

## **DIVERSIFICATION AS AN ALTERNATIVE STRATEGY FOR SUSTAINABLE FARM DEVELOPMENT**

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### **Abstract**

Structural changes in agriculture have drawn attention to new opportunities to use the farm's resources. In order to support rural development, the agricultural policy makers have consistently promoted multifunctionality and diversification of farms by encouraging new types of activities. Farmers get involved in diversification operations and developed on-farm and off-farm activities for various reasons: to face the challenges of the agricultural context, to obtain additional income, continuity of their agricultural activity, to improve their family's quality of life and to reduce the risk of the unstable agricultural market environment. The decision regarding farm diversification depends on a series of factors related to economic, geophysical and socio-demographic farm characteristics or to environmental conservation strategies. The proximity to urban areas fosters the process of farm diversification and it also influences the level of diversification. The sustainability of the farm involves not only economic, but also social and environmental aspects, but most of the farmers are more interested in the economic and social performance and less in the ecological performance. The main forms of farm diversification include: agritourism; non-traditional crops, livestock and practices; added value to existing agricultural products; new marketing and distribution channels; consulting or education service; conservation and restoration of historical buildings, equipment, artifacts from the farm.

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