



Case Study

Tenuta di Paganico

Company headquarters building (photo by Lucia Tacconi and Jacopo Goracci)

1. Introduction

Tenute di Paganico Società Agricola is a large farm with a wide production located in the hinterland of the province of Grosseto in Tuscany. Agricultural activity is prevalent in the agritourism business with the cultivation of cereals, vines, olive trees and production of wine and extra virgin olive oil. The livestock activity is significant, with semi-wild breeding of cattle and pigs of native breeds.

The peculiarity of Tenute di Paganico Società Agricola lies in the fact that over the years it has succeeded in developing agrotourism activities and thus enhanced the territory while remaining a productive company in which the agricultural aspect remains a priority. Widely involved in scientific projects along with various university institutes and research organisations, it is projected toward innovation in agriculture.

NAME OF THE BUSINESS:

Tenuta di Paganico Società Agricola SpA
 Agrotourism: I Roggeti (Il Mandriolo, L'Oleario, La Cacciaia, La Tinaia, La Colombaia, Il Lazzeretto), Casa di Caccia.
 Association: Turismo Verde (CIA)

LOCATION:

Province of Grosseto
 in southern Tuscany

2. About the agrotourism

Tenuta di Paganico is spread over two municipalities in the Province of Grosseto in southern Tuscany. The headquarters and part of the estate, which includes farmland, woods, pastures and facilities dedicated to agritourism, is located in the municipality of Civitella Paganico while other farmland is located in the municipality of Roccastrada.

The territory is an inland rural area of the Tuscan Maremma and is a transit area. Paganico, a name derived from the word *pagare*, was anciently a fortification in the 1200s created to manage the duties of the transport of raw materials, such as salt and spices that arrived in the ports of the Tyrrhenian Sea like Pisa, Grosseto, Civitavecchia to the interior i.e. to Siena and Florence.

The territory on which the farm stands is privileged and strategic. In fact, it is located not far from several major cities such as Siena, Montalcino, Arezzo, Florence. It is typically a rural area characterised by very wild agricultural and wooded areas and natural areas such as Mount Labbro and the Oasis of Mount Leoni.

In this territorial context, it was natural to link the preponderant agricultural activity to the agrotourism activity that takes place in a very rural and natural environment allowing tourists to live truly immersed in rurality and to enjoy typical local products.

The centrality of the location, from which it is possible to reach in 30 minutes the sea of the Tuscan Maremma and in little more than 1 hour art cities such as Siena and Florence has allowed it to develop the agrotourism activity.



Exterior of the Casa di Caccia apartment (photo by Lucia Tacconi and Jacopo Goracci)



When did the agrotourism business start?

The agrotourism business began in 1996 with guest accommodation following the renovation of a farm unit that had remained unused after the end of sharecropping. In 2009, the restaurant business began at L'Opificio.

Number of workers

The following are currently employed at the farm:

- **1 full-time employee** with the role of coordinating and assisting, back-office and front-office, scheduling and promotion, and outside activities (guided view and/or farm experience).
- **1 full-time employee** with the role of coordination and housekeeping.
- **6 part-time cleaning employees.**
- **1 part-time employee** for routine maintenance activities and pool management.
- **Various outside contractors** for grass cutting, and extraordinary maintenance.

Some tourist data from the agrotourism



Exterior I Roggiati farmhouse (6 modular apartments)
(photo by Lucia Tacconi and Jacopo Goracci)

The farmhouse consists of 7 apartments of various sizes and in total can accommodate about 30 guests. Annually, on average, there are about 2,000 guests, with the greatest concentration in the April–October season (about 80/85% of the total, with a concentration in the July–September period of 40/45% of the total).

Historically, the agrotourism is open year-round, but as of this year 2023, winter closure was introduced to reduce operating costs due to external economic contingencies (inflation, energy price increases, etc...). Tourists hosted at Tenuta di Paganico are over 40 on average, and families with children who find a familiar and protected place in the widely equipped apartments.

The common areas are the meeting points for children and adults of the different families hosted. They are also used as a play area by children and as an area to share lunches and dinners by the families.

Before the pandemic, farmhouse guests were mainly from foreign countries (80%), mainly from Germany, the Netherlands, Switzerland, and England, but today 50% of guests come from Italy and 50% from the foreign countries listed above with the addition of the United States.

Each apartment has a fully equipped kitchen, complete with dishwasher, oven, gas stove, refrigerator with freezer, washing machine, and wifi. An exclusive garden equipped with barbecue, covered table, and a hammock is available.

Each apartment has exclusive access to the swimming pool, children's play area, covered communal shed, table tennis, and covered parking. Guests can count on continuous assistance from the central facility for any problems that may come up (health problems, mechanical breakdowns, disruptions in the apartments, etc...). The farmhouse telephone is always on.

Guided tours of the farm, horseback riding activities, butcher's workshop, truffle hunting experience in the farm reserve, tastings (meats, cured meats, etc.), bus-craft and survival courses, forestbathing, Nordicwalking, yoga and meditation trails, etc. are organised.

