



AgEcon SEARCH
RESEARCH IN AGRICULTURAL & APPLIED ECONOMICS

The World's Largest Open Access Agricultural & Applied Economics Digital Library

This document is discoverable and free to researchers across the globe due to the work of AgEcon Search.

Help ensure our sustainability.

Give to AgEcon Search

AgEcon Search
<http://ageconsearch.umn.edu>
aesearch@umn.edu

*Papers downloaded from **AgEcon Search** may be used for non-commercial purposes and personal study only. No other use, including posting to another Internet site, is permitted without permission from the copyright owner (not AgEcon Search), or as allowed under the provisions of Fair Use, U.S. Copyright Act, Title 17 U.S.C.*

JOURNAL OF RURAL COOPERATION



Centre international de recherches sur les communautés coopératives rurales
International Research Centre on Rural Cooperative Communities
המרכז הבינלאומי לחקר קהילות כפריות שיתופיות

CIRCOM

VOLUME 30

No. 1

2002

The **Journal of Rural Cooperation** is an international and multi-disciplinary bi-annual magazine. It welcomes articles, research reports and notes dealing with cooperatives and related rural organizations in developed and less developed countries. Topics of particular interest are cooperatives facing trends of globalization and privatization, the web of cooperative-community relationships, and cooperatives as part of such broader systems as mainstream economics or the "social economy" and related alternative paradigms.

Editorial Advisory Board

BARRACLOUGH, Prof. Solon, UNRISD,
Geneva, Switzerland.

BIRCHALL, Dr. Johnston, Stirling
University, UK.

CERNEA, Prof. Michael, The World Bank,
Washington, DC, USA.

CRAIG, Prof. Jack, York University,
Ontario, Canada.

CRONAN, Garry, Australian Centre for
Co-operative Research and Development,
Sydney, Australia.

DON, Prof. Yehuda, Bar Ilan University,
Ramat Gan, Israel.

FALS BORDA, Prof. Orlando, Punta de
Lanza Foundation, Bogotá, Colombia.

KIM, Prof. Jung-Joo, Kon-Kuk University,
Seoul, Korea.

KLATZMANN, Prof. Joseph, Institut
National Agronomique, Paris, France.

KRESSEL, Prof. G.M., Ben Gurion
University of the Negev, Be'er Sheva,
Israel.

MARON, Stanley, Kibbutz Maayan Zvi
and Yad Tabenkin, Ramat Efal, Israel.

MÜNKNER, Prof. Hans-H. Philipps-
Universität Marburg, Germany.

PARIKH, Prof. Gokul O., Sardar Patel
Institute of Economic and Social Research,
Ahmedabad, India.

SCHIMMERLING, Prof. Hanuš,
Agricultural University, Prague, Czech
Republic.

SCHVARTZER, Prof. Louis, Universidad
de Buenos Aires, Argentina.

STAVENHAGEN, Dr. Rodolfo, El Colegio
de Mexico, Mexico.

STROPPIA, Prof. Claudio, Università di
Pavia, Italy.

Editor: Dr. Yair Levi
Editorial Assistant: Daphna Bar-Nes

CIRCOM

Information for Subscribers: The *Journal of Rural Cooperation* is a semi-annual periodical, aimed at the pursuit of research in the field of rural cooperation. Editorial enquiries and other correspondence should be addressed to CIRCOM, Yad Tabenkin, Ramat Efal 52960, Israel. Fax: +972-3-5346376. E-mail: yadtab@inter.net.il (attn. CIRCOM). Subscription rate: \$28 per annum (plus \$3.00 sea mail; \$6.00 airmail).



