels confirm that providers meet certain criteria. In this paper, Slovenia Green labels (Slovenia Green Accommodation and Slovenia Green Cuisine) were taken into account. Since they are sustainable tourism labels, they should in principle reflect all the three areas of sustainability (environmental, social, and economic), although this is not necessarily the case. Slovenia Green is a national certification scheme of sustainable tourism, but it is linked to internationally recognized labels. Accommodation or food service providers can receive the Slovenia Green Accommodation or Slovenia Green Cuisine label if they have one of the internationally recognized labels. In the case of accommodation establishments, the labels Bio Hotels, Ecocamping, EU Ecolabel, Green Globe, Green Key, Travelife, World of Glamping Green, and Hostelling International Quality & Sustainability are eligible. With regard to Slovenia Green Cuisine label, the Leaders in Environmentally Accountable Foodservice and Green Key labels are eligible. In addition, tourism providers must sign the so-called Green Commitment and thus commit to sustainable action. We were only interested in the total number of labels on organic and non-organic farms, although a single tourist farm can also acquire two labels (for accommodation and for cuisine).

- Accessibility for different visitor groups

The tourism and leisure industry can make an important contribution to social sustainability, as it can have a major positive impact on the quality of life (McCabe, 2009; McCabe & Johnson, 2013). For this reason, the accessibility of tourism is important for all segments of the population, including those who face various barriers, and accessible tourism is also important from a sustainable tourism perspective (Darcy et al., 2010). Accessibility in this context refers to adaptations that enable use and access also for groups of users with disabilities (absence of architectural and other barriers) or to universal design. We were only concerned with the formal recognition of accessibility (so-called specialization "tourist farm suitable for disabled persons") or the inclusion of a tourist farm in the accessible tourism offer on the specialized websites of the Brez ovir and Premiki institutes.

- Growing of native and traditional varieties of crops

The conservation of biological diversity and genetic resources is very important from the point of view of sustainable agriculture (Karaca & Ince, 2019) and thus sustainability, especially environmental sustainability, in general. These varieties are also included in the gastronomic offer of tourist farms. Under the Rural Development Programme of the Republic of Slovenia 2014–2020 (MAFF, 2022b), due to the recognized positive impacts of growing native and traditional

agricultural crops, such as preservation of plant genetic resources, improvement of the state of biotic and genetic diversity, more effective adaptation to climate change, and broader promotion of sustainable agriculture, operation Conservation of Plant Genetic Resources Threatened by Genetic Erosion is implemented to financially encourage farmers to cultivate them. For our analysis, we used data on farmers' formal participation in this operation although cultivation of traditional crops is much more widespread in practice, as shown by the farmer survey (see below).

- Location within protected area

In protected areas, due to their special qualities, the conservation function is in the foreground, which means that agriculture and tourism also face certain restrictions, which as a rule, affects the more environmentally friendly operation of tourist providers, including tourist farms, and thus environmental sustainability. Organic farming at local and ecosystem levels benefits plant diversity (Bavec & Bavec, 2015; Rundlöf et al., 2010) and therefore plays an important role in ensuring the environmental quality of protected areas. On the other hand, tourists and other visitors also get above average environmental quality as a result. A similar role is played by the NATURA 2000 network, which protects habitat types at the European Union level. Some authors (Podmenik et al., 2012) consider tourism on organic farms located in areas of nature protection (NATURA 2000) as the most authentic ecotourism offer.

