THE POTENTIAL OF ORGANIC FARMING TO PROMOTE AND DEVELOP AGRI-TOURISM IN THE ISLAND OF MALTA

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A long essay submitted in part fulfilment of the requirements of the Degree of Bachelor of Arts with Honours in Tourism Studies

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I, undersigned declare that this dissertation is my original work.

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Table of Contents

Acknowledgements .................................................................................................................. iii

Abstract ....................................................................................................................................... vii

Acronyms...................................................................................................................................... viii

Chapter 1: Introduction .................................................................................................................. 1

1.1 Introduction ................................................................................................................................ 1

1.2 What is ‘Tourism’ ...................................................................................................................... 1

1.3 What is ‘Agri-tourism’ .............................................................................................................. 2

1.4 What is ‘Organic Farming’ ........................................................................................................ 2

1.5 What is Sustainable Agriculture? ............................................................................................ 3

1.6 Why is Organic Farming important? ........................................................................................ 4

1.7 Research motivation and problem definition ........................................................................... 4

1.8 Objectives .................................................................................................................................. 5

Chapter 2: Literature Review ............................................................................................................ 6

2.1 Macro Analysis .......................................................................................................................... 6

2.1.1 Organic Farming and Agri-tourism around the world ......................................................... 6

2.1.2 Organic Farming vs. Conventional Farming debates ........................................................... 7

2.1.3 Competitor Analysis ............................................................................................................ 9

2.1.4 Why and how organic farming can improve agri-tourism ................................................ 12

2.2 Micro Analysis .......................................................................................................................... 14
2.2.1 Importance of tourism and agriculture in Malta .............................................. 14
2.2.2 How can a farmer become certified organic? ................................................ 15
2.2.3 Benefits of organic farming in Malta .......................................................... 16
2.2.3 Main Issues ............................................................................................... 18

Chapter 3: Methodology ....................................................................................... 21
3.1 Review of Data Collection Methods ............................................................... 21
3.2 Secondary Data .............................................................................................. 22
3.3 Primary Data .................................................................................................. 22
3.4 Criteria for Sample Selection ......................................................................... 23
3.5 Methods of Analysis ...................................................................................... 26
3.6 Ethical Considerations ................................................................................. 26
3.7 Limitations ..................................................................................................... 26

Chapter 4: Analysis and Results ......................................................................... 28
4.1 Main issues and challenges experienced regarding organic farming ............... 28
4.2 Main benefits of organic farming when compared to conventional farming ........ 29
4.3 What inspired organic farmers to convert to organic farming ......................... 30
4.4 Whether Organic farming has the potential to develop and increase agri-tourism in Malta ... 31
4.5 Demand for organic produce (by farmers and general public) ......................... 33
4.6 Education about organic farming to the public ............................................ 34
4.7 Future of organic farming .............................................................................. 34
Chapter 5: Results, Conclusions and Recommendations ................................................. 36

5.1 Objectives of the research and implications arising from the study ............................. 36

5.2 Suggestions for future research in this area ................................................................. 41

References .......................................................................................................................... 42

Appendices .......................................................................................................................... 47

Appendix A: ......................................................................................................................... 47

Appendix B: .......................................................................................................................... 58
Abstract

Malta is mainly promoted as a sun and sea destination however, there is also the potential to develop and improve the agricultural sector. In doing so this will also attract tourists for the agricultural aspect of the island. One way of how this can be done is to increase agri-tourism in Malta. Therefore the aim of this dissertation is to find out whether organic farming would have the potential to promote and develop agri-tourism in Malta. A qualitative research lends itself best to analyse this research. This is done through interviewing a number of local farmers and organisations and discuss issues related to organic farming in Malta as well as their opinions and views whether they think organic farming can help to improve agri-tourism in Malta or not. From the interviews it was concluded that the majority of the respondents believe that, organic farming does have the potential to promote and develop agri-tourism and that it is important to offer organic produce in order to offer a genuine product to the tourist. However an interesting reply from one of the respondents was that Malta should mainly focus on sustainable agriculture in order to promote and develop agri-tourism in Malta.

Keywords: AGRI-TOURISM, ORGANIC FARMING, CONVENTIONAL FARMING, SUSTAINABLE, TOURISM.
Acronyms

- EU – European Union
- GDP – Gross Domestic Product
- IFOAM - International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements
- MCCAA – Malta Competition and Consumer Affairs Authority
- MEPA - Malta Environment and Planning Authority
- MICC – Maltese Italian Chamber of Commerce
- MOAM – Malta Organic Agriculture Movement
- USDA – United Stated Department of Agriculture
- WWOOF - World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farming
Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Malta has been mainly promoted as a sun and sea destination for over thirty years. Tourism is the main and most important sector for Malta, in fact it accounts for 23% of Malta’s GDP (MICC, n.d). Another important sector for Malta is the agricultural sector which accounts for approximately 1.92% of the GDP of Malta (Quandl, 2013). This shows that in terms of economy, Malta highly depends on the tourism sector and the agricultural sector which can be further improved to contribute more positively for the economy.

1.2 What is ‘Tourism’

As defined by the UNWTO (United Nations World Tourism Organisation), “Tourism is a social, cultural and economic phenomenon which entails the movement of people to countries or places outside their usual environment for personal or business/professional purposes. These people are called visitors (which may be either tourists or excursionists; residents or non-residents) and tourism has to do with their activities, some of which imply tourism expenditure”.

Therefore tourism affects and is affected by various other industries. One important industry which impacts and is also impacted by the tourism industry is agriculture, mainly through agri-tourism (Refer to section 2.1.4).
Tourism is an important determinant for the development of the economy in developing countries. In fact according to the UNWTO tourism contributes 5% of direct global GDP. (UNWTO, n.d)

1.3 What is ‘Agri-tourism’

‘Agri-tourism’ is the act of visiting a working farm or any agricultural, horticultural or agri-business operation for the purpose of enjoyment, education or active involvement in the activities of the farm or operation’ (WMTH, n.d).

As explained in the definition by agri-tourism.eu (n.d) agri-tourism allows tourists to “pick fruits and vegetables, ride horses, taste honey, learn about wine, shop in gift shops and farm stands for local and regional produce or hand-crafted gifts, and much more”. However every farm offers a different experience and different activities for all the family therefore not all farms which offer agri-tourism activities will be the same. Furthermore, agri-tourism.eu continues by saying that “agri-tourism is being developed as a valuable component of a business model to support many agricultural entities”.

1.4 What is ‘Organic Farming’

According to the National Organic Standards Board (1995), “Organic agriculture is an ecological production management system that promotes and enhances biodiversity, biological cycles and soil biological activity. It is based on minimal use of off-farm inputs and on management practices that restore, maintain and enhance ecological harmony.”

Therefore organic foods are free from pesticides, herbicides, insecticides, fertilizers and also fungicides making the fruits and vegetables richer in nutrients, safer and as natural as possible.
Moreover, according to the European Commission for Agriculture and Rural Development (n.d), the practice of organic farming involves the following:

- "Wide crop rotation as a prerequisite for an efficient use of on-site resources"
- Very strict limits on chemical synthetic pesticide and synthetic fertiliser use, livestock antibiotics, food additives and processing aids and other inputs
- Absolute prohibition of the use of genetically modified organisms
- Taking advantage of on-site resources, such as livestock manure for fertiliser or feed produced on the farm
- Choosing plant and animal species that are resistant to disease and adapted to local conditions
- Raising livestock in free-range, open-air systems and providing them with organic feed
- Using animal husbandry practices appropriate to different livestock species"

Furthermore, the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM) (n.d) also adds in its definition that "organic agriculture combines tradition, innovation and science to benefit the shared environment and promote fair relationships and a good quality of life for all involved".