JOURNAL OF RURAL COOPERATION

Vol. 30

No. 1

2002

CONTENTS

1. ARTICLES

- Agricultural Cooperatives in the County of Trento (Italy): Economic, Organizational and Legal Perspectives
Gios, G. and Santuari, A. 3
- Women's Agrotourist Cooperatives in Greece: Key Elements for Their Successful Operation
Iakovidou, O. 13
- Cooperative Societies in Greenland and Nunavik: A Lesson on the Importance of Supporting Structures
Winther, G. and Duhaime, G. 25
- Farmer Self-Organizing Innovation in the Marginal Areas of China: A Study of Farmer Communication Networks in Zhidan, Loess Plateau
Wu, B., Parnwell, M. and Bradley, P. 43

2. BOOK REVIEWS

- Birchall, J. (ed.) The New Mutualism in Public Policy
 S. Maron 65
- Granberg, L., Europe's Green Ring: Perspectives on Rural Policy and
Kovach, I. and Planning
Tovey, H. (eds.) *J. Maos* 66
- Tostensen, A., Associational life in African Cities: Popular Responses
Tvedten, I. and to the Urban Crisis
Vaa, M. (eds.) *A. Dubb* 67

3. CURRENT INFORMATION

- Dissertation Abstracts 69

Women's Agrotourist Cooperatives in Greece: Key Elements for Their Successful Operation

by

Olga Iakovidou

Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece

Abstract

Women's' agrotourist cooperatives constitute the most original type of rural tourism in Greece because of its planning, organization and management. This article aims to analyze the women's agrotourist cooperatives, to point out the bottom-up approach that is determinant for their successful operation, identify the factors that motivate Greek farm-women to join such cooperatives and the effects of such a decision on their life. The results indicate that the most successful cooperatives are those that meet one or more of the following conditions: 1) the cooperatives are made up of a core of women with leadership skills; 2) there is an authority that encourages and supports women's venture; and 3) their establishment is based on a bottom-up approach. The women's cooperatives managed to professionalize their part-time work. They created a source of income for rural women and gave them independence, power of control and self-esteem. Furthermore, the cooperatives resulted in placing the localities, in which they were established, on the Greek map of "alternative tourism".

Key words: Rural tourism; agrotourism; women in rural areas; women's agrotourist cooperatives; bottom-up approach; Zagora, Greece.

Introduction

Rural tourism and other forms of alternative tourism are notions that have recently been widely discussed in Europe. The major shift of interest of modern society in the protection and quality of the environment, coupled with the negative consequences of mass tourism on the environment of the host countries favored the promotion of rural tourism. Moreover, rural tourism is considered as a local or regional activity that may revitalize the rural environment and reduce desertification, thus offering an alternative solution to the social and economic problems facing the rural and mainly mountainous and disadvantaged areas (Iakovidou, 1992).

Rural tourism responds to two needs. The first is the need of the urban population for a "return" to nature, in order to satisfy their desire to escape from everyday life. The second concerns the farmers, who overcoming the role of the producer, decided

to open up to “others” and occupy themselves in the service industry, in an attempt to supplement their farm income, often insufficient and insecure (Iakovidou, 1995). While men keep their job as heads of their farms, women, who have no professional status on the farm (Bock, 1994; Gidarakou, 1999), take on the management of agrotourist activities (Bock, 1994; Burr, 1997).

Until 1970, there was no organized type of rural tourism in Greece. Some of its fervent advocates had envisaged the development of rural tourism but never got to realize it. From 1980 onwards, some local experts started planning new forms of tourism such as rural tourism.

With regard to the demand for rural tourism, it must be stressed that during the 1980s, in Greece, a Mediterranean country with long tradition in seaside tourism, rural tourism did not exist. Therefore, the urban demand was not high enough to create favorable conditions for the development of tourism in rural areas. In this regard, it is important to point out three facts: First, in Mediterranean countries, the dominant trend has always been seaside tourism. The international tourist agents who focused the interest of tourists, whether local or foreigners, on the coastal regions rather than the interior rural areas (Bazin et Roux, 1997) further reinforced this trend. Second, the strong desire for “returning to nature” and “discovering a place”, which emerged in the 1990s, did not exist in the early 1980s and could not constitute a tourism stream towards a certain destination in the country. Third, given that the rural exodus took place in Greece only recently (after the 2nd World War), the city-dwellers to date have not cut the painter with their hometowns and always go back to their villages on holidays. Therefore, they have never felt a strong need “to go back to their roots” or seek “the authenticity of the rural world”.

