



Co-funded by
the European Union



AGORA

Proj. No: 2022-1-FR01-KA220-ADU-000086999

Work Package 2

Activity A2

Identification of Challenges and Barriers that stand in the way of developing Regenerative Tourism experiences.

Interviews with local producers of Food and Drinks

Reporting Template

Varvara Michael

Developed by p-consulting.gr.

May 2023



WP2 A2 Interviews with local producers of Food and Drinks Reporting Template Reporting – Varvara Michael

.....1

Interviews with local producers of Food and Drinks – Reporting Template

Guidelines for conducting interviews with project stakeholders/local producers of Food and Drinks to support the creation of the Sustainability Guide

Here below are suggested comprehensive guidelines for conducting interviews with stakeholders in the context of creating a sustainability guide for addressing challenges and barriers in regenerative tourism experiences involving local producers:

- **Identification of relevant stakeholders/local producers – Interviewee's profile:** The key participants of this series of interviews for the support of regenerative tourism experiences, **are local producers of food and drinks that are actively involved or participate in the development and/or implementation of such a regenerative tourism experience.** You should ensure representation of perspectives and expertise.
- **Interview Objectives:** The objectives of the interviews, are gathering insights on challenges and barriers, understanding stakeholders' perspectives on sustainability practices and implementation of regenerative tourism experiences, and identifying potential solutions. This will help focus the interview and ensure relevant information is gathered.
- **Development of Interview Questions:** We have prepared a set of open-ended questions that encourage participants to share their knowledge, experiences, and suggestions. There is a **generalized set of questions**, and **a set of questions tailored to the specific challenges and barriers** identified in the context of regenerative tourism experiences involving participants/interviewees. However, **partners** conducting the interviews, **should bear in mind the local context, which might lead them in identification of additional challenges that have not been listed herein.** In this case, **they can add questions, if they consider them to be relevant for the purpose of finding out more about specific situations** (for example water scarcity has been highlighted as a challenge, in other places it might be some other climate related challenge, which might hamper production or even facilitate it ...like with new varieties growing in places that used to be too cold, etc.).
- **Conduction of the interviews:** You are proposed to schedule interviews with participants and ensure a comfortable and conducive environment for open discussion. Use active listening techniques, probe for deeper insights, and encourage them to share their experiences, ideas, and suggestions.
- **Establishing Rapport:** Begin each interview by introducing yourself, explaining the purpose of the interview, and emphasizing the importance of the participant's perspective. Establish a friendly and open atmosphere to encourage honest and meaningful responses.
- **Document the answers:** You are suggested to take detailed notes during the interviews. Transcribe or record interviews (optionally with the use of a consent note when anonymity is not an issue) to ensure accuracy. Also, if feasible, ask for photos or/and a short bio of your participants. Otherwise, ensure participants' confidentiality and anonymity, if desired. Assure them that their responses will be aggregated and anonymized to protect sensitive information.
- **Follow-up and clarification (optional):** If needed, follow up with stakeholders to seek clarification or gather additional information after the initial interviews. This can help ensure a more accurate understanding of the challenges and barriers.



Follow-up and Gratitude: Send a follow-up email or letter expressing gratitude for the stakeholders' participation. Offer to share the project's findings and demonstrate how their input contributed to shaping the sustainability guide.

Interviewee's Introduction: My name is Varvara Michael and for the past 12 years I have been involved in the cultivation and processing of herbs. We started by growing them and then, by going through various stages, we increased the variety of herbs and after that, moved on to processing them. Also, since last August, we opened a place where we accept people. In essence, we are operating as a Botanical Park where we have also created a small café, a small tea house (as we call it), where we carry out various activities such as botany courses, educational seminars related to the cultivation of herbs and finally together with the Deputy Ministry of Tourism we organize some experiential workshops through which we involve people with our activities.

Source: <https://www.facebook.com/people/Lumina-botanical-gardens/100054345348134/>

Generalized interview questions

1. *The most common definition of regenerative tourism is "leaving things or a place in a better state than visitors found them or it" and most recently it has been stressed that "it is not just about visitors having a positive impact but also for hosts to play an essential role in the process". What do you think regenerative tourism experiences are all about?*

Answer: Regenerative tourism is something new. As I understand it, it is in line with one of our objectives. That is, to bring people closer to nature, to get more actively involved with the environment, to understand the importance of getting close to nature, and finally to understand how important the things that nature offers us are, so that we can protect it and leave something better for future generations. For us, it is particularly important. To cultivate a better attitude and idea about the environment, nature and the things it offers us. It is not enough just not to harm the environment and not to take actions that have a negative impact on the environment. We need to leave something better.

