

Title: Perceptions toward agrotourism diversification – the case of family farming in Prespa region, Macedonia

Name: Delyana Marinova

### Background

The agricultural sector plays an important role in Macedonia in terms of both value added and employment. As subsistence agriculture still dominates in most parts of the region, farming ensures a minimum level of food security and socio-economic stability in rural areas. Therefore, the sector has an important function as a social and economic buffer for rural economies.

Farmers in the region derive their income mainly from agricultural production, but nowadays they are struggling to survive in difficult economic times. They are particularly vulnerable due to dependency on weather conditions and climate changes, natural disasters and animal and plant diseases. After the sharp decline in farm income in recent years, new types of on-farm activities hold the potential for economic revival of rural areas. In particular, non-agricultural activities can diversify the farm and thus create additional sources of income for farmers.

Couple attempts were made in the past few years to improve the rural development and increase farm diversification levels in the country mainly through IPARD and National funds but those levels still remain low.

Agrotourism is a type of niche tourism that could provide substantial additional income and reduce the economic risk of family farms in Macedonia. In the region of Prespa, this type of diversification activity is particularly relevant as 43% of the population are primarily engaged in agriculture and the area lay within close proximity of the touristic destination of Ohrid city as well as two big lakes, two national parks and borders with Albania and Greece.

### Aims/Research questions

The main research objective of the Master thesis is to contribute to an enhanced understanding of the perceptions of farmers in Prespa region toward agrotourism diversification on their farms.

Research questions:

- How do farmers in Prespa define agrotourism diversification?
- What are the factors that hinder the development of agrotourism in Prespa region, according to farmers?
- How could agrotourism diversification help the local family farms?

### Methods

Qualitative case study method is used in order to achieve the research objectives and focus specifically on family farms in rural Prespa, Macedonia.

In the initial phase of the research, exploratory interviews with 8 farmers were conducted to get to know the context and build trust in the area. Together with literature review on the topic of agriculture in Macedonia and agricultural diversification in general, these initial interviews provided data for developing and designing the semi-structured interviews for the main research phase. In the latter, 20 family farms from the region are visited and data is collected by in-depth interviews with open-ended questions to gain deeper knowledge about their perceptions toward agrotourism diversification. For the purpose of this study, the collection method is snowball or chain referral sampling where participants' social networks are used to get to know and recruit more interviewees.

|   |                                 |
|---|---------------------------------|
| Study programme                         | M.Sc. AgEcon                    |
| Lifetime                                | 01.02.2018 – 01.08.2018         |
| First examiner                          | Prof. Dr. Claudia Bieling       |
| Second examiner                         | Prof. Dr. Andrea Knierim        |
| Supervisor (if different from examiner) | -                               |
| External partners                       | GIZ Macedonia<br>UNDP Macedonia |

## Reference

Volk, T., Erjavec, E., & Mortensen, K. (Eds.). (2014). *Agricultural policy and European integration in Southeastern Europe*. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.

COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT. (2016). *The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia 2016 Report*

MakStat – *Macedonian Statistical Institute*