In addition, a survey of a random sample of tourist farms was conducted between October 2021 and January 2022. Most of the respondents were interviewed on their farms. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, some respondents were interviewed by telephone. The sample included 129 farms, representing 13.5% of all Slovenian tourist farms. The respondents were primarily the holders of the subsidiary activity of tourism on the farm and in some cases other members of the farm household. Out of the 129 tourist farms surveyed, 14.0% (18 in total) are organic farms. Among all tourist farms, this percentage is 15.2% of the total population, which means that organic farms are adequately represented in the sample. The survey was intended to investigate the main characteristics of Slovenian tourist farms. The questionnaire included content from previous research in the field of farm tourism, sustainable tourism, and organic farming (Ascorbe Landa, 2018; Carlsen et al., 2001; Hoang, 2021) has pointed out the importance of. The questionnaire consisted of questions on the general characteristics of tourist farms and their tourism subsidiary activities (type of tourism offer, characteristics of guests, proportion of foreign visitors, etc.), aspects of locality, cultivation of traditional, and native varieties and breeds. A special section included questions about respondents' views on tourism potential of the farm, as well as plans related to farm tourism. In this section, we measured farmers' level of agreement with statements using a 5-point Likert scale. Statements, related to various aspects of sustainability were included in order to provide additional insight into some aspects of tourist farm sustainability. The final section included questions about the sociodemographic characteristics of the respondents.

Descriptive statistics were used for data calculation from secondary sources (number of sustainable tourism labels, number of tourist farms with accessible tourism offer, number of farms raising traditional breeds and plant varieties, and number of farms in protected areas) and data from our survey. Descriptive statistics and *t*-tests for independent samples (equal variances were not assumed) were used to analyze the differences between the two groups of tourist farms. The results are presented in tables (1–4).

4. Results and discussion

Farm tourism is present both on conventionally producing and organic farms. In 2020, there were 3,358 certified organic farms in Slovenia, i.e., 4.9% of all agricultural holdings (Šimunović, 2022). Given the marked dominance of the conventionally producing farms, most tourist farms are also characterized by conventional farming. However, as mentioned above, out of the 957 tourist farms, 145 (15.2%) are organic (certified organic), which is a significantly larger share than the share of organic farms in Slovenia (4.9%). It is obvious that tourist farms in Slovenia practice more environmentally sustainable agriculture. This is probably, at least to some extent, also a consequence of the fact that some visitors particularly appreciate organically produced food. Some farms produce partly organic and partly conventional. In this paper, they were considered as non-organic.

The performance of various subsidiary activities on the farm does not only reflect the intensity of the use of various resources on the farm and the ways and extent of income diversification, but it also shows the ability of the farm to adapt to various risks. In addition to better resilience to various unpredictable situations on the farm (Lampič & Potočnik Slavič, 2017), income diversification indirectly affects economic sustainability. A comparison of the average number of subsidiary activities reported on organic and non-organic tourist farms shows that the operators of organic tourist farms perform an average of 6.8 subsidiary activities, compared to only 4.6 on non-organic farms (Table 1). Among these subsidiary activities there are many that are functionally closely related to the tourism activity (production of spirits, baking of bread and pastries, horseback riding, etc.).

Table 1. General characteristics of organic and non-organic tourist farms in Slovenia

	Organic farms	Non-organic farms	Total
Number of tourist farms	145	812	957
Average farm size (ha)	15.7	10.7	11.5
Average number of subsidiary activities	6.8	4.6	4.9
Number of individual subsidiary activities			
Osmica	0	40	40
Winery	7	93	100
Excursion farm	69	421	490
Tourist farm with accommodation	112	477	589

The structure of organic and non-organic tourist farms, in terms of the type of subsidiary activity of tourism on the farm, is very different (Table 1). In organic tourist farms, accommodation plays a much more important role (77.2% of organic tourist farms offer accommodation) than in non-organic tourist farms (58.7% of non-organic farms). On the other hand, wineries (11.5% of non-organic and 4.9% of organic tourist farms) and osmicas (4.8% and 0%, respectively) are much more represented in non-organic than in organic farms. These two categories represent a type of subsidiary tourism activity that is less burdensome in terms of time consumption and the characteristics of the offer. At the same time, they are very closely related to viticulture, within which the presence of organic farming in Slovenia is very modest. The latter is also reflected in the fact that only 19.3% of organic tourist farms are included in MAFF's register of wine and grape producers, while this figure is as high as 49.4% for non-organic businesses. We can attribute this situation to the fact that the inclusion of permanent crops (especially vineyards) in organic farming is very demanding.