Rural tourism in Greece includes tourist activities that take place either in a farm (agritourism), or in a village (agrotourism). Even though agritourism remains underdeveloped because of the structure of Greek agriculture, agrotourism constitutes the most original form of rural tourism in the country and women’s agrotourist cooperatives are the main actors of its development.

In this paper, we will try to understand how the promotion of Greek agrotourism was achieved through the creation of such women’s agrotourist cooperatives. We will focus on the bottom-up approach as a determining factor for the successful operation of the cooperatives and other parameters that motivate Greek rural women to join these cooperatives. Moreover, we will try to analyze the effects of women’s involvement in such cooperatives.

The data used for this purpose were collected from personal interviews with the members of the cooperatives, especially in the area of Zagora in Pelion, and from a number of studies that were carried out in various areas in Greece.

Literature review

The involvement of rural women in off-farm business activities is an increasing phenomenon in Europe (Ventura, 1994; Bock, 1994; Gidarakou, 1999). The main sectors in which they are involved are: 1) agrotourism; 2) production and distribution of agricultural and other traditional products; 3) manufacturing and trading products related to the cultural heritage; 4) manufacturing and trading products of alternative forms of agriculture (Gidarakou, 1999). The common feature of all these activities is that they are mutually supportive and show the significance of parallel, complementary action promising to provide diversified and well-structured agrotourist services, which will make them viable forms of employment in the countryside. Besides, what is of great importance is that most of these activities are part of the duties of a traditional housewife and, therefore, women are familiar with them. Finally, women do not have to move away from the house, family, or community in which they live and/or work (Iakovidou, 1995).

According to research, rural women usually prefer to engage in new activities in the farm rather than take on a paid job, because this gives them the opportunity to combine their domestic duties and the work in the farm. It also gives them the possibility to be always close to the children and the farm, which is the main characteristic of a "good" mother and farmer (Bock, 1999). However, this characteristic is also the biggest stumbling block in her involvement in innovative agrotourist activities that take place away from the household and the farm. The fact that still today women work on the farm is, at least for the Greek farms that are family-run, a determining factor for the survival of the farm (Tsartas and Thanopoulou, 1994).

Empirical research (Gidarakou, 1999; Gidarakou *et al.*, 2000) conducted in Greece showed that the rural women that engage in off-farm activities prefer to work in teams and become members of cooperatives. The empirical evidence corroborate this view explaining that women are more inclined to belong to a group or a community and feel more capable of dealing with problems when working in a team (Gidarakou *et al.*, 1997). It is possible that their preference for teamwork is also due to their inward shyness and to the fact that they are called to stop being submissive and take on responsibilities (Gidarakou *et al.*, 2000). Besides, this preference partly results from the decisions of the agricultural policy on the employment of rural women.

In Greece, the agents involved in the promotion of agrotourism oriented women to the establishment of, and participation in, cooperatives, rather than the creation of a personal business. This is because priority is given to the funding of collective, rather than individual investments (Iakovidou, 1992; Tsartas and Thanopoulou, 1994).

Yet, women's presence and involvement in such collective ventures and mainly in mixed cooperatives is rather low in Greece (Drosopoulou, 1989; Tsartas and

Thanopoulou, 1994) like in the most developed and developing countries (Turner, 1985). The legal barriers and the perception of women about the roles of the two sexes are the most significant reasons for the limited participation of women in mixed cooperatives (Tsartas and Thanopoulou, 1994). These obstacles, however, are lifted through the establishment of women's cooperatives. In Greece, farm women and rural women participate in agrotourist cooperatives, which constitute one of the most successful examples of agrotourist development in the country.

Women's agrotourist cooperatives in Greece

Women's cooperatives in Greece date from the early 1950s. Their initial goal was to increase the family income and to upgrade the social status of the farm woman. The most prominent activities at the time were the manufacture and distribution of artifacts of cultural heritage. These cooperatives did not manage to make their presence felt in the domain of agriculture. This is due to the objectives of the agricultural policy that prevailed at the time and until the late 1970s, with regard to the increase of the agricultural production and the modernization of farming (Gidarakou, 1999; Gidarakou *et al.*, 2000). However, just 10 of them managed to survive until the end of the 1980s, when the first women's agrotourism cooperatives were established.