2. *How do you see the future of regenerative tourism?*

Answer: I think that if people understand its importance, then regenerative tourism will have great potential, as in essence, apart from the environment, it will also improve the human being. For this reason, I believe that if people are aware of this all, then I can see a great potential for the future.

3. *How do you perceive the importance of sustainability and regeneration in addressing long-term environmental, social, and economic impact?*

Answer: I think it is of the utmost importance, as it will only have a positive impact in the future. People need to learn to work with nature, to protect it, to enhance certain practices that will improve the environment, our health and our way of life. So, with this interactivity, the impact will be great and positive.

4. *What role do local associations, authorities, and infrastructures play in supporting regenerative tourism experiences?*

Answer: Unfortunately, and fortunately one person alone cannot do anything, there must be cooperation. Especially, when it comes to small communities like the ones we live in. In addition,



however, local authorities and society in general should support small businesses as well as initiatives, because if support does not exist, then a project cannot survive. Consequently, there has to be cooperation from everyone so that we can get results that benefit us all.

5. What improvements or collaborations and co-design initiatives, would you suggest in supporting regenerative tourism experiences?

Answer: From my own experience, the experiential workshops supported by the Deputy Ministry of Tourism for the past two years, have been a means through which people have been able to come close to us and also listen. With that, we can continue this beautiful journey that we have started, which concerns the environment, while also bringing people closer to us. I believe that such partnerships should continue, and I also believe that there could possibly be other initiatives that would support the businesses that want to promote this kind of tourism. For instance, potentially under the auspices of the European Union and local authorities. Moreover, something that I would like to promote and suggest is a possible cooperation with universities. I believe that they can make a positive contribution and help businesses that are involved in this type of tourism and located in the countryside. In particular, in terms of information, I think that universities can make a very positive contribution to what we are trying to develop.

6. What are the main challenges you have encountered in developing and implementing regenerative tourism experiences through collaborations with peers, local authorities, community agents and/or associations and other relevant stakeholders in your area, if any?

Answer: The truth is that so far, we have very good cooperation with the local authorities here. The biggest challenge we have faced, had to do with how to get close to the people. This took us a lot of time, but one organisation that helped us a lot, so that we could get our work out there, is Larnaca's Rural Women's Association. An association that helps and supports several women involved in traditional, local products and more.

7. Would you have suggestions and solutions to share for successfully addressing such challenges?

Answer: In addition to the above, many women faced problems in finding local and traditional products to support their businesses, whether their sector was regenerative tourism or not. However, associations such as the one I mentioned earlier can help to solve these problems.

8. Can you share any specific environmental impacts that you have identified and the measures you have taken to mitigate them?

Answer: Absolutely, environmental sustainability is at the core of our ethos at our Botanical Park. As stewards of the land, we are acutely aware of the impacts our operations may have on the environment. One key impact we've identified is water usage in herb cultivation. To mitigate this, we've implemented drip irrigation systems and rainwater harvesting techniques to minimize our water footprint.

9. In your experience, what are the key barriers to involving the local population to participate in regenerative tourism initiatives?

Answer: Lack of awareness. The sooner we promote regenerative tourism, the sooner people will know about it, the more it will spread and the more people will be interested.

10. What strategies or initiatives have you found effective in educating visitors about sustainable practices and ensuring their active participation in maintaining the area's cleanliness and good practices?

Answer: The hands-on workshops are a way for us to inform people about the environment and herbs. Through engaging people in the activities, we tried to bring awareness about the environment, the use of herbs, the way we should live. We gave people the opportunity through the walks in the herb garden and also in the forest to make a connection between people and nature which is very important. We see that even a walk among nature gives excitement, relaxation, calmness and gives us the strength to continue.

Specific interview questions for individuals and or representatives of organizations that implement virtual experiences in the gastronomy sector.

- How do you perceive the overall positive impacts of regenerative tourism activities in the area?

Answer: Firstly, there's a noticeable improvement in environmental conservation efforts. Through our initiatives, visitors gain a deeper understanding of the importance of preserving nature, leading to reduced pollution and habitat destruction. Additionally, our focus on regenerative practices like organic farming and water conservation contributes to the restoration of ecosystems and biodiversity. Furthermore, there's an intangible yet invaluable impact on individual well-being. Engaging in regenerative tourism activities promotes mindfulness and connection with nature, leading to improved mental and physical health for visitors and locals alike.