1.5 What is Sustainable Agriculture?

According to Sustainable Agriculture Initiative (n.d), “Sustainable agriculture is the efficient production of safe, high quality agricultural products, in a way that protects and improves the natural environment, the social and economic conditions of farmers, their employees and local communities, and safeguards the health and welfare of all farmed species”.
1.6 Why is Organic Farming important?

According to the Hartman Group (2011) the main reasons for organic farming are for “health and nutritional concerns, superior taste, food safety concerns, and environmental friendliness”. (Hartman Group, 2001).

As stated by Mr. Mario Salerno, the president of Malta Organic Agriculture Movement (MOAM) in an article on Malta Today (2006) ‘Sustainable future: organic horticulture in Malta’, “The organic farmer works with nature and benefits from it, unlike the conventional farmer who tries to be independent from it. This means that the organic farmer has to know the environment rules, the eco-system where he works, and the biological cycles of all organisms that live in the agro-ecosystem”.

1.7 Research motivation and problem definition

The agricultural sector can be incorporated together with tourism in order to strengthen both sectors and this is done through agri-tourism. In order to offer a genuine product and experience, an increase in organic agriculture can help to further improve agri-tourism. By doing so, this can result in a new niche market for Malta so it can be promoted also for agri-tourism and organic agriculture. Therefore the main purpose of this dissertation is to see whether organic farming (focusing mainly on fruits and vegetables) can help to promote, develop and strength agri-tourism in the island of Malta.

To be discussed are the main benefits and issues that Malta would face should it adopt the quite-controversial method of organic farming in Malta. The main aim of the research was to investigate
what the potential of organic farming for the island of Malta is in order to promote and develop agri-tourism.

Even though conventional farming is the most common practice in Malta, this is slowly changing as can be seen from ‘The Environment Report Indicators 2010-2011’ by MEPA (Malta Environment and Planning Authority) (pg.31) when it states “between 2010 and 2011, the area of land cultivated using organic farming methods increased by 17.5%, covering 25ha of the Maltese Islands in 2011”. Additionally, some farm and wine estates in Malta and Gozo are working hard to become certified organic. However, it is challenging to become certified organic in Malta since there are various issues that need to be addressed (especially since Malta is such a small island) and considerations before a farmer will become certified.

1.8 Objectives

The three main objectives for this study are:

1. To find out how organic farming can bring about agri-tourism activities in Malta

2. To consider how to adopt feasibility of organic farming in Malta

3. To establish the main benefits and issues of organic farming in Malta.

The research hypothesis to be tested is whether organic farming has the potential to (further) develop agri-tourism in Malta or not.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Macro Analysis

2.1.1 Organic Farming and Agri-tourism around the world

Demand for green tourism is always increasing. Organic farming leaves less impact on the environment when compared to conventional farming. Hence diversifying a farm business to include agri-tourism will generate increased income as well as providing a market for the produce of organic farm (Fowler, 2011).

The link between organic farming and agri-tourism can be seen through the World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farming (WWOOF) programs which are becoming increasingly popular globally. As Kimble-Evans identifies in her article ‘Postcards from the Veg’ (2011), such programs bring about positive results such as increased interest in culture of that particular country and also improvements in the agricultural sector. Another advantage is that the volunteers working in the farms gain experience and would be able to grow their own food at home.

According to Kimble-Evans WWOOF is “a network of independent organisations that link farmers and homesteaders who need help with people looking for a taste of real agricultural life. WWOOFers, as the volunteers are nicknamed, provide strong backs and willing hands. The hosts, in turn, provide a place to stay, meals with the family, and the benefit of years of organic farming
wisdom. Everybody wins”. In fact David McRobie who was a volunteer in New Zealand expressed that “You’ll forge memories you’ll never forget, skills you’ll always need, and a passion you’ll have for life. After WWOOFing, I can’t live in a place without my own garden. It is a part of who I am.”

WWOOFing (which started originally in 1971) has now become global in approximately 90 countries including more than 6,000 hosts. Such work-exchange programs like WWOOFing, that offer direct and hands-on training and experiences to every volunteer have proved to be positive for both the farmers (hosts) and the volunteers.

Organic farming is becoming increasingly important for the agricultural sector worldwide. In fact according to the Agricultural and Veterinary University of the Banat (2011), “In some developed countries, organic agriculture is an important segment of the agrofood (such as 10% in Austria and 7.8% in Switzerland), and in many other countries organic agriculture is growing more than 20% annually (the example in the USA, France, Japan, Singapore). A number of developing countries within small markets organic products (Egypt) and others have begun to explore the export opportunities offered by organic agriculture (eg exports of Mexican coffee and cotton in Uganda).” In addition to this, it also identifies the opportunities that agri-tourism offers in conjunction with organic farming, “But equally important is it to develop and agro-tourism, so as to obtain additional income.”

Anne-Mette Hjalager and Magda Antonioli Corigliano (2000) stated that, “Food and tourism are increasingly being combined, e.g. in agri-tourism, wine tours and the sale of food products as souvenirs” which shows that food and tourism are continuously increasing in various ways.

2.1.2 Organic Farming vs. Conventional Farming debates
There have been constant debates and studies trying to analyse which farming practice is the best one and if organic farming is truly more beneficial and a better option than conventional farming. In fact in the article ‘In defense of Organic Farming’ by Richard Schiffman (2013), he identified and analysed such disputes and studies. One study he mentioned was ‘Are Organic Foods Safer or Healthier than Conventional Alternatives?’ which was conducted by Stanford University and it concluded that there is "little evidence of health benefit from eating organic food". Therefore the study concluded that organic food does not offer higher levels of vitamin and mineral contents than conventional food. This had created a lot of controversy and in fact the 'Los Angeles Times' stated that the study did not consider the negative impacts that conventional farming causes to the health of humans. Moreover, Richard Schiffman explained that the Los Angeles Times said that "the study largely ignored the ill effects of pesticides on conventionally grown produce, along with the hormones and antibiotic-resistant bacteria that taint factory-farmed meat and poultry. The study also failed to examine processed foods, the health effects of the chemical additives, dyes, preservatives, and genetically modified foods that are allowed in conventional products but not in those labelled ‘organic’.”

Another important point that Richard Schiffman emphasised was the fact that the critics of such study, did not mention the environmental aspect of how conventional farming practices impact negatively the environment when Schiffman described the conventional farming as a "chemical-intensive agriculture that dominates the American landscape and much of the globe". He explained that even though conventional farming may be more productive and yields more (per acre) in terms of volume for certain products (such as corn and wheat), it might still not be the most efficient method when considering its environmental impacts and therefore it is not a sustainable method. This is because as Schiffman analysed, “farming machinery and petroleum-based chemicals require huge amounts of fossil fuels. Industrial farming depletes the soil of nutrients, and uses water less efficiently than organic methods. Toxic pesticides and herbicides harm pollinators and pollute
the groundwater’. He continued by saying that "Modern agriculture is here to stay. But it does need to change. Underground aquifers are drying out; bees and other pollinators are dying; the climate is getting hotter and drier in many places. Desertification is encroaching on huge swaths of Africa, China, and elsewhere. Arable land is declining worldwide. This means that farmers need to learn to grow food more sustainably”.