The initiative of the creation of women's agrotourist cooperatives lies with the Equality Council, which later became the General Secretariat of Equality of the Ministry of the Interior, Public Administration and Decentralization.¹ The initiative was launched in 1983 with the establishment of a cooperative in Petra, a rural settlement on the island of Lesbos. There are three main reasons that led to the establishment of such cooperatives: The first is the rise in awareness of the governments and the European Union in equality matters. This was achieved through the application of vocational training programs for women, like the NOW² initiative, which aimed at creating small enterprises. Emphasis was put on farm and rural women, who more than any other social group were on the fringe of society mainly because of the problems faced in their workplaces. The second reason was the choice of the most appropriate form of women's involvement in the productive systems. The reasons for choosing the cooperative form is because women prefer to work in teams and become members of cooperatives as they feel more capable of dealing with problems when working together. The choice of cooperatives made up exclusively of women was due to the following factors: 1) it was easier for a woman to join a women's cooperative rather than a mixed one (Iakovidou, 1995); 2) women could collect the money for the service provided without men's intervention (Tsartas-Thanopoulou, 1994). The third reason is that women's cooperatives are mostly oriented to agrotourism. This is based on two elements: 1) across the

¹This is the authority responsible for promoting and guaranteeing the legal and substantial equality of opportunities and the equal treatment of men and women in "all sectors of economic and social life".

²NOW is an initiative of the European Union aiming at the creation of small businesses by women.

Greek countryside, there are beautiful places which, in combination with their local heritage, seem to fulfill the increasing demand for alternative forms of tourism (Iakovidou, 1995); 2) the capital required for the operation of such ventures is not very big. Besides, women are to some extent familiar with the duties they are in charge of, which are similar to their simple domestic duties even though they do not only have to serve their guests but also be entrepreneurs (Sandrous, 1992; Iakovidou, 1992).

The ideological motivation for creating these cooperatives is the belief that they could help change women's status in rural areas. In addition, in a country with a long tradition in mass, organized tourism, these cooperatives are considered as places of collective action for women, rather than agrotourist enterprises in the form of a cooperative (Tsartas and Thanopoulou, 1994). They were created in "an effort to guarantee women's economic independence as a first step towards their emancipation" (Laiou-Antoniou, 1985). Emphasis was put, on the one hand, on women's economic independence rather than the creation of supplementary income for the rural family and, on the other hand, on the overall improvement of local resources and economy, which is the goal of agrotourist development.

The establishment of the first women's agrotourist cooperative, based on a top-down approach (Equality Council), was at the time an avant-garde initiative. From the supply point of view, it offered an innovative touristic product of "vacation in the countryside," and from the demand point of view, it responded to the increasing demand for alternative forms of tourism.

As regards the supply of agrotourist services, it must be pointed out that until recently Greece did not have a structured agrotourist product that combined vacation in the countryside, consumption of local agricultural products and the promotion of rural heritage.

The specific project that was proposed to women by the Equality Council concerned an innovative product, which was planned "somewhere else" and was almost unknown in Greece. Of course, the motivation for this project was based on the fact that the women would have an income from activities they were familiar with, such as selling farm products or handmade crafts and providing bed and breakfast services. Nevertheless, providing tourism and recreational services in rural areas, which entailed evading the traditional framework of typical Greek hospitality and female work in the house, turned out to be very difficult. It took time and special training for women, actors and local communities to accept, organize and finally adopt the technical and organizational innovations required for the implementation of agrotourist projects.

Apart from the General Secretariat of Equality, there were also other public and private authorities which, mostly in the early 1990s, mobilized and encouraged the female population of rural areas to establish either purely agro-tourist or agro-

industrial cooperatives. Initially, these authorities were motivated by EU projects such as LEADER,³ NOW, etc. However, most often, they confined themselves to holding training seminars for women, without being able to support or promote women's initiatives (Koutsou, 2000).

The first cooperatives were established in the period 1989-1993. The period between 1989-93 was characterized by relative stagnation because of policy changes in matters of equality of the two genders. After 1993, most of the new women's cooperatives were supported by EU projects and initiatives (LEADER, NOW, etc.) as well as local agents who promoted employment and business activities in the field of agriculture.