Organic tourist farms are significantly larger and have an average size of 15.7 ha, while non-organic farms have an average size of only 10.7 ha. A larger volume of available

agricultural land means the possibility of greater (and more diverse) agricultural production and may also provide a more secure economic environment for the farmer.

- Sustainable tourism labels

Several tourist farms are among the recipients of the Slovenia Green label, both for accommodation (Slovenia Green Accommodation) and for food and beverage providers (Slovenia Green Cuisine; Table 2). Organic farms are very well represented among them. Of the eight tourist farms with accommodation that carry Slovenia Green Accommodation label (as of August 2022), two are organic, which still represents a quarter (25%) of the total. Considering that only 15.2% of all tourist farms are organic, this is a disproportionately high percentage. Of the seven tourist farms that offer only food and beverages and carry Slovenia Green Cuisine label, four are organic, or 57.1% of the total. Even though the absolute numbers are modest, the significantly higher than average percentage of organic tourist farms among the recipients of the labels is nevertheless very revealing. Organic farmers are more inclined to adopt sustainable practices, which may be linked to their overall attitude toward environment and sustainability. The issue of environmental values has already been discussed for rural tourism in general (Carlsen et al., 2001), pointing out the considerable presence of these values in the context of rural tourism. Previous research has also drawn attention to the presence of environmental values among organic farmers (DeLong et al., 2023).

Table 2. Differences between organic and non-organic tourist farms

	Organic tourist farms		Non-organic tourist farms		Total No. of tourist farms
	No.	Share of OTF %	No.	Share of NOTF %	No.
Sustainable tourism labels, Slovenia Green Accommodation	2	1.4	6	0.8	8
Sustainable tourism labels, Slovenia Green Cuisine	4	2.5	3	0.4	7
Accessibility of tourism offer	4	2.5	3	0.4	7
Growing of native and traditional varieties of crops	4	2.8	20	2.5	24
Location within protected area	22	15.2	84	10.3	106
Location within Natura 2000	45	31.0	195	24.0	240
Total number of tourist farms	145	100.0	812	100.0	957

Note. NOTF = non-organic tourist farms, OTF = organic tourist farms.

- Accessibility of tourism offer

In 2022, the website of the Association of Tourist Farms of Slovenia (n.d.) listed six tourist farms with the specialization of a tourist farm suitable for disabled persons. Taking into account the data from websites offering accessible tourism (Brez ovir, n.d.; Premiki, n.d.), one more tourist farm can be added to these six. Of these seven tourist farms, four are organic (57.1%), while the other three are not (Table 2). Thus, even in this case, there is a significantly above-average representation of organic tourist farms. According to the World Tourism Organization (2021), accessible tourism is a crucial element of any sustainable and responsible tourism policy. As Darcy et al. (2010) pointed out, increased accessibility not only makes financial sense, but also has the potential to promote social and environmental goals.

- Growing of native and traditional varieties of crops

According to the data of the ARSKTRP (n.d.), there are only 24 tourist farms included in the operation Preservation of Plant Genetic Resources Threatened by Genetic Erosion (Table 2). Out

of these, most (12) are those growing traditional grape varieties, nine traditional buckwheat varieties, while other crop varieties (oilseeds, wheat, millet, corn) are grown by only one to three tourist farms. Of these, there are only five that grow traditional varieties of more than one crop. The numbers are extremely small, but this does not mean that traditional varieties are indeed so modestly represented. This is also shown by the survey results presented later (more than 60% of farmers stated that they grow native and traditional crops and also integrate them into their offer). The share of organic tourist farms growing native varieties (participating in the operation) is 2.8%, while the percentage of non-organic farms is slightly lower (2.5%).