2.1.3 Competitor Analysis

Gozo:

Gozo depends very much on the agricultural sector. Various estates and farms are working very hard in order to further develop agri-tourism and it was, and presumably still is, government policy to encourage organic farming in Gozo as this will develop it further as an ecological island. (The Sunday Times, 2010 quoting the then- Parliamentary Secretary Chris Said).

Furthermore it was agreed that such a change would offer a more genuine product with no pesticides. Gozo already has five certified organic farmers and more are being encouraged to become organic and in fact the European Union offers funds to encourage farmers to do so.

In 2010 an important conference ‘Organic Agriculture and eco-Gozo – A world of challenges, opportunities and innovation’ was held in Gozo with delegates from the IFOAM-EU (International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movement – European Union Group) and the by the Ministry for Gozo together with the Malta Organic Agriculture Movement (MOAM). The conference was a great opportunity for the Maltese and Gozitan farmers and operators in the agricultural sector to learn more about organic farming and how it is connected to sustainability. Additionally, Hon. Giovanna
Debono, the Minister for Gozo, said that sustainable agriculture benefits the quality of life of the farmer, landscape of Gozo, the employment sector and also the tourism industry.

Main Issues experienced

Ta’ Mena Estate is the first agri-tourism complex in Gozo and even though it is not certified organic they claim to not use any pesticides. The owner believes that all Gozo has to convert to organic farming and not just one. This is because since Gozo is such a small island, there needs to be at least five miles of distance between the organic and non-organic farm otherwise it would still be affected.

Besides offering genuine products, Ta’ Mena also wanted to blend together the two important sectors of agriculture and tourism as they believe that the two sectors sustain each other. In fact their aim is continue developing and improving agri-tourism at Ta’ Mena. This is done by educating the visitors about their methods, what they offer and also allow them to go around the Estate. Ta’ Mena offers tours for children and adults, locals and tourists. Therefore the aspects of entertainment and education are blended together to offer a complete experience.

Italy:

In Italy one can find various places where organic farms and agri-tourism are combined. Online people all around the world can choose from a wide range of organic farms which also offer accommodation and various touristic facilities. One good example is the organic farm ‘Arcudaci’ in Trapani (agriturismo.it). Such facilities which are offered include a biological salt water pool, horse-
riding, bike rental and much more while enjoying the landscape and the experience of staying in an organic farm.

**Cyprus:**

Organic farming is increasing and becoming more established in Cyprus however it is still relatively considered as a new concept which started back in 1988 and which is still developing (Theophanous, 2000).

The Organic Days programme was held in Larnaca, Cyprus between the 24th and 26th September 2012 where more than 100 people had participated in such an event. This gave the society as well as the organic sector the opportunity to discuss important issues regarding the future of the agricultural sector in Europe. It also addressed important environmental issues such as climate change and the negative effects on natural resources and how these issues can be reduced and controlled through methods of production and processing of local food and through organic farming. Importance was also given to the combination of organic farming and tourism, where this can help to increase and improve promotion of local organic food and also increase interest in the agricultural sector when combines with tourism activities.

A good example of a place where agri-tourism and organic farming are combined is the Erson Hoca’s Organic Farm which is situated in the Yeşilirmak district. What makes this farm special is the fact that it was the first original organic farm in Cyprus. The farm also offers accommodation for tourists where people can eat from the fresh, local, certified organic produce grown on the farm. The experience is a relaxing one but also an educational one where tourists will learn about the
organic methods used. The farm also believes in adopting sustainable measures which benefit the tourism sector and leave positive impacts on the environment such as making use of the solar energy. Other services which are offered which are related to tourism include the sale of the organic products produced on the farm, specialised tours such as for schools or for tourists and also fun and educational activities for children.

Such organic farms on islands which are considered as competitors for Malta show that there is a possibility to increase organic farming in Malta to contribute positively to the agri-tourism and tourism sector.

2.1.4 Why and how organic farming can improve agri-tourism

According to Donatella Privitera in ‘The Importance of Organic Agriculture in Tourism Rural’ (2010) (pg.59), explains that there are many benefits of agri-tourism to a country, “it may strengthen local economy, create job opportunities and new businesses; develop and promote training and certification programs to introduce young people to agriculture and environment. Agri-tourism helps preserve rural lifestyles and landscape and also offers the opportunity to provide “sustainable” or “green” tourism”.

Furthermore, she states that organic agriculture plays an important role for agri-tourism, when she says “it’s clear the link of the organic agriculture with agri-tourism and tourism services. They have a considerable role in the future development of rural areas”. An interesting comparison identified by Kuo and Chiu (2006), is the ‘Characteristics of Traditional agri-tourism and Organic agri-tourism’ which shows the main differences between the two types of agri-tourism:

An interesting comparison identified by Kuo and Chiu (2006), is the ‘Characteristics of Traditional agri-tourism and Organic agri-tourism’ which shows the main differences between the two types of agri-tourism:
“Traditional Agri-tourism

Increase income of farmers
Provide new forms of employment
Rural environment and agricultural activities are regarded as tourism resources
Tourists can experience agricultural life
Support for social-cultural aspects of agricultural community
Promotion and sale of quality and typical rural food products
Development of agricultural areas and reduction of rural outmigration

Organic Agri-tourism

Agricultural activities are based on organic farming
Tourism and recreation activities are managed according to the principles of ecotourism
Emphasis on environmental protection and natural conservation of landscape
Respect traditional culture of local village
Protect diversity of ecosystem, agricultural activities and traditional culture
Local benefits
Provide more health, safety food and recreation services
Offer an additional economic resource for environmental protection
Certified by official body
Environmental Management of the farm
Promotion and sale of organic food products
Use of natural, environmental building materials and architectural styles”
2.2 Micro Analysis

2.2.1 Importance of tourism and agriculture in Malta

Tourism plays a very important role for the economy of Malta in fact it contributes up to 27.7% of the GDP in 2011 according to the World Travel and Tourism Council in the ‘Tourism and Travel Economic Impact 2012 - Malta’. It is also important with regards to the employment sector where the total contribution of tourism to employment (direct and indirect) in 2011 was 28.6%.

The year 2011 was a record year and had experienced the highest increase of 5.6% in the number of tourists when compared to the previous year, reaching a number of approximately 1.4million tourists. (Malta Today, 2011)

On the other hand, regarding the importance of the agricultural sector to the Maltese economy, the last report in 2012 by the World Bank showed that the value added percentage of GDP was 1.92% in 2010.

It can be observed that even though the tourism sector contributes positively to the economy of Malta, the contribution of the agricultural sector is still relatively low when compared to tourism. This shows that since agriculture is low consequently, agri-tourism is also low when compared to other tourism-related activities since various agri-tourism activities involve or are related to the
agricultural sector. Therefore there is the potential that through an increase in organic farming, this might result in an increase in agri-tourism, resulting in an increase and improvement in the agricultural sector too.

2.2.2 How can a farmer become certified organic?

Firstly, organic produce in the European Union by law should have the symbol showing that the product is truly or genuinely certified organic. For European organic products one can find the ‘Euro-leaf’ logo (where the farmers or producers would have to follow the standards set by the European Union) while if the product is for example American, the label would have a ‘USDA Organic’ logo.