Today, there are approximately 74 women's cooperatives, and another 7 are under formation. They are located in towns and villages of the Greek countryside covering the total surface of continental and insular Greece. Ten of those provide hospitality services either in guesthouses or in rooms to let and have a total capacity of 660 beds. Recently, they expanded their activities to the manufacture and trade of traditional products with a view to diversify agrotourist production. Most of the cooperatives are small home industries and handicrafts. Thirty-one of them are involved in the production of processed and differentiated agricultural products; thirteen, in the manufacture of artifacts and textiles; nine combine these two activities, while the rest have no specific activities.

In 1998, the women's cooperatives established a Union consisting of 11 founding members. One year later, another 5 cooperatives became members while the rest of them are expected to join it in the near future.

No competent authority controlled or coordinated the establishment of Women's Agrotourist Cooperatives, especially from 1993 onwards. As a result, most of these cooperatives were concentrated in some Prefectures, such as Evros (seven cooperatives) and Magnesia (six cooperatives), at the expense of certain areas such as the Ionian Islands and Western Greece. Furthermore, this resulted in a lack of cooperation between them.

The top-down and bottom-up approaches to the cooperatives

The studies and research that were conducted during the 17 years of existence of the women's agrotourist cooperatives focused on the first cooperatives, which were established in the mid-1980s and are considered as agrotourist cooperatives par excellence, because their main activity consisted in providing bed and breakfast services (Kanaki, 1989; Logotheti, 1993; Tsartas and Thanopoulou, 1994; Liatou, 1995; Giagou and Apostolopoulos, 1996; Iakovidou, 1997; Delipetrou, 2000). The very few studies on the cooperatives carried out in the 1990s (Emmanouilidou *et al.*, 2000; Delipetrou, 2000) indicate that the conditions prevailing at the time of the

³LEADER (1991-to date) is an initiative of the European Union aiming at rural development.

establishment of a cooperative were determinant for its subsequent development.

When a cooperative was established on the basis of a top-down approach, its success depended on its capacity to "understand" the needs of the local population and the participation process in planning and intervention. Most often, they did not comply with this process. The authority responsible for the creation of a cooperative was the one to define both its form and activities. More specifically, the women's cooperative was chosen as the ideal business for women who wished to engage in a business activity, while agrotourism and the manufacture and distribution of agricultural or other traditional products were chosen as the main cooperative activities.

A number of seminars on the "cooperative" concept and other agrotourist activities were held in order to train women and to promote the idea of women's cooperatives. These seminars did not contribute much to an understanding of the issue, in particular of cooperative principles. This often resulted in the discord between the women and the inefficient operation of the cooperative management. This also resulted from lack of business awareness as to the operation, management and selection of goals with negative effects on the financial issues (low profits, lack of capitals, lack of investments).

However, in the few cases where a cooperative was established on the basis of the bottom-up approach, thanks to educational and training programs, women made themselves familiar with the cooperative principles and the agrotourist values, and as a result, the cooperative's performance was satisfactory in terms of growth and development.

One example is the women's agrotourist cooperative of Zagora in Pelion, which was established in 1993 and started operating one year later. The idea and the initiative belonged exclusively to the women of Zagora.

The women of Zagora decided to create a business unit in order to use their know-how in the production of high-quality goods such as marmalade, jam and other sweets through processing of local agricultural products.

The main factors that urged women to create such enterprises were related to their personal needs. Their main need was to guarantee an income, essential for strengthening their self-confidence and acknowledging their role in the rural community, in which they lived and worked. This need stems from the fact that, in their vast majority, women of Zagora, who merely helped in the family farm, did not receive any form of income and, consequently, depended financially on the head of the family. This fact also determined their status in the Zagora community, which they tried to change by becoming members in a cooperative. Spending their free time in a productive way, giving them the opportunity to get in touch with each other and with the visitors of the area, was another factor that motivated women to create a cooperative or to join it. The determining factors for their participation were: 1) the

fact that their involvement in the cooperative gave them the possibility to stay close to their children, household and farm; and 2) the fact that women were familiar with most of the agrotourist activities that were part of the traditional role of the housewife.