In addition, every spring there is an itinerant tasting of about 5 km with 5 gastronomic stops within the woods where the wild-raised Maremmana cattle live, accompanied by folk music, called *Messa al Pascolo* (about 300 attendances).

The agrotourism collaborates with the Natural History Museum of Grosseto, and together days are organised for the recognition of wild grasses and wild mushrooms.

Guests do not participate directly in farming because it is very complex and since the farms are semi-wild, there are no stables where guests can be involved in daily activities.



Swimming pool
(photo by Lucia Tacconi and Jacopo Goracci)



I Roggiati dining room and living room
(photo by Lucia Tacconi and Jacopo Goracci)



I Roggiati View of the house from the
common area (photo by Lucia Tacconi
and Jacopo Goracci)



I Roggiati external stairs (photo by Lucia
Tacconi and Jacopo Goracci)



Living room (photo by Lucia Tacconi and Jacopo Goracci)

About advertising

The company has its own website (<https://www.tenutadipaganico.it/it/accoglienza-agriturismo/>) with a direct booking platform (<https://booking.passepartout.cloud/booking?oidPortale=10621>). Word of mouth among customers is very effective.

It has a presence on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/tenuta.paganico> and on Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/tenuta_di_paganico/.

Social media is used to publicise the business as a whole and therefore for agrotourism, product sales, and farming.

About starting up the business

The agrotourism was started in 1996 by taking advantage of grants made available by the Region of Tuscany through the Rural Development Program for farm diversification and the start-up of agrotourism activities.

For the Tenuta di Paganico, the agrotourism activity represents an important link in the closing of its food production chain: through direct sales, administration, tasting and hospitality in general, the farm is able to transfer to the end user the values that are the common thread of all the different activities carried out.

Sustainability, respect for animals and the environment, the absence of chemical residues and drugs in the soil and food, animal and staff welfare, innovation and research are all values that are consistently transmitted to consumers, in a process of continuous exchange and education.

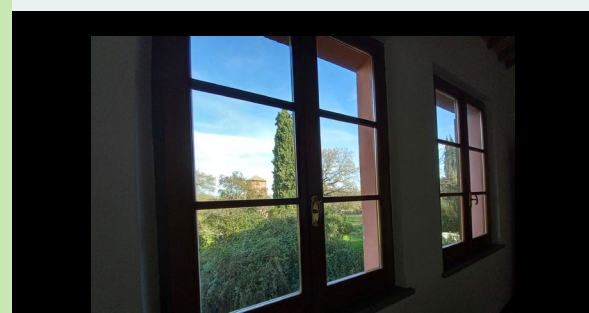
About commercialisation

In addition to the direct booking platform on the company's website (<https://www.tenutadipaganico.it/it/accoglienza-agriturismo/>) (<https://booking.passepartout.cloud/booking?oidPortale=10621>), the company is present on several portals through which it is possible to book your farm stay:

- Agriturismo Verde: <https://www.agriturismoverde.com/it/agriturismo/tenutadipaganico>
- Agriturismo.it: <https://www.agriturismo.it/it/agriturismi/toscana/grosseto/TenutadiPaganico-4990003/index.html>
- Booking: <https://www.booking.com/hotel/it/tenuta-di-paganico.it.html>

Through the company website, you can also buy farm produce, oil, wine, fresh meat, etc.

Since 2007 direct sales have been active in a farm store where it is possible to buy the farm's products (fresh meat, organic cold cuts, etc.) and a selection of other typical products, also organic, produced by other farms in the area. The store is also a point of reference for the farm's guests, who can find a wide selection of products. The restaurant is another way of marketing farm products but also a service aimed at guests and external customers.



I Roggiati View of the ancient water cistern from the kitchen windows (photo by Lucia Tacconi and Jacopo Goracci)



Outside yard (photo by Lucia Tacconi and Jacopo Goracci)

Food, thus, becomes a pretext for establishing deep and lasting relationships, (re)creating a link between countryside and city, between food producers and citizens, sharing knowledge that is essential to make a consistent and sustainable daily food choice, and stimulating a sociality that is too often sidelined.

At Tenuta di Paganico, the idea of creating an activity where the rural world and the urban world could come into contact long predates the establishment of agritourism. In fact, its founder as early as the 1970s felt the need to create an agricultural facility that would accommodate outsiders in order to bring them closer to the rural world, to share with them the knowledge of the countryside and the values of the land, and to safeguard traditions and avoid their dispersion since at that very time there had been a massive depopulation of the countryside with people moving to urban centres.

The renovation of the rural buildings for the agrotourism activity took place in several stages.

The first renovation, which involved the Podere dei Roggiati, made it possible to start the accommodation business in 1996. In 2000, a second renovation allowed to recover and use as agrotourism Casa di Caccia, a structure adjacent to the farm centre that in the past was used by the estate's hunters for meetings and lunches at the end of hunting trips. In 2005 an additional rural building, the farmhouse "I Noci" was renovated, which today is also used for agrotourism.

