Torre Colombaia

1. Introduction

The farm of about 160 hectares, is located in the surroundings of Perugia, capital of Umbria. The environment of Torre Colombaia is one of the last samples of “ranco”, a large secular wood owned for centuries by the Benedictine friars protecting the cultivations from stormy winds. In 1987 the traditional farm converted into organic agriculture to follow an ecological feeling of the owner Alfredo Fasola Bologna, a Political Sciences graduat with previous work experience in trade union. A farm house was restored to develop agritourism, also including a restaurant offering traditional recipes made of organic ingredients. Didactic farm activities are also offered to schools and ecological tourists based on organic farming and biodiversity learning by walking between the fields, the woods, and the pond, and observing natural landscapes, flowers and protected fauna.

2. Promoter profile



First Name
Alfredo

Last Name
Fasola Bologna

Birth Year
1941

Gender
Male

Education

University degree

3. Farm Profile











Address
Voc. Cerreto, 52 San Biagio della valle. 06072 Marsciano (Pg)

Country
Italy

Farm area in hectar
160.00

Date of establishment of the farm

1987

Date since when the promoter owns/rents the farm
Thu, 01/01/1987 - 12:00

NUMBER OF WORKERS	**FAMILY MEMBERS**	**EXTERNAL WORKERS**
Full time	3	2
Part time	5	0

Farm description

The farm consists of 160 ha, 100 ha wood and 60 cultivations. The secular wood surrounds the cultivations as a protection against wind, one of the very few existing examples of this Benedictine wood management. The cultivation planning was based on rotation principles, by producing spelt, old kinds of wheat and sunflower, lentils, and other leguminous plants. Sheep were held grazing to increase the natural fertilizaty of the soil. The farm was the first certificated "organic" farm in Umbria in 1987. It produces cereals (wheat, millet, barley and spelt), legumes (broad bean, lentils, chickpeas), alfalfa, sunflower, and flax. Farm organic food products from crops are sunflower oil, flax oil, flour directly processed, and pasta processed by a specialized factory. Torre Colombaia was also one of the first agritourism in Umbria, with accommodation including 26 beds and 2 rooms for group activities, located in 19th century houses - previously hunting cottages. The lodges have been restored sticking to the essentials and transformed into apartments forming a small village in the woods at the farm entrance. Not far away there is a farmhouse dating back to 1700’s, restored with maintaining the local architectural characteristics. At the ground floor, there is a large restaurant room where all organic dishes are served and which also offers vegetarian and vegan cuisine mainly obtained from own company products.

Website and social network links
www.torrecolombaia.it

4. Multifunctional/sustainable farming and European Agricultural Landscapes (EAL)

Multifunctional & sustainable farming Key Words
Biodiversity
Social farming
Direct sales
Quality/Organic/Certified production
Renewable energies
Tourism and recreation related to EAL

Free Text

Organic agriculture and historical rural landscape are the keywords for this family farm, particularly engaged to maintain and valorize an historical landscape with a secular wood, Community Interest Site, surrounding the cultivations. Since 1987 the converting conventional farming to organic agriculture was taking part with the main idea to produce healthy and genuine food, not just as raw materials, but also processing by using at farm small size machineries and completing some processes such as i.e. from flour to pasta in certificated organic plants. A further idea was to develop organic farming not just as traditional food, but also innovating with specific focus on healthy and nutraceutical products. The first experience started with sunflower oil by cold extraction and on the same wave the flax oil extremely rich in balanced content of omega-3 and omega-6. In the last year, a network of nine organic producers was established with the purpose of providing the consumers with a large range of organic food offer. A specific interest is focused on old varieties of cereals and legumes with an ongoing experimentation in collaboration with academic and research centres. The products are sold in a farm shop and shipped to organic food retailers and joint purchasing groups in Italy and exported abroad. Farm multifunctional activities have been developed based on organic agritourism with 26 beds and meals served in a restored traditional farmhouse, didactic farm focused on learning and sharing farmer's life, and natural paths in the farm secular wood with guided tours for bird and flora watching. Vegetarian and vegan cuisine courses as well as yoga sessions are provided at the farm. Photovoltaic panels provide renewable energy to the whole farm, agritourism, and processing machineries. A new project started recently, named Widespread Natural Museum, originated by a collection of pictures taken in the surrounding landscapes with the aim to gather documents representing the historical and cultural values of the territory.