- Location within protected area

In Slovenia, 269,475 ha belong to protected areas, i.e., 13.29% of the country's area, and there are also many tourist farms (106 or 11.1%) in these areas (Figure 1). Organic tourist farms are located in protected areas to a greater extent (15.2% of organic tourist farms) than non-organic tourist farms (only 10.3%). Both, organic and non-organic tourist farms are most frequently located in landscape parks (50.1% and 40% respectively) and in the only national park (22.7% and 19.1% respectively). This can be attributed to several influencing factors. For example, the presence of legal restrictions related to location within protected areas may be an incentive for farmers to choose organic farming. In addition, the natural geographic conditions in many protected areas are less suitable for agriculture, especially conventional agriculture.

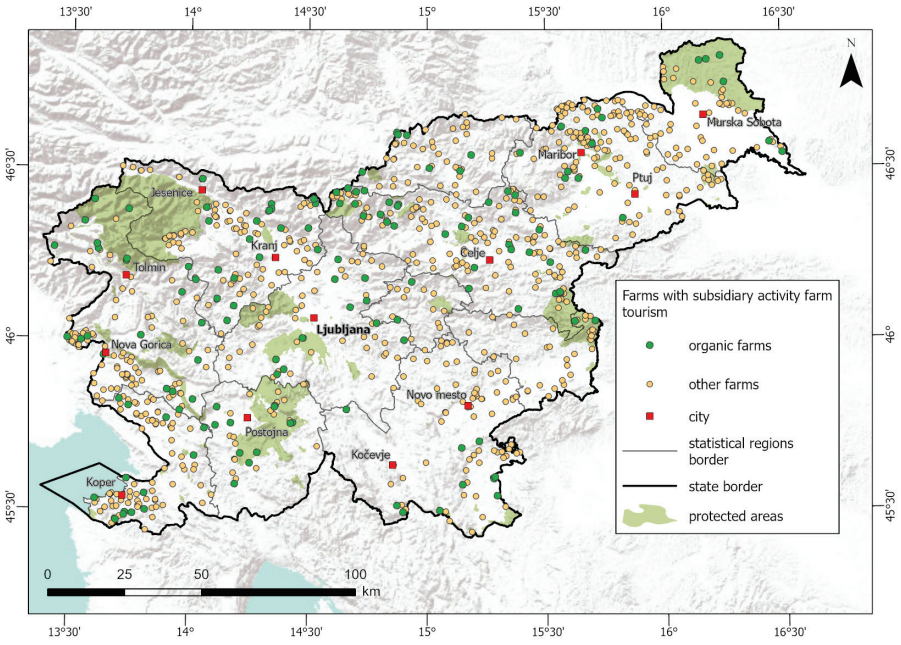

Figure 1. Farms with subsidiary activity farm tourism.

Note. The content on the map is based on *Register of Agricultural Holdings,* by Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food, 2022a [Unpublished database]; *Atlas okolja* [Environmental Atlas], by Slovenian Environment Agency, n.d. (http://gis.arso.gov.si/atlasokolja/profile.aspx?id=Atlas_Okolja_AXL@ARSO&culture=en-US). In the public domain.

There is also a significant proportion of tourist farms (25.1%) in the NATURA 2000 areas, which account for 37% of Slovenia's land area. The additional attractiveness and the advantage of preserved nature certainly also contribute to this. Again, the share of organic tourist farms is higher (31%) than the share of non-organic tourist farms (24%). Organic farms contribute significantly to preserving and enriching biodiversity (Bavec & Bavec, 2015; Rundlöf et al., 2010) and consequently to environmental sustainability.

4.1. Questionnaire survey on tourist farms

Among the tourist farms surveyed, there are 59 farms (44.9%) that offer only food and beverages to their guests, and 70 farms (55.1%) that also offer accommodation. The percentage of farms offering accommodation is slightly higher among organic farms (61.1%) than among non-organic farms (54.1%).

Respondents were asked which are the most common groups of guests/visitors at their tourist farms, and were allowed to name a maximum of five categories of guests. Couples with children were most often cited (at 77.8% of organic and 66.1% of non-organic tourist farms), followed by couples without children (38.9% of organic, 50.5% of non-organic tourist farms), and extended families (50.0% of organic and 45.9% of non-organic farms).