Women chose to work as a group because they were accustomed to working together with their relatives or neighbors and because they could tackle their problems more effectively. Besides, participating in a cooperative implied a lower degree of responsibility, a smaller capital and, therefore, a lower economic and personal risk compared to a private business.

The women of Zagora decided that the cooperative was the most appropriate legal business form for them. It was not imposed directly or indirectly either by the government or by any other authority. Their decision was determined by their positive experience from the Agricultural Cooperative of Zagora, a successful local cooperative established in 1916. It must be stressed that this cooperative applied competitive strategies that, according to the relevant empirical evidence of the Greek food companies (Oustapassidis and Notta, 1997; Oustapassidis and Vlachvei, 1999; Oustapassidis *et al.*, 2000) improved the performance of both the investor-owned and cooperative organizations. Therefore, the local women who, through their husbands who were members of the Agricultural Cooperative, were familiar with the cooperative principles and practices, knew what would be the social and economical benefits. Thus, they considered the cooperatives as the most appropriate form that would allow them not only to achieve the economic objectives of their own enterprise but also to contribute to the promotion of social welfare values in their isolated region.

The bottom-up approach contributed to a great extent to the proper operation and general development of the cooperative. The transparent operation of the cooperative allowed women to build mutual trust and to work together effectively.

The difficulty that usually emerges when an idea conceived on a national level (*e.g.* establishing a cooperative) is implanted in the female population of a traditional rural economy, did not emerge in the case of the Women's Cooperative in Zagora. The bottom-up approach implied a voluntary participation of women, which was not imposed by any public authority or project. As a result, the number of women that joined the cooperative of Zagora increased to 90, making it one of the three largest women's cooperatives in the country. The other two are those of Tyhero, in Evros and Kissamos, in Crete, each with 120 members.

The dissemination of ideology, although vitally important for a cooperative to run successfully, was not necessary to farm women, as the ideological element of cooperation is part of the tradition and culture of Zagora. The existence of a core of very active women with leadership skills approved by the majority of members, was determinant for the smooth operation of the cooperative. Selecting qualified people as members of the board of administration of the cooperative, among whom the skilled women mentioned above, resulted in a good management and decision-

making process and in the absence of conflicts within the cooperative. Internal conflicts, in fact one of the most serious problems of cooperatives, were limited in the case of Zagora, because the distribution of labor among members was done on the basis of availability. Apart from the successful management of the cooperative, it is worth noting its good performance that does not only refer to economic factors associated with growth, but also to a successful application of strategies leading to the production of highly diversified high-quality products and services.

The cooperative of Zagora is one of the Greek cooperatives that managed to overcome their problems and the public funding syndrome, and promote their work in order to finance their own activities. Thus, in the early stage of its operation, every member prepared the traditional local products at home and then sold them at the store rented by the cooperative in the main square of the village. Three years later, the cooperative rented a place in the village in order to house a well-equipped workshop where women could prepare their products, working in shifts and being paid according to the time spent conducting their duties. As a result, production went five times up.

In the winter of the year 2000, the cooperative established a high-quality unit for processing local agricultural products. Moreover, the cooperative built up a small traditional hotel that provides high-quality and traditional services. These initiatives helped the cooperative grow, compete with other firms of the same field, and therefore increase its chances of surviving.

Local authorities such as the Municipality of Zagora, the Local Action Group of Pelion, the Agricultural Cooperative of Zagora and the Prefecture of Magnesia supported the cooperative of Zagora. Some of these authorities offered their full support in the early stages of its operation and continued to do so in the course of time. Others merely held a number of educational and training seminars without providing any other kind of support, encouragement or promotion. However, it must be stressed that despite its sound operation, the cooperative has some weaknesses, mainly as far as marketing is concerned, and therefore needs the support of bodies with specialized knowledge.

Conclusions and discussion

The development of women's agrotourist cooperatives in Greece can be described as an ongoing story of success and struggles. Their success is partly due to the assets of the women themselves such as the true hospitality based on "welcome to my house" model and a true interest in pleasing the customer. Other factors that contributed to the success of these cooperatives are the rich resources of the areas and the high potential for rural tourism.

