

CASE STUDY IT - 4

NICHE PRODUCTS AND TOURISM IN GARFAGNANA (ITALY)

BRIEF PROFILE OF THE CASE STUDY

Garfagnana is a valley enclosed by mountains on three sides, in Tuscany region (Central Italy). The area comprises sixteen municipalities and has homogenous features from environmental, historical, economic and cultural reasons. In this area the Local Action Group and the “Unione dei Comuni” promoted a very successful local development strategy, strongly oriented towards **farming diversification (agro-tourism and niche products)**.

Key drivers were the **coherence and complementarities of policy interventions**, the **new tourism demand** and the **increased appreciation for quality and niche products**.

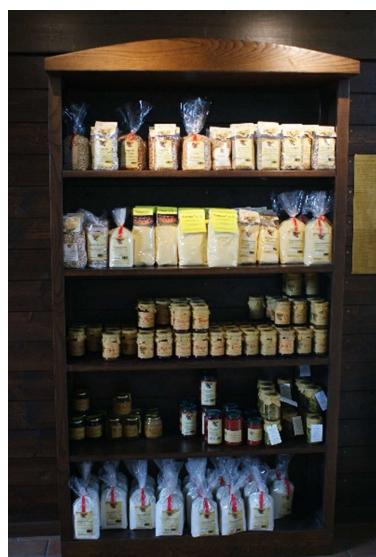
The main environmental and social benefits studied in this case study are (i) **biodiversity** (high levels of crop and livestock genetic diversity); (ii) **landscape character** and (iii) **rural vitality** (maintenance of rural identity through cultural and farming practices).



KEY FACTORS IMPACTING THE PROVISION OF ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL BENEFITS

In this case study the provision of environmental and social benefits is the result of a complex combination of **policy and market drivers**. Significant examples of such integration are: (i) the **regulatory framework and the policy support for agro-tourism**, which enabled local actors to invest in the sector; (ii) the **public support and the technical assistance**, that ensured to conserve local varieties and breeds (niche products).

In Garfagnana, the provision of environmental and social benefits is strongly linked to the features of the **local farming system**, not only in terms of farming structure and practices, but also in terms of rural traditions, cultural heritage, sense of belonging to the rural community, cultural and social habits. Key driving factors are **the capacity of local actors to collaborate**, the **coherence and coordination of public investments**; the **ability of local institutions to stimulate private initiatives** and the **bottom up and inclusive approach experimented through LEADER**.



EMERGING FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

A key element of this case study is the **capacity to react to difficult social and economic conditions experienced during the '80s and '90s** through a broad range of **coordinated public policies and market mechanisms** designed and implemented through **participatory and inclusive methods**. Garfagnana is now recognised as a very successful example of **local endogenous development based on farming and forestry resources**, with the overall result of an increased economic and social vitality of the area. The main challenges for the future are related to the structural features of the local farming sector, characterised by a **lack of generational turnover**, the **high presence of part-time and non-professional farms** and the **problematic land market** (with a very fragmented ownerships).