The proportion of foreign tourists and day visitors at the surveyed tourist farms is substantial, but since the survey was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic, the shares of foreign visitors are still lower than they would otherwise be. The average percentage of foreign tourists staying overnight is 40.3% on the surveyed organic tourist farms, and 29.3% on the non-organic tourist farms. Among visitors who do not stay overnight, but only come for food and drink, the average percentage of foreigners is much lower, namely 19.7% at organic farms and 15.1% at non-organic farms. The food and beverage offer is therefore to a much greater extent aimed at local and regional demand, while the accommodation offer attracts many foreign guests.

Traditional and native varieties and breeds are well represented on the tourist farms surveyed, especially on organic farms. Thus, traditional/native varieties are grown on 72.2% of the surveyed organic farms, while this share is only 62.7% on non-organic ones. The percentage of tourist farms growing traditional/native breeds is much smaller: 44.4% of organic farms and 27.3% of non-organic ones. Therefore, organic tourist farms are more oriented toward both the cultivation of traditional/native varieties and the breeding of traditional/native breeds. At this point, we should also point out the differences with the data on farmers' participation in the operation Conservation of Plant Genetic Resources Threatened by Genetic Erosion, which are enormous. This indicates a discrepancy between the actual and formal situation, as many producers apparently see no point in formalizing their cultivation or husbandry of these varieties/breeds through participation in the operations of the Rural Development Programme. Among factors influencing this discrepancy are also farmers' perceptions of what traditional varieties/breeds are, which do not necessarily fit the official definition.

In the second part of the questionnaire, the respondents assessed on a scale from 1 to 5 (1 = *no potential at all,* 5 = *very high potential*) where they see the potential for their tourist farm. Among the options offered in the questionnaire were organic production, organic labeling of crops/products, native plant varieties, and native animal breeds. In general, they see the greatest potential in local foods and beverages (Table 3). Thus, the percentage of responses with the score of 5 for local food was 77.8% on organic and 70.6% on non-organic tourist farms, and for local beverages 61.1% on organic and 75.0% on non-organic tourist

farms. An even larger share of respondents from organic farms saw *very high potential* related to organic farming (88.9%; on non-organic farms only 28.2%) and organic labeling of crops (83.3%; on non-organic farms only 20.4%).

Table 3. Assessment of individual potentials for tourist farms: response rate (%)

	Type[a]	1	2	3	4	5	Total	Mean	*t*	*p*-value
Respect for local heritage and culture	NO	0	6.3	12.6	16.2	64.9	100	4.4	0.27	0.788
	O	0	0	27.8	11.1	61.1	100	4.33		
Knowledge of global trends in the field of rural gastronomy	NO	6.4	10	21.8	20	41.8	100	3.81	0.89	0.383
	O	11.1	16.7	11.1	33.3	27.8	100	3.5		
Accommodation	NO	13.5	3.6	13.5	14.4	55	100	3.94	–0.85	0.406
	O	11.1	0	5.6	22.2	61.1	100	4.22		
Organic production	NO	12.7	13.6	22.7	22.7	28.2	100	3.36	–6.38	0
	O	0	5.6	0	5.6	88.9	100	4.78		
Organic certification of crops/products	NO	15.7	15.7	27.8	20.4	20.4	100	3.03	–7.22	0
	O	0	5.6	0	11.1	83.3	100	4.72		
Local food	NO	1.8	2.8	8.3	16.5	70.6	100	4.41	–1.3	0.203
	O	0	0	5.6	16.7	77.8	100	4.72		
Local beverages	NO	0	3.7	7.4	13.9	75	100	4.6	0.79	0.438
	O	0	0	16.7	22.2	61.1	100	4.44		
Autochthonous animal breeds	NO	21.3	12	16.7	15.7	34.3	100	3.3	1.04	0.308
	O	27.8	11.1	27.8	11.1	22.2	100	2.89		
Autochthonous plant varieties	NO	7.4	10.2	23.2	16.7	42.6	100	3.77	0.4	0.692
	O	16.7	11.1	11.1	16.7	44.4	100	3.61		
Local supply networks	NO	9.3	5.6	20.4	27.8	37	100	3.78	1.17	0.257
	O	22.2	5.6	16.7	27.8	27.8	100	3.33		
Protected agricultural products and foodstuffs within European quality schemes	NO	20.4	9.3	22.2	19.4	28.7	100	3.15	0.5	0.621
	O	33.3	5.6	11.1	22.2	27.8	100	3.06		
Protected agricultural products and foodstuffs within national quality schemes	NO	20.4	8.3	22.2	23.2	25.9	100	3.26	0.23	0.822
	O	27.8	5.6	16.7	22.2	27.8	100	3.17		
Development of territorial collective brands	NO	16.8	11.2	15	23.4	33.6	100	3.46	0.98	0.336
	O	27.8	11.1	16.7	16.7	27.8	100	3.06		
Thematic routes	NO	4.6	3.6	9.1	22.7	60	100	4.3	0.92	0.371
	O	16.7	5.6	5.6	11.1	61.1	100	3.94		
Brands (e.g. Gault Millau)	NO	36.5	15.9	13.1	19.6	15	100	2.61	1.27	0.217
	O	50	5.6	27.8	11.1	5.6	100	2.17		