The women's cooperatives succeeded in adding many rural communities on the Greek map of "alternative tourism" and the professionalization of part-time as well as unpaid women's work. Furthermore they had an influence on the development of

other sectors of the local economy, namely agriculture, trade, small enterprises, etc. They also succeeded in guaranteeing an income to rural women. They helped to give them independence, self-esteem, self-confidence and to improve their social status in the local community. Finally, women's daily contact with people from different cultures and mentalities gave them the opportunity to go beyond the limits of their own community and therefore open their horizons.

Initially, women's agrotourist cooperatives, in theory and in practice, laid the foundations for the creation of new structures in rural areas. Ever since, however, they have been in limbo and in an economic and social stagnation, which, to a great extent, is due to the lack of continuity in the support provided by the competent authorities responsible for the top-down approach of their establishment. Many of these authorities withdrew their initial support unexpectedly and at an inopportune time, without having created in the meantime the necessary support infrastructure. Also, the members of the cooperatives failed to understand the cooperative idea and a number of technical and operational problems arose during operation, which in turn led to frictions and conflicts among the members.

Even though most cooperatives were financed by State or EU projects, only few managed to overcome their problems and take on the promotion of their work in order to finance their own activities. The cooperatives that were based on the bottom-up approach, and were run by women with leadership skills, belong to this category. These conditions contributed to their success.

One very important lesson is that good intention, quality products, the "welcome to my house" hospitality and a true interest in pleasing the customer, are not enough. Apart from the practical knowledge of hospitality management and the manufacturing know-how of local traditional products, there are other prerequisites, such as knowledge in marketing, management and capital. Networking and inter-cooperative relations are vital for the success and the development of women's agrotourism cooperatives. Therefore, it is needed to provide training on specific issues and to create the necessary support infrastructure.

References

- Anthopoulou, T., Iakovidou, O., Koutsouris, A. and Spilanis, I. (1998). "Spatial and developing dimensions of agritourism in Greece" in *Proceedings of the Fifth Hellenic Congress of Agricultural Economics*. Athens, pp. 485-501 (in Greek).
- Bazin, G. and Roux, B. (1997). *L'agritourisme: un atout pour les zones rurales difficiles Méditerranéennes?*. Paris: Harmattan.
- Bock, Ir. B.B. (1994). "Female Farming in Umbrian Agriculture" in L. van der Plas and M. Fonte (eds.) *Rural Gender Studies in Europe*. Assen/Maastricht: Van Gorcum, pp. 91-107.
- _____. (1999). "Women and Rural Development in Europe: Appreciated

- but Undervalued". Paper presented at the Conference "Gender and Rural Transformations in Europe: Past, Present and Future Prospects". Wageningen, 14-17.10.99.
- Burr, M. (1997). "Farm Tourism in Scotland: Impacts on Farm Family Now and in the Future". Paper presented at the European Seminar "Agrotourism and its Contribution in Conserving the Cultural Tradition of the European Countries. Plomari-Lesvos (Greece), 2-7.6.97.
- Delipetrou, E. (2000). "The Experience from the Function of the Women's Agrotourism Cooperative of Zagora and the Rest of Greece". First Meeting on Agrotourism and Rural development, Gazoro (Greece), 14.5.00 (in Greek).
- Drosopoulou, S. (1989). *Agrotourism Cooperatives*. Athens: Interbooks (in Greek).
- Emmanouilidou, M., Stavrakas, T., Simeonidou, P. and Xrisostomidis, D-G. (2000). Development Perspectives of Agrotourism in Poroia: The Case of Women's Agrotouristic Cooperative of Poroia, Greece. Mimeograph. Thessaloniki: Department of Agricultural Economics, Aristotelian University of Thessaloniki (in Greek).
- Giagou, D. and Apostolopoulos, C. (1996). "Rural Women and the Development of the Agritouristic Cooperatives in Greece: The Case of Petra, Lesvos". *Journal of Rural Cooperation*, 24:143-155.
- Gidarakou, I. (1999). "Indigenous Development in Countryside and Women Employment" in Kasimis, H. and Louloudis, L (eds.) *Greek Rural Society in the End of the Twentieth Century*. Athens: NCSR, pp. 189-216 (in Greek).
- _____, Xenou, A., Kazazis, E. and Theofilidou, K. (1997). "The Challenge of Women's New Roles In Rural Greece". Paper presented at the XVII Congress of the European Society of Rural Sociology "Local Responses to Global Integration: Towards a new era of rural restructuring." Crete: 25-29.8.97.
- _____, Xenou, A. and Theofilou K. (2000). "Farm Women's New Vocational Activities: Prospects and Problems of Women's Cooperatives and Small On-Farm Businesses in Greece." *Journal of Rural Cooperation*, 28:19-37.
- Iakovidou, O. (1992). "The Role of the Women's Agrotourism Cooperatives for Promotion of Agrotourism in Greece". *SINETERISTIKI PORIA*, 27:137-145 (in Greek).
- _____. (1995). "Rural Tourism". Paper presented at the Congress of Geotechnical Chamber. Athens: 10-12.12.95 (in Greek).
- _____ and Turner, C. (1995). "The Female Gender in Greek Agrotourism". *Annals of Tourism Research*, 22:481-484.
- _____. (1997). "Agrotourism in Greece: The Case of Women's Agrotourism Cooperative of Ambelakia". *MEDIT*, 1:44-47.

