

# Azienda agricola Maridiana

## 1. introduzione

L'azienda agricola di circa 28 ettari è situata nei dintorni di Umbertide in provincia di Perugia, regione Umbria, un'importante area agricola lungo l'ultima parte dell'alta valle del Tevere. Gianni Berna, fondatore di Maridiana Alpaca, ritiratosi come professionista di progetti di cooperazione in paesi in via di sviluppo, con una laurea in economia e background in gestione aziendale, ha viaggiato in Umbria, dove sono radicate le radici della sua famiglia ed è stato attratto dalla bellezza di un'area abbandonata di pascoli con un gruppo di case coloniche e edifici rurali, un granaio, un forno per il tabacco e capannoni. Obiettivo del progetto aziendale era combinare tradizione e innovazione a partire dall'allevamento di animali tradizionali, pecore e cavalli, ma anche l'introduzione di alpaca per la produzione di fibre naturali per abiti disegnati a casa.

## 2. PROMOTORE PROFILO



**Nome**

Gianni

**Cognome**

Berna

**Anno di nascita**

1941

**Sesso**

Masculino

**Formazione**

University degree in economics

### 3. FARM PROFILO





**Address**

Frazione Niccone, 173, 06019 Molino Vitelli, Umbertide PG

**Nazione**

Italia

**Zona agricola in ettari**

28.00

**Data di costituzione dell'azienda**

1997

**Data da quando il promotore possiede / affitta l'azienda agricola**

Mer, 01.01.1997 - 12:00

NUMBER OF WORKERS	FAMILY MEMBERS	EXTERNAL WORKERS
<b>Full time</b>	1	2
<b>Part time</b>	0	0

**descrizione dell'azienda**



The farm consists of 28 ha; 9 ha wood and the rest is arable land, mostly pasture and 200 olive trees. The property is located on a scenic hill area at risk of abandonment. After retirement, the farm promoter decided to restore a traditional farmhouse with alpaca breeding. The idea was to promote an initiative in the area classified as disadvantaged, with the aim to tackle widespread unemployment and land abandonment. The large farmhouse could become farm center with laboratories and agritourism, while the alpaca breeding, granted by European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund (EAGGF), was planned to produce alpaca wool clothes, since the business promoter had a large experience in rural development cooperation with the education background in economics. The landscape is a traditional Umbria hill area with forest, pastures, a few cultivations and olive groves, and scattered rural buildings. Alpaca breeding is the main farm activity with the use of the wool for self-designed and hand-knitted clothes in outsourcing, while two farmhouses with 12 beds totally are dedicated to agritourism.

#### **Sito web e social network links**

[www.alpaca.it](http://www.alpaca.it)

Facebook

YouTube

## **4. Agricoltura multifunzionale/sostenibile e Paesaggi Agricoli Europei (PAE)**

#### **Multifunctional & sustainable farming Key Words**

Direct sales

Tourism and recreation related to EAL

Traditional buildings

#### **Testo libero**

Tobacco is the traditional cultivation of the valley, while on the neighboring alluvial hills, wheat, olive trees, and vines that all together characterizes the rural landscape. Above the cultivations, the open fields and pastures are largely abandoned, as well as farmhouses endangered to disappear as a local rural heritage. In the last few years, some farmhouses have been restored to second homes and for agritourism, but a large part of the territory is still not cultivated and maintained. Sustainable agriculture and rural landscape preservation are the keywords for this family farm, particularly engaged in maintaining and valorizing the traditional Umbrian hill landscape in a disadvantaged area, but developing an innovative idea based on natural wool clothes production and direct selling. Since 1997, restoring abandoned traditional farmhouses started the Maridiana farm planning project, with its main idea to breed alpaca for wool and accommodate tourists. The project was granted under EAGGF and soon became a well-known and popular in the media (newspapers, magazines, TV and web). The carried out activity has a positive impact on the preservation of the biodiversity in the area, thanks to the sustainable management of the whole land surface of 28 ha, and on restoration, maintenance, and care of the old traditional rural buildings. The

use of textile fibres with traditional processing is aimed to maintain handicraft techniques and abilities, and also to provide work and know-how in the area by organizing workshops on a request for learners on hand-spinning, felting, natural dyeing, and weaving. The first objective of this kind of multifunctional agriculture is to promote employment and development of short production chains respectful to the traditional techniques with the use of natural fibres instead of modern industrial fashion in rural areas, in order to avoid abandoning rural countryside and villages, and also combining agriculture with handicraft and tourism. Another challenge is to educate the public to a conscious consumption, to the choice of sustainable products, and to be more respectful of the environment and people's work. Schools are sometimes hosted at farm, for the natural environment and presence of alpaca are very stimulating for a pleasant and educational visit. The main difficulties encountered are often linked to the lack of infrastructure to support the company and the increasing disappearance of services for communities in the rural disadvantaged areas.