Note. The participants' responses (1 = *no potential at all*; 5 = *very high potential*). [a]Type of tourist farm: NO = non-organic, O = organic.

With respect to the differences in means between the two groups, *t*-tests were performed and statistically significant differences were found in relation to the assessment of organic farming, $t(39.75) = -6.38$, $p = .00$, and organic labeling of crops, $t(38.16) = -7.22$, $p = .00$. It seems that organic tourist farms have mostly positive experiences with the visitors' reaction to the offer of organic products, while on non-organic tourist farms a possible conversion to organic production seems to be hardly considered. For the other statements, there were no statistically significant differences in the evaluation of each potential between organic and non-organic farms.

Respondents also indicated what plans they have regarding the various forms of tourism on farm (expanding the scope of subsidiary activity, reducing the scope of subsidiary activity, maintaining the current scope, closure of subsidiary activity). The answers (Table 4) show that from an economic point of view farm tourism is a sufficiently successful subsidiary activity. All organic farmers and the majority of non-organic farmers intend to maintain at least the same volume of business as before or even to increase it. Cases of planning to reduce the business volume or even to close down are extremely rare. There is no such case among the organic tourist farms, but among non-organic ones, a single non-organic tourist farm plans to close a subsidiary activity (tourist farm with accommodation), and three plan to reduce the volume of the subsidiary activity (one tourist farm plans to reduce the volume of two registered subsidiary activities). This suggests that their operation is economically successful and—considering the business model—also sustainable.

Table 4. Plans regarding various subsidiary activities of tourism on farm

Type of farms	Expanding the scope of subsidiary activity	Maintaining the current scope	Reducing the scope of subsidiary activity	Closure of subsidiary activity	Total
Non-organic farms	51	79	4	1	225
Organic farms	8	15	0	0	49
Total	59	94	4	1	274

Note. Numbers relate to registered subsidiary activities, not farms.

5. Conclusion

Farm tourism is present and important in many rural areas and represents a noteworthy segment of the tourist offer. The paper dealt with farm tourism in Slovenia in relation to sustainable tourism, which as a concept has recently received a lot of attention both in the academic circles and in the context of tourism policies. Due to their specific nature, tourist farms represent a relatively modest part of Slovenia's tourism supply, but they are by no means insignificant. Among them there are also organic farms. Their relative importance among tourist farms is much greater than the importance of organic farms among all Slovenian farms. This and some previous research (Kerma et al., 2014; Podmenik et al., 2012) suggest that there is considerable potential in the field of tourism linked to organic farming.