- Kanaki, E. (1989). The Women's Agrotourism Cooperative at Petra of Lesvos: A Case Study. Mimeograph. Thessaloniki: Department of Agricultural Economics, Aristotelian University (in Greek).
- Koutsou, S. (2000). Women's Agrotourism Cooperatives: Link Problems Related to Local Development. Paper presented at the VI Hellenic Congress of Agricultural Economics. Thessaloniki: 24-25.11.00 (in Greek).
- Laiou-Antoniou, H. (1985). New forms of women's cooperatives. Athens: General Secretariat of Equality (in Greek).
- Liatou, A. (1995). Characteristics and Attitudes of Tourists that Choose Agrotourism as a Form of Leisure: The Case of Agrotouristic Cooperative in Ampelakia. Mimeograph. Thessaloniki: Department of Agricultural Economics, Aristotelian University (in Greek).
- Logotheti, A. (1993). Women's Agrotouristic Cooperative of Prespes, Management-Training and Educational Needs of the Members. Mimeograph, Thessaloniki: Department of Agricultural Economics, Aristotelian University (in Greek).
- Oustapassidis, K. and Notta, O. (1997). "Profitability of Cooperatives and Investor-Owned Firms in Greece". *Journal of Rural Cooperation*, 25:33-43.
- _____ and Vlachvei, A. (1999). "Profitability and Product Differentiation in Greek Food Industries". *Applied Economics*, 3:1293-1298.
- _____, Vlachvei, A. and Notta, O. (2000). "Efficiency and Market Power in Greek Food Industries". *Journal of Agricultural Economics*, 82:623-629.
- Sandrous, M. (1992). "The Policy of the Secretariat General for Equality of the Two Sexes in the Field of Agrotourism". Paper presented at the Conference "Rural Tourism". Thessaloniki: 21-22.1.92 (in Greek).
- Triandafyllou, K. (1999). Ag. Germanos in the Chart of Alternative Tourism. The Contribution of the Women's' Agrototuristic Cooperative. M.Sc. Thesis. Thessaloniki: Department of Agricultural Economics, Aristotelian University (in Greek).
- Tsartas, P. and Thanopoulou, T. (1994). *Women's Agrotourism Cooperation in Greece, a Study of Its Function*. Athens: KEGME (in Greek).
- Turner, C. (1985). Circumstances Influencing Forms of Cooperation in Agriculture with Particular Reference to Women's Participation. M.Sc. Thesis. Wye College, University of London.
- Ventura, F. (1994). "Women in Italian Agriculture: New Roles, New Problems" in Plas L. van der and Fonte, M. (eds.) *Rural Gender Studies in Europe*. The Netherlands: Van Gorcum. pp. 80-90.