In order for a conventional farmer to become certified organic that is, can produce organic products, the process takes a minimum of two years. Therefore the term ‘in conversion’ farmers refer to those who are still during the two year process. In fact in Malta one can find some farmers who are in conversion including the following:

- Mary Mallia (limits of Mgarr)
- Mark Cassar (Qormi)

Furthermore, one can also find some certified organic farmers in Malta (however most of them still do not produce a large variety of fruits and vegetables) and these are listed below:
2.2.3 Benefits of organic farming in Malta

The first advantage organic farming can offer is that tourists can participate in such rural activities organised by the organisations and farmers, experience it hands on and learn more about organic farming in Malta. Agri- and Eco-tourism are slowly developing and increasing in Malta and also in Gozo. In fact, a recent agreement at the beginning of 2013 took place between Merill Eco Tours and Ta’ Mena Estate in Gozo which is one of the most popular in offering agri-tourism activities and experiences.

Additionally, another benefit is that rural activities can be introduced or given more importance (for locals and tourists) such as bike rides, horse riding, trekking, informative and educational tours about the organisations or for example wine/cheese/ olive oil/ apiculture, nature-study walks about flora and fauna and much more. By doing so, this links eco-tourism (example nature walks) together
with agri-tourism (local organic food tasting and learning) therefore blending the two aspects of education with entertainment.

Organic farming would also improve the opportunity for Malta to be promoted for its new ecological/organic farming rather than only as a ‘Sun and Sea’ destination.

It is also important to note that demand for ‘greener’ tourism is increasing globally and this can be seen through various countries marketing themselves using the words ‘eco’, ‘green’ and ‘sustainable’. This can also be seen in Gozo where it is being marketed as ‘Eco-Gozo’. Therefore, introducing or further developing the idea of organic farming will help to strengthen such a name. Furthermore, the issue of sustainable living through organic farming is also another important benefit which includes for example improved air quality and sustainable measures and concerns.

Apart from tourism, organic farming can bring about other advantages such as healthier, local fruits and vegetables without the use of pesticides. Conventional farmers make use of some or all of the following in order to produce their fruits and vegetables: pesticides, fertilizers, sewage sludge and bioengineering. However organic farming only includes the use of crop rotation, manure and mulching.

Organic farming would also bring about a decrease in bad farming practices such as the use of toxic herbicides and pesticides (which cause damage and risks to peoples’ health and also to the soil). This will offer a more genuine product therefore attracting more visitors (tourists and even locals).

The agricultural industry is currently experiencing various challenges. As explained by Shawn Vella in his Masters ‘Management and Landscaping through Agroforestry and Permaculture’ (2011) “there is a great dependency on chemical fertilisers and pesticides. This reduces the economic
capacity of the farming industry and leads to soil erosion and land degradation”. Since organic farming does not make use of any chemical fertilisers and pesticides, it may be an alternative to reduce such negative issues.

As stated in the ‘National Programme for Malta Technical Assistance and Administrative Cooperation’ (MT-02-08.02) in 2002, organic farming also has positive and sustainable effects on the environment at the ‘ecosystem level, soil level, water level and climate and air’.

Moreover, another benefit is that of reducing consumption of energy since it requires less input needs when compared to conventional farming, which therefore is more positive for the environment.

2.2.3 Main Issues

Organic produce has relatively higher prices when compared to conventional farming. This is because production costs are higher due to higher labour inputs per unit of output. Another reason is because organic produce has to be handled separately than conventional produce mainly for processing and also for transport. However such costs can decrease if demand increases.

Another issue is that in order to produce organic fruit and vegetables, this requires a large area of land with no pesticides being used around and this is very difficult for Malta since it is such a small island.

Furthermore the farmers have to pay yearly for the MCCAA certification, which most farmers would not be very willing to pay as they see it as a financial burden.

Another issue is that agriculture in Malta is unfortunately not one of the main sectors where most people would like to work, at least till now. “Some farmers encourage their children to become
doctors and lawyers instead. It is easier to go to university and get a job than to make a success as a farmer in Malta” (Zammit Anne, 2011).

Unfortunately agricultural land in Malta is always decreasing because of the new buildings, roads and urban areas that are being built therefore, reducing and limiting rural areas even more. Additionally another important consideration is the threats and concerns of soil and water pollution.

The farmers would require training in order to learn everything about organic farming since the majority of farms are family run and they have gained knowledge regarding agriculture and farming from their own family and would not most likely know or learn about new techniques such as organic farming.

National Programme for Malta 2002

The name of the project title in the National Programme for Malta Technical Assistance and Administrative Cooperation (MT-02-08.02) in 2002 regarding organic farming for Malta was called the ‘Strategy for promotion of organic farming in the Maltese Islands’. This addressed important issues and strategies and detailed information for Malta to develop and promote organic farming.

An important analysis done by the 2002 National Program was that of the SWOT analysis where it identified the main factors which affect the development of organic farming in Malta.

Some of the main strengths of organic farming which were identified in the Program are that organic farming promotes and projects the image of a “natural” island for Malta, it will also reduce and limit the use of chemical synthesis resources; tourism was also listed as another strength which affects the development of organic farming in Malta.

With regards to the weaknesses, the Program stated that the level of training of farmers is quite low; there is also very limited ‘technical assistance’ and advisory services available regarding Organic
farming; low soil fertility; promotion of organic products is very limited and issues of water re-
sources.

As opportunities, the National Program stated that there is possibility to have ‘multifunctional farms’;
possibility of increase in rural population; developments and improvements of rural and natural heri-
tage; increase in rural tourism; product diversification for tourism (in order to offer something differ-
ent than ‘sun and sea’ destination).

Some of the threats identified were that employment in the agricultural sector is decreasing and the
threats due to water and soil pollution which are increasing by time.

Some important aspects were identified by Ms. Nathalie Chetcuti in her Masters ‘The Prospects of
Organic Farming in the Maltese Islands’ (September 2003) where she concluded from her
interviews that even though the farmers agree with organic farming, they admitted that it is "very
difficult to achieve through the limits of agricultural practice in Malta". However three foreign
experts have shown that practicing organic farming in Malta should be seen as an opportunity in
order to attract foreign markets and further investments. She also proved through her research that
demand from the public does exist in fact, “22.9% of respondents expressed willingness to pay over
20% more to obtain fresh food produce that was certified organic".
Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Review of Data Collection Methods

The research methodology chosen to conduct the study and reach the research objectives, is by using the Qualitative method of research because as Merriam (2009) explains that Qualitative analysis can be used mostly when “there is lack of theory” it is the researcher’s choice to “gather data to build concepts, hypothesis or thesis”, which is the case for this area of study.

As a definition of Qualitative research, Lincoln (2000) states that “qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them”. (pg.3) Therefore this method was used to conduct this research where the interviews were held at the place of the interviewee to be able to learn and make observations about the farm or the organisation itself.

Qualitative research methodology requires a small number of participants unlike quantitative research (where a larger number of participants are required); therefore this was chosen because as already seen, there are only a limited number of people who are involved in organic agriculture in Malta.
The second reason why qualitative research methodology was chosen is because it allows a more detailed explanation to the questions asked. Therefore the interviewee can further give reasons and express their ideas and opinions to the answers they give.

3.2 Secondary Data

Information is very limited regarding the connection between organic farming and agri-tourism in Malta. However, some useful information was found from 'The Prospect of Organic Farming in the Maltese Islands' (MSc. Environmental Planning and Management – September 2003 by Ms. Nathalie Chetcuti) where interviews were conducted with several farmers. However such data might not be all relevant today since the research was conducted in 2003. Therefore it was important to interview various farmers and organisations in order to analyse the current situation of organic farming and agri-tourism in Malta.

