

**Eco Agro Tourism and Organic Holidays**  
**By**  
**Victor Ananias / Bugday Association-Turkey**

## **1- ECEAT and Eco Agro Tourism in the world**

To build a strong movement, sector and to sustain it, strong civil participation, good economic systems, and laws made for sustainability with correct party's involvement is needed. Practically sustainable tourism is not yet so well advanced and regulated as organic production all over the globe. The organic movement is a good example to consider whilst developing the eco-sustainable tourism sector and movement.

There is no strong-global organization in Sustainable tourism as IFOAM stands for organic agriculture globally. ECEAT is a good example in the field as the leading organization of small-scale sustainable tourism with a special attention to rural areas and organic farming. ECEAT is a growing network of over 1300 small-scale accommodations and tourist services all over Europe, offering sustainable quality of tourist services and approves their contribution to local communities and protection of the environment. ECEAT promotes responsible travel which brings every year almost 500.000 overnights in rural areas for benefit of local economies in 20 European countries and satisfies responsible travelers.

ECEAT provides expertise in the field of sustainable tourism through number of different projects all over the world - in Europe, Americas or Asia. Its role is not only sharing experience and being a marketing tool for ecological and sustainable tourism but also a tool to be strengthened in order to work on the legislative-political level.

Besides many local and regional organizations in this field, WWOOF, "World Wide Opportunities at Organic Farms" network is another network of holidays in the organic farms which does not utilize money but works on volunteer exchange of work power and accommodation-food. WWOOF has 46 National organizations and host organic farms at around 50 other countries with no national coordination.

## **2- Eco Agro Tourism in Turkey and TaTuTa**

Organic agriculture has a more concrete description, legal infrastructure than Ecotourism in Turkey like in many other countries. Organic agriculture principles have been practiced at rural land for centuries, traditions that are built for ages by different races on this soil still exist in their full diversity. Nevertheless, certified organic agriculture in Turkey has started with the demand from European importers in the early 80's. Even if Turkey has been main exporter of organic sultanas, apricots, cotton, figs, hazelnut, rose oil and others, the real move in the verification and growing numbers in organic production has been by the taking off of the domestic markets in the last 5 years.

Hospitality is something Turkey strongly represents especially in the wisdom of rural traditions. But still in consideration to the numbers of comparison between mass production-services with the sustainable ones in tourism in Turkey, there is still a big gap. TaTuTa, the organic farm visits system started and run by Bugday Association

has been the only ecological and agricultural tourism scheme at the national level and represented internationally as well since 2004.

Bugday Association's vision is a whole humanity consisting of ecologically and socially sustainable lifestyles. To serve that, Bugday as a social movement has started to work 18 years ago on building sustainable human activities, support the existing good examples and network among all to enhance free flow of knowledge and experience.

In 2003 Buğday has started to work on its farm visits, consumer educations at site and volunteer program's in a well organized whole system at a sustainable-organic farm network. With this respect TaTuTa farm visits and volunteers program was established, which also led the organization to become member of ECEAT and WWOOF. TaTuTa has 70 farms in different regions of Turkey that receive Tourist and/or volunteers as hosts. They are checked, trained, supported and advertised by Bugday Association. Bugday does all these on volunteer basis, finds donors for its expenses. Reservations are made by another partner since 2006, Genctur, which is a youth tour organizer company in Turkey. TaTuTa receives a growing number of tourists and volunteers from Turkey and other countries.

### **3- Funding in Ecological and Sustainable Tourism**

Before a baby is born, there has to be a lot of love, care, good intentions and plans among the potential partners. Money neither helps during the pregnancy nor in the lifetime of the born person, if you do not have these. All strong - successful social movements have been developed from civil, strongly motivated, visionary people's intentions, activities and devotion.

There is a lot of money available at many resources like national and international funds like Dutch Matra Fund, UNDP, GEF SGP, EU, World Bank, Soros Foundation, etc. The only delicate part is when money and funding starts to be the dominating-motivating prior tool there may start some loss of vision and values, corruption, handouts and all other negative effects. The main tool to eliminate the negative impacts of money and finances is to have a strong vision that includes and describes the well being of all possible stakeholders, parties affected.

Today it looks impossible to escape from using money as an exchange tool but with creative systems we can still do a lot. For instance Turkish TaTuTa host families in Turkey exchange some of the organic products that they do not produce themselves to consume and serve their guests

What we can be done at international sustainable tourism schemes is that with the help of volunteer networks, different standards at different parts of the world can be described and adopted in order to give chance for every stakeholder to compete, get enough interest in a possibly more equal way. That is of course just one of the many good ideas that need to be planned, worked on and realized by satisfactory participation in order to generate enough funding into the sustainable tourism activities all over the world.

### **4- Future of Eco Agro Tourism**

Now is the time again to take further steps to improve the movement to cooperate, coordinate it so well so that we can start competing with mass tourism, and support further the shift from unsustainable ways to sustainable ones.

Tourism and other activities on that level can only sustain first of all by leaving out any kind of discrimination, for example having a fair and shared participation of the woman in the activities. So each country, region even farm should be working in consideration of the local conditions but again, never supporting discrimination at any level as unfair roles of women's in the society.

We as the actors, decision-making partners of this issue should make sure that we do utilize and regulate, grow the idea of Ecological-Sustainable tourism as a tool for peace, against any social contradiction and consider and respect each region-culture that we work with its own priorities, needs in that. Demand should not be the shaping power but only a stakeholder of sustainability building in this.

In organic agriculture another label is necessary to indicate that it comes from a fair system for its producers called Fair Trade Label. It would be much easier if organic labels could also have standards including that. Nevertheless we are able to define that in Tourism now so that many countries that still do not have any legislation or are developing it, can include social standards into the general legislations and guidelines.

We can change everything, come over all challenges as long as we are ready to take some risk and pay the price for it in all means. Agricultural and Ecological Tourism has chance to grow in a sustainable way only if it remains with social values dominating the sector in all means.

## **5- Related Links**

[www.bugday.org](http://www.bugday.org)

[www.tatuta.org](http://www.tatuta.org)

[www.eceat.org](http://www.eceat.org)

[www.woof.org](http://www.woof.org)

[www.ifoam.org](http://www.ifoam.org)