In the Rural Development Program 2007/2013 Tenuta di Paganico has benefited from the submeasure 311 "Diversification of non-agricultural activities" and the submeasure 121 "Modernization of farms". The farm, which had already benefited from additional funding on the previous programming 2000/2006, purchased the equipment for the apartment's kitchen and some computing devices, as well as carried out the renovation of the premises used as a farm shop and set up the laboratory of beef processing. For this reason, it was included in the directory of best practices in the framework of PSR 2007/2013 of the Province of Grosseto: <https://www.regione.toscana.it/documents/10180/12369765/scheda+TENUTA+-DI+PAGANICO.pdf/a66d3703-a436-4027-a420-ed77591d422a>

For the 2014/2020 Rural Development Program, the Estate has benefited from many measures, including 4.1.1, 8.3 and 8.4, but it has also been the lead partner in innovation transfer activities with submesures 16.2 PS-GO and 16.2 GAL F.A.R. Maremma.

As for the obstacles encountered, first of all there is

the one generated by the territorial structure of the company which is very extensive in length and therefore very dispersed making it difficult for people to interact with each other. In addition, the large extension along with the complexity of the company requires large resources.

The maintenance of large areas involves large budgets, especially for the maintenance of the agricultural activity and the accessibility to all farm areas, particularly with a view to carrying out accommodation activities.

Facilities must be easily accessible by any means. Another obstacle encountered concerns the aspect of marketing services and products. While it has been easy to find appropriate professionals to run the agritourism, managing the commercial aspect is more complicated due to the availability of fewer resources.

The bureaucracy of authorisations for whatever activity that wants to be implemented is one of the most important obstacles to be faced and it requires the commitment of considerable resources.

About managing an agrotourism business

The farm bases its tradition on free-range cattle breeding with silvopastoral management: Maremmana cattle and Cinta Senese pigs and crossbreeds. The Paganico Estate consists of 1,500ha, including 1,100 ha of woodland (mostly represented by tall Cerro trees), 100ha of pastureland, and 300ha of arable land (soft and hard wheat, barley, oats, triticale, field beans, protein peas, corn, sorghum, alfalfa, grassland and hay meadows, arboricultural plantings, olive groves, and vineyards).

Agrotourism activity accounts for about 30 percent of the farm's total income.

The farm does not have a family component in strength, and all people involved are employees.

Agricultural and tourism work are separate in the sense that the people assigned to the two departments are different according to their skills and competences. However, in a complex business like Tenuta di Paganico, the connections between the agricultural and agritourism compartments are necessary to make the business work at its best.

The activities offered to guests are many and some of them are closely related to agriculture, so those involved in planning and managing visits to the farm must be aware of the agricultural activity that takes place at all times of the season in order to offer valuable experiences for the guests.

Coordination meetings between employees on the agricultural side and those on the tourism side are held regularly on the farm.

The skills needed are numerous depending on the area of expertise, including administration, marketing agrotourism management, agricultural and livestock

management, meat processing, and catering. As far as Tenuta di Paganico is concerned, an improvement is desirable in the marketing and emarketing of services and products.

While for the agricultural and livestock sector there is a careful planning of activities and predictive strategies are put in place to optimise results, for the agritourism sector this ability to understand market trends in advance and the ability to adapt to changes is more difficult and slower.

Specific training and the possibility of employing properly trained and specialised figures in marketing strategies would help in the organisational phase, allowing for better results. Unfortunately, there are instances where certain events or changes in the market may not be fully grasped in time, causing the agrotourism activity to miss out. It would be more beneficial to catch on earlier and take advantage of these opportunities.

Knowledge of the regulations that affect the management of the agrotourism business in all its aspects such as, for example, security, privacy and all related policies is very important to manage the business wisely and doing training on this is strategic.

The ambition of the company is not to be just a spectator in front of the choices of the local administrators but to be an active part of the territory and also aims to be able to network with other companies to deal with the multiple aspects of land management and planning.

In the near future Tenuta di Paganico is considering the possibility of diversifying the agrotourism offer by including new ways of staying such as camping. Given the extension of the estate, spaces are available where a glamping or camping site could be built to expand the accommodation offer in the face of new market demands.



Advice for new entrepreneurs

The advice for new entrepreneurs who want to go into agrotourism is to create a unique identity for themselves through the services they offer. Placing yourself in the average today does not pay. In 1996 when Tenuta di Paganico started with agrotourism it was unique in the area, but today many farms have taken this path by starting agrotourism.

Vacationing in the farmhouse in a rural setting is no longer a novelty. Hence the need to find their own strong identity by offering something new and unique in the area.

Knowledge of the rules is also very important for those approaching this activity today.

Improvising in agriculture and agrotourism is not possible, as it takes a lot of knowledge to manage and make the activity productive, so training is very important.

Finally, inventing experiential activities for guests is a strategy that pays off. For example, a meat challenge has been developed as an experiential activity in order to raise awareness of the quality of their product. In Tenuta di Paganico, fresh beef is produced from semi-wild herds of the Maremma breed.

The customer is invited to taste meat from the farm in comparison with meat from other sources cooked in the same way, and through tasting and comparison, the aim is to recognise the distinctiveness of the meat produced on the farm.