3.3 Primary Data

In order to gather information, face-to-face interviews were conducted and also some time was spent with them in order to learn about the current situation of organic farming in Malta, their experiences and views, learn more about the farmer or the organisation, the benefits and issues of organic farming for Malta and whether it has the potential to improve agri-tourism in Malta, which in total took a maximum of one hour.
Since there is lack of information in this area of study, interviews were conducted in the following order with several people and organisations as shown below:

1. MOAM – Malta Organic Agriculture Movement (organic organisation)
2. Mr. Joseph Sciberras (certified organic farmer)
3. Mary Mallia from ‘Tal-Fuklar’ Farm in Mgarr (converting farmer)
4. Ms. Jeanette Borg (Merill Eco Tours)
5. Mr. Louis Cini (certified organic farmer)
6. Gaia Foundation with Ms. Carmen Chetcuti (certified organic but recently reduced and limited their production of organic produce to olives only)

3.4 Criteria for Sample Selection

Various different people with different roles and ideas were chosen to be interviewed. Therefore in total six interviews were conducted: One was conducted with the organic organisation in Malta which is the MOAM, three with farmers (Mary Mallia who is still converting to organic farming and two interviews with certified organic farmers - Joseph Sciberras and Louis Cini). The fifth one was carried out with the GAIA Foundation that is certified organic however, it used to produce a wider selection of organic produce but today it only offers organic olives. The sixth and last person interviewed was Ms. Jeanette Borg from Merill Eco Tours.

The reason why MOAM was chosen to be interviewed is because it is the main organisation in Malta which is dedicated to organic agriculture. It is a voluntary non-governmental organisation which aims to educate people about organic farming and strives to promote and encourage organic
agriculture for Malta. The members of the organisation are farmers (converting, certified organic or farmers who aim to make the transition) and people who are interested in such a subject. It informs and teaches farmers through training on how to convert to organic farming and it also helps them with any problems or issues they experience.

The interview was important to gather information regarding main issues or challenges that Maltese farmers face to convert to organic farming, the main benefits of organic farming, whether they believe organic farming is important to increase and develop agri-tourism in Malta, the demand for organic produce in Malta, if they think there is enough education regarding organic food in Malta, the future of organic farming in Malta and more.

The second interview was conducted with Mr. Joseph Sciberras in Manikata who is a certified organic farmer and also organises occasional agri-tourism activities to tourists and also locals. It was important to interview a certified organic farmer in order to get to know more about his personal experience in organic farming in Malta, the reason why he decided to convert to organic, the challenges he experienced to become certified, the issues and benefits he experiences today as a certified organic farmer, whether he thinks organic farming is important to develop agri-tourism and such information.

Since there are only a few certified organic farmers in Malta it was best to interview another certified organic farmer in order to be able to compare and contrast the replies of both certified organic farmers. Therefore Mr. Louis Cini was also interviewed in Mellieha. The reason for interviewing two certified organic farmers was as it is interesting to see if they experienced or are experiencing same or similar issues and challenges, what their opinions are regarding agri-tourism and organic farming in Malta and the relationship between the two sectors and more.
The fourth person interviewed was Ms. Mary Mallia from ‘Fuklar Organic Farm and Wine Estate’ in Mgarr who is still in conversion but is hoping to become fully certified organic by the end of 2013 with BioZoo Italian organic certification. Apart from growing their own produce, they also give a lot of importance to agri-tourism activities which are organised at the estate for anyone to visit and participate. The farm is still in conversion since 2004 and therefore, not certified organic up to now. The reason why Ms. Mary Mallia was chosen was because the estate combines the two aspects of organic farming (still in conversion) together with agri-tourism so one would be able to analyse such views of farmers as to why she thinks these two aspects are important.

Furthermore, by interviewing a converting farmer one can understand how the current situation is for a converting farmer, the problems or challenges she is experiencing to become certified, what inspired her to convert to organic farming, whether she thinks it is important or not that organic farmers include agri-tourism activities and more.

The fifth person interviewed was Ms. Jeanette Borg from Merill Eco Tours. Merill Eco Tours is a leading company in Malta which offers various agri-tourism and eco-tourism activities (Times of Malta, 2013). Since the company is all about agri-tourism and eco-tourism, it was important to interview Ms. Jeanette Borg to see what her thoughts are about organic farming and whether she believes it is important for agri-tourism.

The sixth and last interview conducted was with GAIA Foundation which is certified organic. GAIA Foundation also offers tourists with great opportunities to have hands on experience at the place. They offer various projects and one of them is specifically targeted to promote eco-tourism. Here, GAIA Foundation offers virtual tours, workshops and also volunteer programmes offering free accommodation to tourists who want to spend a few days as volunteers. Ms. Carmen Chetcuti from GAIA Foundation was chosen to be interviewed firstly because they are certified organic and offer
various activities related to agriculture and tourism. The second and more important reason is due to the fact that they used to produce a larger variety of organic produce but even though the demand (seeing from their customers) was quite high, they limited their production of organic produce only to olives. Therefore it was interesting to see the main reasons why they had to reduce their produce and what challenges they were facing.

3.5 Methods of Analysis

Structured interviews with open ended questions were conducted in order to allow the interviewees to add their own opinions. All the interviews were conducted face to face except the one with Ms. Jeanette Borg from Merill Eco Tours which had to be conducted via email. Furthermore, the interviews had a maximum of thirteen questions in order to keep the interviews short and to the point. Each face to face interview took approximately forty five minutes since all of them were willing to share information and their personal views and experiences.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

All interviewees were given the option to remain confidential if they would not like to have their names mentioned for the research. However all six interviewees accepted to have their names mentioned. In order to prove this, a consent form was signed by all interviewees agreeing that their names will be listed in the long essay and that all information provided by them will solely be used for this research. Since the interview with Ms. Jeanette Borg was not done face to face, she agreed via email for her name to be mentioned in the long essay.
3.7 Limitations

One limitation experienced was that of access to informants because as previously stated one interview with Merill Eco Tours had to be conducted via email. The main reason for this was because it was peak season and they were very busy with ongoing activities therefore the questions had to be very limited and to be sent via email. The main disadvantage of this is that the information given by the interviewees is very limited only to the questions asked and the replies cannot be elaborated. Another limitation experienced was that in Malta there are a very limited number of people who are involved with organic farming. Additionally, out of this small number, there are only a few of these who integrate both agri-tourism and organic farming. Consequently, information gathered was limited to only a small number of people. In order to overcome such a limitation, various people were interviewed that is, certified organic farmers (Mr. Joseph Sciberras and Mr. Louis Cini), a converting farmer (Ms. Mary Mallia), the main organic organisation of Malta (MOAM), a company offering eco-tourism and agriculture-related activities to tourists (Merill Eco Tours) and another certified organic organisation which experienced challenges with organic farming (GAIA Foundation). Therefore even though the number of people in the sectors related to the research was limited, it was important to interview people with different views and experiences for the research not to be biased.
Chapter 4: Analysis and Results

4.1 Main issues and challenges experienced regarding organic farming

When asking MOAM about the main issues and challenges that farmers face in order to convert to organic, they stated that the main challenge is financial as farmers need to pay in order to become certified organic. This was also in fact pointed out by both certified organic farmers Mr. Louis Cini and Mr. Joseph Sciberras when he (Mr. Sciberras) explained that he had to pay a fee of €500 to MCCAA to become a certified organic farmer.

Furthermore, another challenge for farmers according to MOAM is that since organic farming is highly regulated, this therefore requires skills and knowledge in order to be able to produce genuine organic produce and many farmers are still not willing to do this.