Sustainability of tourist farms in general and the comparison between organic and conventionally producing tourist farms is poorly researched so our approach based on various elements of tourism sustainability is an attempt to reduce this research gap. The presence of various potentially sustainable elements related to organic tourist farms was investigated using various available data (presence of sustainable tourism labels, presence of accessible tourism, cultivation of traditional, and native crop varieties, links to protected areas) that draw attention to various aspects of sustainability (mostly environmental and partly social). The plans for the future of the tourist farms revealed by the survey also show the successful economic performance of organic tourist farms and thus also speak of economic sustainability, which is also indicated by the above-average size of organic tourist farms and the greater number of subsidiary activities carried out by organic farms.

According to the legal framework, tourist farms in Slovenia are necessarily closely integrated into the local economy, as they are allowed to purchase a maximum of 25% of the value of the offer (raw materials and products) over the counter. The other 75% must come

from the individual farm or from other farms. At the same time, control over development of tourism is in the hands of the provider. This indicates that aspects of economic sustainability are present in all tourist farms.

Although organic and non-organic tourist farms do not differ much in most of the characteristics discussed, in all these cases it is the organic tourist farms that have a greater presence of the characteristics considered, suggesting that organic tourist farms are more sustainable not only in agricultural production but also in tourism. Therefore, the assumption of greater sustainability of organic tourist farms is valid, at least partially, not only from the perspective of the characteristics of agricultural production, which are the legally established basis for labeling the farm as organic, but also from some other aspects (greater representation of sustainable labels, greater presence of native/traditional varieties and breeds, more frequent links with protected areas, etc.).

Due to the limited range of characteristics considered, the rather small number of organic tourist farms and the fact that the situation depends on conditions at the national level, it is not possible to draw a generally valid conclusion. Under Slovenian conditions, organic tourist farms clearly have a somewhat greater potential in terms of sustainability than non-organic farms, but this is not necessarily the case in other countries, where farm tourism is embedded in a different social, legal, and environmental context.

The research findings are relevant to both agricultural and tourism policies. The latter strongly encourages and prioritizes the sustainable development of tourism. The results show that farm tourism is an area with significant potential for the development of a sustainable tourism offer, and this is even more true for organic tourist farms. Although tourism on a farm appears to be a rather homogeneous sector, there is a non-negligible internal diversity within it, also in relation to the sustainability of tourism. The Action Plan for the Development of Organic Agriculture (MAFF, 2021) defines the ambitious strategic goal of having a total of 30% organic tourism farms in Slovenia by 2027, but the current trend is to reduce their number. At the same time, the surveyed non-organic tourist farms do not recognize the potential for development in organic production, so this goal may be difficult to achieve. Targeted support tourism activities on organic farms will therefore be necessary and must not remain only at the declaratory level.

Therefore, more targeted and planned incentives are needed, and currently the environmental sector in Slovenia is more engaged in promoting the development of organic agriculture (and organic farm tourism), but there is still a lack of adequate intersectoral linkage of activities (environment, agriculture, and tourism). In the future, cross-sectoral measures must also take into account the supply and demand side.

With regard to the results presented, some research limitations should also be noted. Thus, due to limited data availability only some characteristics were included in the analysis. Many relevant aspects have not been addressed, which applies, among others, to the issue of transportation and mobility of tourists. Also, accessibility was considered only from the point of view of accessibility for persons with disabilities, but not in relation to the social situation (social tourism). It should also be taken into account that the differences between organic and non-organic farms are not always very sharp in reality, even in the field of agriculture. This is partly due to the fact that in this article also those farms were treated as non-organic, which cultivate a part of their land conventionally and a part organically. In addition, the actual production practices of non-organic farmers are often at least partially close to those of organic farmers, but they do not decide on certification, which involves administrative and other obligations.

To the authors' knowledge, this is the first example of a direct comparison of farm tourism sustainability on organic and non-organic tourist farms. It should be considered an exploratory study that should serve as a starting point for further research. This study also points to several unanswered questions. It has only addressed some potentially sustainable elements on the supply side, while neglecting the demand side. Questions that deserve attention in future research include visitors' attitudes toward greater or lesser sustainability of the offer on tourist farms, what role organic production plays in this, and whether the various sustainable practices on tourist farms also influence visitors' decisions.

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