Advice/Recommendation

Organic farming, sustainable production, and environmental protection are different faces of the same strategic farm vision. Consumers are to be made aware how important can be genuine healthy food, biodiversity protection, heritage recipes, natural landscapes, and the use of renewable energy sources. Even using funds from the Rural Development Plan measures has been ecologically oriented according to the principle that farmers can play a fundamental role for the rural communities and whole society by providing genuine food and reducing the foot print impact of farming at the same time. This overall commitment is reflected in the attention paid to the rural landscape and its preservation, as an important asset of the natural capital that is the heritage transferred from the past to the future generations and the icon of beauty and sustainable food production.

5. Considerations, skills/competences involved and queries/questions

General considerations

Training has its starting point from a holistic approach to the soil use and management not just based on technical issues related to organic production and food processing. In this way the people involved in farming, food processing, and non-food farm management are all first

of all trained to be a part of the farm vision and mission. Awareness to work within a Community Interest Site add a plus to the overall engagement requested by organic farming methods. As a consequence of this vision focused on the local rural values, combining historical heritage, cultural landscapes, genuine healthy food products and use of renewable energy sources, training and competences include a large range of on farm professional specialists (agronomist, farm workers, food technologist, business manager, restaurant chef) and some other outsourcing competences (environmentalists, sociologists, group animators, eco-tourism guides, web designers, communication managers, etc.). The farm staff participate on training courses to update and deepen some specific competences and give courses to schools and small groups. Some recent projects on old varieties of cereals and legumes collect organic farms under the label "Contado perugino" and the Widespread Natural Museum have contributed to increase the farm staff training needs.

Strengths	**Weaknesses**
• Traditional farm well known in the market as one of the first certificated organic farms. • Location in a traditional farm surrounded by secular woods. • Integrated multifunctional farm with low footprint connecting organic and sustainable agriculture with the use of renewable energy.	• High costs due to organic production methods and small production scale. • Difficulties to find seasonal workers with competence on organic farming.
Opportunities	**Threats**
• Increasing market demands of organic products. • Networking with other organic producers. • Enlargement of eco-tourism as an option for schools. • Increasing gastronomy and good eating tourism movement.	• Competition on the market of low cost emerging organic producing countries often with low quality. • Competition from a large scale of retailers often not providing information on products origin.

Keywords

EAL Keywords
Protected area
Rural area
Wooded grassland

Farming Key words

Field crops
Horticulture
Legumes
Processing

Main Training/Skills/Competences

The company knowledge is based on organic farming, healthy food, and traditional rural landscape preservation. Main company activities are organic cultivation of cereals, legumes to make flour, pasta and dry legumes, and seeds to make nutraceutical oils (sunflower and flax oils) with related marketing, commercialization, and shipping of farm products. Organic agritourism accommodation and restaurant are provided as well as didactic courses for schools and small groups. Recent projects have increased the range of staff competences and training needs. The company has a complete range of internal competences, agronomist, farm, farm mill and seed oil mill workers, business manager, and competences in outsourcing (cereal processing to make pasta and business administration). The farm owner shares also the participation to a joint group of local organic producers to enlarge their organic food offer to customers.

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Queries/Questions

- Do you think that such a holistic approach based on organic and healthy food and landscape preservation can be viable for a farming enterprise and even add value to the farming activity? Do you think that this approach could be replicable in your context?

- Are you aware of the possibilities offered by the Rural Development Plan funds for organic farming and traditional heritage? If not, did you consider asking for consults (e.g.: to a Farmers Association) in order to be informed about taking an advantage of the available RDP aids?

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