The issues and challenges Ms. Mary Mallia is currently experiencing (since she is still a converting farmer) are to become certified with BioZoo. The process of conversion has been going on since 2004 and she is expected to become fully certified organic by the end of 2013. She believes that
the process to become certified organic should not be a complicated one as it was for her. She further explained that the challenges she experienced were mostly related to the government specifically the departments of the government (MCCAA, MEPA and Ghammieri).

Ms. Jeanette Borg explained an important issue with regards to challenges for Malta to adopt organic farming, when she stated that since Malta is such a small island, it lacks the area needed to offer organic farming especially if the person next to the organic field is spraying. Therefore this issue makes it challenging for a small island like Malta to convert to organic farming unless all farmers adopt the EU organic farming principles.

It was interesting to ask why GAIA Foundation decided to limit their organic produce to only olives and what were the main challenges they were experiencing. When asking Ms. Carmen Chetcuti, she stated that the whole process and having much more organic produce (rather than just olives), it was very time consuming and many people were needed to help with the production. Therefore even though they are certified organic (since 2005), they decided to reduce their organic produce to olives only.

4.2 Main benefits of organic farming when compared to conventional farming

As explained by MOAM the main benefits of organic farming are those stated by the EU as the four main principles of organic farming namely, fairness, health, ecology and care.

When asking Mr. Joseph Sciberras about the benefits he experienced since he became an organic farmer, he stated that the change brought about land benefits. He also sees various new insects which he did not see before when he was not organic. Additionally, another benefit according to Mr. Sciberras is that he can safely eat the produce directly from the field.
Ms. Mary Mallia said that in her opinion, the benefits of organic farming are that since no chemicals are used, this results in better health for both the consumer and also the farmer. Moreover, another benefit is for the environment since for instance conventional farmers make use of chemical fertilizers and when it rains it ends up in the water table causing negative effects to the environment. It is interesting to note that these two benefits mentioned by Ms. Mallia were the exact same as those mentioned by Mr. Louis Cini.

4.3 What inspired organic farmers to convert to organic farming

Mr. Joseph Sciberras explained that he never liked using pesticides and mainly decided to convert to organic farming when his son asked him why he cannot just pick and eat a strawberry from the fields yet he sells them to other people. He said that that was the mainly the moment when he decided to start the conversion to organic – in order to produce genuine organic produce.

Ms. Mary Mallia said that her husband mostly inspired her to convert to organic farming for the main reasons of being able to contribute positively towards the environment and also because they believe and are aware that conventional farming is not sustainable. She also added that it was important to become certified as an organic farmer so that tourists, customers or anyone in general who visits, would trust the farmer more that such produce is organic and abides with the EU regulations of organic farming.

Mr. Louis Cini has always believed that conventional farming is not a genuine method of farming. He explained that his parents who were also farmers, even though they were not certified organic, they still used primitive methods for farming and did not use pesticides and he continued using the same techniques and became certified organic.
When asking GAIA Foundation what inspired them to convert, Ms. Chetcuti stated that they believe organic produce is healthier and also because it is important to offer genuine produce to the customers, visitors or tourists.

4.4 Whether Organic farming has the potential to develop and increase agri-tourism in Malta

According to MOAM, organic farming and agri-tourism are complementary and that there is no agri-tourism without organic farming. It was explained that this is mainly because of safety issues. Tourists or visitors who visit a farm would want to try out the produce and therefore this has to be safe to eat from the fields with no pesticides. Certification in organic farming means that everything will be audited to guarantee a genuine product.

Mr. Joseph Sciberras started to incorporate agri-tourism activities together with organic farming. He said he experiences certain challenges from MEPA in order to provide facilities for the tourists visiting. He also added that he is working closely with the Majjistral Nature and History Park. When asked about his thoughts regarding the connection between organic farming and agri-tourism, he said that this makes sense so that the produce offered will be healthy, safe and genuine where one can eat directly from the field.

At the Fuklar Organic Farm, Ms. Mary Mallia explained that schools and tourists visit the farm and they also usually buy their products while visiting. Moreover, according to Ms. Mallia it is important to organise agri-tourism activities in order to sustain the farm since organic farming yields less produce. Therefore she believes it is important that organic farming is sustained with agri-tourism.
and that agri-tourism would include organic produce. Additionally, she believes that through organic farming, agri-tourism activities can increase in Malta since tourists that travel or search for agri-tourism also search for organic produce and not conventional. Finally Ms. Mallia also added that the government plays an important role when it comes to providing agri-tourism activities in combination with organic farming.

Mr. Louis Cini explained that even though he does not offer any agri-tourism activities since he works all by himself, he aims and dreams that one day he can start to offer such activities.

When asking Mr. Louis Cini whether he thinks organic farming does help to increase and develop agri-tourism in Malta, he replied by saying that yes, he believes that it would help to develop agri-tourism.

Ms. Jeanette Borg from Merill Eco Tours stated that the demand for agri-tourism is increasing in Malta but there is the potential to offer further agri-tourism activities and experiences especially since it is a diversified kind of business. Mr. Borg added that rules and regulations and proper marketing must be given importance for any agri-tourism activity.

When asked if organic farming can help to increase agri-tourism in Malta, Ms. Jeanette Borg explained that she believes that this might not be the case. However it is interesting to note that she stated that sustainable agriculture is definitely the answer. Ms. Borg explained that nowadays farmers are more conscious about the inputs and methods they use for agriculture however there is still a need to become more sustainable. She also said that it is of utmost importance to start including more local produce not only in agri-tourism but also on the menus in hotels, restaurants and other tourism-related businesses in order to offer a truly authentic local experience to the tourist.
Ms. Jeanette Borg stated that if all Malta would adopt the EU organic farming principles, organic farming would be a more sustainable option for Malta. However if not everyone agrees to convert to organic farming, it is not possible to have one organic farmer and the farmer next him sprays and is not organic. Therefore until now, she believes that lack the area to have organic farming unless as already stated, the whole territory converts to organic farming.

GAIA Foundation organises various workshops which are related to tourism. Ms. Carmen Chetcuti said that the majority of people who visit GAIA Foundation are mainly tourists and schools. Hands-on experiences are offered to tourists and many foreigners come as volunteers to help around and gain experience in agriculture.

When asking Ms. Carmen Chetcuti if she believes organic farming can help to increase and develop agri-tourism in Malta, she stated that she does because it is important to offer the tourist and consumer a genuine product.

4.5 Demand for organic produce (by farmers and general public)

MOAM stated that the number of farmers in Malta who are interested to convert to organic is always increasing but the actual number of people who are ready to take up the challenge is still very small mainly because of the fact that since organic farming is highly regulated, many are still not ready to comply with such regulations.

With regards to the demand for organic produce, Mr. Joseph Sciberras stated that observing from his customers demand is increasing however supply is still very limited since the majority of farmers in Malta are conventional farmers. However on the contrary Ms. Mary Mallia who also observed her customer demand, believed that demand for organic produce is still low. Moreover she explained that most people come because they will be interested only but not to actually buy. The majority of
people who buy the organic produce are mostly sick people such as people with cancer because their doctors would suggest to them to eat more organic produce and not conventional produce to avoid more chemicals in their system.

Mr. Louis Cini explained that the majority of people who are conscious about organic produce, seeing from his customers, are tourists and also sick people especially people with cancer for the same reasons as Ms. Mary Mallia also stated.