- What are the water availability and scarcity challenge you face? Are there any sustainable water management practices that have been effective?

Answer: No, we've never had a problem. We have perforation on our site and that is how we do the watering in the park. Apart from that we also have the village water which is potable, which has been verified after analyses have been done.

- How can the local community be effectively engaged and involved in regenerative tourism initiatives?

Answer: Effectively engaging the local community in regenerative tourism initiatives requires a multi-faceted approach that emphasizes inclusivity, education, and collaboration I think, communication is key. Transparent and open dialogue with community members about the objectives, benefits, and potential challenges of regenerative tourism initiatives is essential. This can be achieved through community meetings, workshops, and information sessions where locals can voice their concerns and contribute ideas.

- What are the potential benefits and concerns from the community's perspective?

Answer: The traffic in the area. Not just one person benefits when there is increased footfall, but the benefits are many and varied.

- What are the key regulatory challenges you face? How do you believe can regulatory compliance be made more accessible and streamlined?

Answer: A lot of regulations may make it challenging for businesses to stay compliant. However, the Deputy Ministry of Tourism is known for its substantial efforts in addressing regulatory issues in the tourism sector, and has helped a lot through this matter.

- What are the infrastructure limitations affecting the development of regenerative tourism experiences locally?

Answer: The truth is that we have an issue with accessibility, as in many places the road is a dirt road. We are trying to resolve it; we have taken some actions and we are waiting. However, unfortunately, it is a very time-consuming process.

- How can infrastructure be improved to attract more visitors and extend the tourist season?

Answer: Unfortunately, our experience is not the best. The local authority cannot do anything and it is up to the state agencies. The procedures are complex and we try as much as we can to communicate this and intervene whenever we can, so that the problem will be solved at some point.

- What are the main economic challenges you are faced with? Are there any successful examples of overcoming these challenges and achieving economic viability?

Answer: During the Covid-19 period we had a problem channelling our products. First of all, as a botanical park we were not open. All we could dispose of was our products. Unfortunately, our sales were quite reduced and in essence, on the one hand the demand was reduced and on the other hand we could not meet it.

- How can visitors be educated about sustainable practices and responsible behaviour? Are there any specific initiatives or strategies that have been effective?

Answer: One cannot find the practices that we use, for example in the cultivation of herbs. We try to inform people about the way we work in our area and in general about the way we interact with nature. We recently participated in a project with the University of Technology on green entrepreneurship, where we developed some modules on good and green practices based on the way we operate in our business.

Additional Question: Could you please share with us some positive feedback you received from the visitors regarding your activities?

Answer: The truth is that I can't remember anything specific. What always amazes me is the fact that so many people don't even know what some herbs or plants in nature look like. We try as best we can to introduce them to it. I especially love to see them excited during and at the end of their visit and I love the way they react when they smell the herbs and the way they react when they come in contact with nature. Finally, I get moral satisfaction and I am very happy when I see the children running around playing, laughing, being happy and enjoying nature.

Summary of the main points reported by interviewees.

- There is a need to understand regenerative tourism as leaving destinations in a better state than they were found, involving both visitors and hosts in environmental stewardship and appreciation.



- *If people grasp its importance, regenerative tourism holds great potential, not only for the environment but also for personal development.*
- *Sustainability and regeneration are crucial for long-term environmental, social, and economic benefits, promoting positive impacts on nature, health, and overall quality of life.*
- *Collaboration among local associations, authorities, and infrastructure is essential for supporting regenerative tourism initiatives, ensuring their viability and success.*
- *Continued partnerships with organizations, governmental bodies, and educational institutions, along with initiatives like workshops and collaborations with universities, are suggested to promote regenerative tourism.*
- *Challenges include engaging with the local community and addressing regulatory and infrastructure limitations. Solutions involve communication, education, and advocacy to overcome barriers.*
- *Measures such as drip irrigation and rainwater harvesting are implemented to mitigate environmental impacts, showcasing a commitment to sustainability.*
- *Economic challenges, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, are discussed, with emphasis on adapting business models and finding innovative solutions for sustainability.*
- *There is satisfaction in seeing visitors' excitement and appreciation for nature, highlighting the positive impact of regenerative tourism experiences.*