### **Consiglio/Raccomandazione**

The combination of agritourism, alpaca breeding for use of textile fibers, and commercialization of self-designed clothes have to be planned as a whole sustainable farm planning, maintaining pasture natural biodiversity, and taking care of rural traditional building. This way the visitors and guests are aware and can enjoy the rural Umbrian landscape. Marketing and promotion via website and social networks have contributed to increase the number of foreign customers visiting the farm and buying alpaca clothes without changing the business strategy based on low impact strategy, traditional handicraft, and rural landscape preservation.

## **5. CONSIDERAZIONI, abilità/competenze coinvolte e domande/questioni**

### **Considerazioni generali**

Training has its starting point in a sustainable agriculture approach aiming to tackle land abandonment, soil erosion, natural and human capital impoverishment. This concept is very important as it is not just based on technical agricultural issues and land exploitation, but also on the vision enabling present and future generations to live and work in disadvantaged areas. This non-food farm management was originally based also on sheep wool and not renovated since then for the wolf attacks in the recent past together with horse riding based tourism, only the focus is now put on alpaca breeding and manufacturing clothes with agritourism as a main farm assets. The only farm food product is extra-virgin olive oil, but all other food products offered to the guests are gathered from a network of producer members, "Spesa in Campagna" ("Shopping in Countryside"), trade mark managed by the Italian Farmers' Confederation (CIA Agricoltori italiani), ensuring genuine farm ingredients and specialties for the customers. This guarantee pertaining of a cooperation of farmers' in the network is also a part of the Maridiana Alpaca farm vision for a sustainable agriculture and rural landscape preservation. Because of this vision focused on the local traditional heritage

in terms of farming, landscape, and handicraft as historical and sustainable community values, training and competences include a large range of professional specialties (farm workers, business manager, restaurant chef, and wool cloth hand-makers) supported by farmers' association services and external professionals (agronomists and veterinarians, accountancy, administrative and planning services, etc.). The farm staff members sometimes participate on farm markets and exhibitions as well as in training courses to update and deepen some specific competences, and also to give short courses for schools and small groups.

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Abiti tradizionali in lana di alpaca autoprodotti e prodotti in un settore di mercato di nicchia con pochissimi concorrenti.</li> <li>• Confezioni tradizionali di alta qualità che rappresentano la visione e il territorio.</li> <li>• Azienda agricola multifunzionale a basso impatto che unisce paesaggio tradizionale, agriturismo e prodotti artigianali.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mancanza di infrastrutture e servizi in un'area svantaggiata.</li> <li>• Difficoltà a trovare lavoratori agricoli stagionali quando necessario e persone esperte in infeltrimento tradizionale, tintura e tessitura di lana di alpaca.</li> </ul>
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aumento delle richieste del mercato di tessuti tradizionali per l'artigianato.</li> <li>• Collegamento in rete con produttori di alimenti genuini di fattoria.</li> <li>• La combinazione di agriturismo con allevamento di alpaca del paesaggio e confezioni autoprodotte.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Concorrenza sul mercato di lana di bassa qualità e altre fibre miste che imitano le confezioni tradizionali fatte a mano.</li> <li>• Mancanza di servizi con conseguente esodo di giovani.</li> </ul>

## Parole chiave

### EAL Keywords

Meadow

Pasture

### Farming Key words

Alpaca  
Livestock  
Processing

### **Main Training/Skills/Competences**

The company knowledge is based on product innovations of alpaca breeding and wool as a main product, and also of tradition recovery of handcrafted cloths from natural fibres. This company asset is combined with agritourism by providing accommodation and services in restored traditional farmhouses and rural buildings (barn, tobacco oven and sheds). The hill landscape dominating the valley below with vines, olive groves, and cereals is a key factor for the identity of the company and preferences of customers. The main farm food product offered to customers is extra-virgin olive oil, but all other food offered to guests come from other farms included in the network "Spesa in Campagna" [www.laspesaincampagna.it](http://www.laspesaincampagna.it)

### **Multifunctional & sustainable farming Key Words**

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### **Domande/Questioni**

- Do you know similar innovative approaches based on traditionally processed handcrafted cloths from natural fibers?
- Which maintenance approaches shall be provided to rural landscapes where agritourism is combined with traditional farmhouses? How can the valorization of cultural heritage (e.g.: landscape and traditional buildings) add value to the farming activity? Could this opportunity be applied also in your context?
- Do you think that the establishment of a network of farmers selling and marketing together local, high quality products, may help the promotion of such products and the viability of small farms?
- Do you think that an approach like "Spesa in Campagna" could be replicable in your area?

### **Riconoscimento e clausola di esonero della responsabilità.**

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