4.6 Education about organic farming to the public

As already explained by MOAM, there is the need to increase more education to the public in Malta regarding organic farming. They also stated that the only training that is provided for organic farming is by MOAM and they also promote and educate through social media such as their Facebook page and their website. Additionally, MOAM organises various talks, visits, monthly radio talks and also articles on newspapers and magazines. Moreover they work closely with NGOs in Malta namely Birdlife, Din l-Art Helwa, Friends of the Earth and Ramblers Association of Malta.

4.7 Future of organic farming

When asking MOAM if they think there is a possibility to have the majority of farmers in Malta organic, they said that till today there is still no national policy regarding agriculture or organic agriculture therefore even if there is a possibility, it would most likely not be in the near future. Also, they said it is quite difficult since there is always resistance to change however it is not impossible.

MOAM explained that as an organisation, they are constantly trying to find new ways on how to reach farmers, help them and guide them towards organic farming. They are also working to provide hands-on training abroad for farmers.
When asked about his thoughts about the future of organic farming in Malta, MOAM said that it is very important that support from government and authorities will be available. Furthermore, a new Action Plan by the government about organic farming is needed since before there was one but it was not implemented and had no support to actually put into practice.

MOAM explained that any farmer who would want to start the process of conversion, must make sure to familiarise himself with the regulations of organic farming since it is highly regulated. Additionally the farmer must learn about agronomy which includes for example biological control. He also stated that such knowledge should also be applied in conventional farming.

Mr. Joseph Sciberras believes that until now, organic farming is still not very popular. He also stated that it is quite difficult to have organic farming in an area close to other fields that are conventional. This in fact was also mentioned by Ms. Carmen Chetcuti from GAIA Foundation. He added that he considers himself very lucky that his area is suitable enough for organic farming. However he said that conventional farming is still not sustainable and has less nutrients while organic produce is all natural and also tastes better.

Just like Mr. Sciberras, Ms. Mary Mallia also believes that organic farming is a more sustainable method than conventional farming. She also added that conventional farming is destroying our soil, natural insects and is harming the environment.

When asking her about her thoughts of the future of organic farming in Malta, Ms. Mallia (just like MOAM and Ms. Chetcuti), stated that it depends on the attitude and actions of the new government. Moreover, she also said that there is more future for organic rather than for conventional farming since Malta would be able to compete with other countries in the European Union through organic farming.
Chapter 5: Results, Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1 Objectives of the research and implications arising from the study

The hypothesis tested for the research was whether organic farming has the potential to develop agri-tourism in Malta or not. According to the replies given in the interviews conducted, five out of the six people interviewed believe that yes, organic farming can help to develop agri-tourism in Malta. However the majority have also added that it is important for the government to take actions in order to increase and develop organic farming in Malta.

The three main objectives for the research were met through the interviews conducted. The first objective of the research was to find out how organic farming can develop and increase agri-tourism activities in Malta. From the interviews it can be concluded that there cannot be agri-tourism without organic farming. This is because tourists who come for such activities related to agriculture, would expect a complete experience and they would want to eat healthier and have genuine local organic produce without pesticides and grown in a sustainable way. The issue of safety was also brought up constantly because organic food would be safe to eat from the fields and this is important when tourists would be visiting farms. Farmers also explained that organic produce tastes better and the process is all natural which in turn might attract more tourists. Additionally, certification proves that all produce from that particular farmer would be certified and according to the EU standards of organic farming so tourists would be ensured that the produce is genuine.
Organic farming is becoming very important globally therefore Malta would be able to compete with such countries mainly in the European Union, as explained in the interview by Ms. Mary Mallia.

When interviewing certified organic farmers, they explained that they offer visits to tourists at their farms explaining to them their methods of organic farming. The tourists would also have the opportunity to taste the fresh organic produce from the fields and some farms also offer tourists the opportunity to help around the farm if they would like to.

The issue of sustainability is without doubt becoming very popular everywhere. Organic farming according to all replies from the interviews conducted is stated to be a more sustainable option instead of conventional farming. In fact as Ms. Mary Mallia explained conventional farming is destroying the soil and the environment. Therefore by increasing organic farming, Malta can be promoted more as having sustainable agriculture.

The second objective of research was to consider how to adopt feasibility of organic farming in Malta meaning, to see whether organic farming (in all its aspects) would be a possible option for Malta. One advantage of organic farming is that it is highly regulated therefore the farmers would have set guidelines to follow and to keep the farming practice a sustainable one. This helps to make organic farming feasible for Malta.

As explained by MOAM, there is the need to increase education and training because till today this is only offered by MOAM. Therefore by increasing training for farmers and also education for the public, organic farming in Malta would possibly increase and become feasible.

An important issue which was brought up in interviews was the role of the government regarding organic farming. It was explained that till today Malta does not even have a National Policy about agriculture and organic farming. This would be an important step for the government to recognise
the importance of organic farming by setting up a National Policy for agriculture and organic farming. Additionally, the certified organic farmers and also MOAM hope for improvements and support from the authorities such as a setting up of an Action Plan by the Government.

Another issue which was mentioned was that the public demand in Malta for organic produce is quite high however supply is low, in fact this same comment was also brought up by Mr. John Portelli from MOAM in an article in Malta Today (2008). As already discussed, the majority of farmers in Malta are conventional farmers. This shows that in order for organic farming to be made feasible, it must increase by encouraging more farmers to convert to organic farming. MOAM as explained during the interview is working very hard and closely to farmers who wish to start or are during the process of conversion.

It is interesting to note that apart from the positive effect organic farming can have on agri-tourism, agri-tourism is also important is keeping organic farming feasible sustainable. This is because since organic farming yields less than conventional (since the process of organic is an all-natural one), it can be combined with another activity such agri-tourism in order to keep the business sustainable.

Since Malta is such a small island, this makes it challenging to have organic farming in areas close to conventional farms because of spraying. The solution for this challenge, as Ms. Jeanette Borg explained is to ideally have the whole territory of Malta adopting the organic farming principles, which in itself it is still a challenge to convert all farmers to organic.

In order to promote the local organic produce not only in farms, Ms. Borg also stated the importance of offering such produce in hotels, restaurants and other places related to tourism. This will encourage more farmers to convert to organic farming while also offering genuine, organic, local produce in tourism-related businesses as this is what tourists search for in food when visiting a country – to experience the local, authentic food.
The third and final objective of the research was to establish the main benefits and issues of organic farming in Malta.

The main benefits of organic farming which were identified in the interviews are the following:

- Fairness, health, ecology and care (which are the EU principles of organic farming)
- It is highly regulated therefore more safe
- The process is all natural (no chemicals are used that can cause harm to health)
- Produce has more nutrients
- No pesticides
- Land benefits (more environmental friendly)
- More sustainable
- Health benefits for consumer and farmer
- Safe to eat produce directly from fields
- Organic produce tastes better
- Organic farming can help to increase agri-tourism
- Offers a more genuine product to customers and tourists

The main issues identified from the research are:
• To convince farmers to convert to organic farming, mainly because of the financial burden to become a certified

• Even though it can be seen as an advantage that organic farming is highly regulated and requires skill and knowledge, many farmers in Malta are still not ready to commit to these

• Demand for organic produce is high but supply is relatively low

• Training and education with regards to organic farming in Malta is only provided by MOAM

• There is no National Policy for agriculture and organic farming in Malta until now; an Action Plan regarding organic farming is also needed by the Government

• There is a need for improvements and support from authorities

• Organic farming yields less produce than conventional since the process is more natural

• More time consuming

• Cannot have conventional farms (spraying pesticides) close to the area of organic farms – this makes it even more challenging for Malta since it is a small island with limited space
5.2 Suggestions for future research in this area

Further research in this area would be important since there is limited information up to now regarding the connection of organic farming and agri-tourism in Malta. Another reason would be that since these two areas are developing very quickly in Malta, research must be updated regularly in order to assess improvements and developments.

A further suggestion would be to also analyse the views, opinions and plans of authorities related to the sectors and also the plans of the government. Moreover, the opinion of a conventional farmer can also be considered in order to analyse their opinions on organic farming in Malta.

Lastly, another important consideration is that of Ms. Jeanette Borg when she stated that it is mainly important to offer sustainable agriculture in order to increase and develop agri-tourism in Malta. Therefore in this research this view was identified which shows an alternative view of focusing on offering sustainable agriculture. This view merits further research.
References


- Donatella Privitera. N.d. The importance of organic agriculture in tourism rural. [ONLINE] Available at:


Appendices

Appendix A:

Interview 1

Name:

Visited:

1. What exactly is the main role and aim of MOAM?

2. What are the main issues and challenges for Maltese farmers to convert to organic farming?

3. What are the main benefits of organic farming when compared to conventional farming?
4. Do you think organic farming can help increase and develop agri-tourism in Malta?

5. Do you think more farmers are becoming interested in converting to organic farming?

6. Do you think the demand of the public for organic local produce is increasing?

7. Do you think there is enough education about organic farming for the locals?

8. As an organic organisation how do you plan on increasing knowledge about organic farming in Malta?

9. Do you think it is possible to have the majority of farmers in Malta certified organic?

10. Are there any on-going or future plans by MOAM related to organic produce and farming in Malta?
11. What do you think is the future of organic farming in Malta?

12. What tips would you give to a farmer who would want to start the process of converting to organic?

Interview 2

Name:

Visited:

1. How long did it take to become certified organic?

2. Is the process of becoming certified organic complicated? Do you experience any challenges?

3. What products do you offer that are certified organic?

4. For how long have you been certified organic?

5. What inspired you to convert to organic farming?
6. What are the main benefits that you have experienced since you became certified organic?

7. What is the demand for organic produce (seeing from your customers)?

8. Do you also include agri-tourism activities? If so, how and if no, do you plan to do so in the future?

9. Do you think organic farming can help increase and develop agri-tourism in Malta?

10. What do you think the future is for organic farming in Malta?

11. Do you think organic farming is more sustainable for agriculture in Malta?
Interview 3

Name:

Visited:

1. In your opinion, what are the main benefits of organic farming?

2. What products do you offer / aim to offer that are certified organic?

3. Since when have you been waiting to become certified organic? When do you plan to be officially certified?

4. Is the process of becoming certified organic complicated? Are there any challenges?

5. Do you believe organic farming is more sustainable (i.e for the long term) than conventional farming?
6. What inspired you to convert to organic farming?

7. What are the main challenges you are experiencing to become a certified organic farmer?

8. Why do you think it is important to be certified as an organic farmer?

9. What is the demand for organic produce?

10. Do you organise agri-tourism activities? If yes, how? If no, do you plan to do so in the future?

11. Do you believe that through organic farming, agri-tourism can increase in Malta?

12. Do you believe that organic farmers should include agri-tourism activities?
13. What do you think the future is for organic farming in Malta?

Interview 4

Name:

Visited:

1. How long did it take to become certified organic?

2. Is the process of becoming certified organic complicated? Do you experience any challenges?

3. What products do you offer that are certified organic?

4. For how long have you been certified organic?
5. What inspired you to convert to organic farming?

6. What are the main benefits that you have experienced since you became certified organic?

7. What is the demand for organic produce (seeing from your customers)?

8. Do you also include agri-tourism activities? If so, how and if no, do you plan to do so in the future?

9. Do you think organic farming can help increase and develop agri-tourism in Malta?

10. What do you think the future is for organic farming in Malta?

11. Do you think organic farming is more sustainable for agriculture in Malta?
Interview 5

Name:

Date of interview (via email):

1. Do you think the demand for agri-tourism is increasing in Malta?

2. Do you think there is the potential to offer more agri-tourism experiences in Malta? If so, why should it be encouraged?

3. Do you believe organic farming can help increase agri-tourism in Malta?

4. Do you think organic farming is more sustainable for agriculture in Malta? Why?
Interview 6

Name:

Visited:

1. How long did it take to become certified organic?

2. Is the process of becoming certified organic complicated? Did you experience any challenges?

4. For how long have you been certified organic?

5. What inspired you to convert to organic farming?

6. Why did you stop selling organic produce? What were the main challenges you were experiencing?
7. What type of activities are organised at GAIA Foundation? Any activities related to agriculture?

8. Since you organise various workshops, who are the main people that attend for such workshops? Locals or tourists? What is their main aim when attending?

9. Do you think organic farming can help increase and develop agri-tourism in Malta?

10. What do you think the future is for organic farming in Malta?

11. Do you think organic farming is more sustainable for agriculture in Malta?
Appendix B:

Interview 1

Name of organisation: MOAM

Visited: 4/4/2013

1. What exactly is the main role and aim of MOAM?

The main aim of MOAM is to promote organic agriculture. It is an agro-environmental practice (by law).

2. What are the main issues and challenges for Maltese farmers to convert to organic farming?

To convince farmers to convert to organic mainly because of financial issues. Organic is a highly regulated practice and many farmers do not look to be maintained so much. Organic requires skill and knowledge and they are not ready for it.
3. What are the main benefits of organic farming when compared to conventional farming?

Basically they can be found on the website ifoam.org where it explains the EU principles of organic farming which are fairness (a fair share), health (as conventional farming is dictated by the chemical industry), ecology and care.

4. Do you think organic farming can help increase and develop agri-tourism in Malta?

There is no agri-tourism or ecotourism without organic because of safety. Everything is audited in organic practice and everything is certified by a third party organisation.

5. Do you think more farmers are becoming interested in converting to organic farming?

Always but people who actually take the challenge is still limited as farmers still find it difficult to comply with regulations.

6. Do you think the demand of the public for organic local produce is increasing?

Demand is high but supply is short (therefore instead we import).

7. Do you think there is enough education about organic farming for the locals?
No, only training provided by MOAM (for farmers) and we also promote online with limited resources (such as Facebook and MOAM website).

8. As an organic organisation how do you plan on increasing knowledge about organic farming in Malta?

Talks, visits, outings, social media, meetings with authorities, radio talks (every four weeks), newspaper articles and in magazines. We are also very active with other NGOs (such as Birdlife, Ramblers Association of Malta, Friends of the Earth and Din l-Art Helwa).

9. Do you think it is possible to have the majority of farmers in Malta certified organic?

Till today there is no national policy for agriculture let alone for organic agriculture. It is very difficult because there is always resistance to change but still it is possible.

10. Are there any on-going or future plans by MOAM related to organic produce and farming in Malta?

We are always looking for new methods to reach farmers. We are working on offering training from abroad hands-on for farmers (open to anyone who is interested).
11. What do you think is the future of organic farming in Malta?

We hope for improvements and support from authorities. We need a real organic Action Plan done by the Government. There was one but it was not actually implemented and no support to materialise.

12. What tips would you give to a farmer who would want to start the process of converting to organic?

Important to learn the regulations because organic farming is very regulated. The farmer would also have to learn about agronomy (example biological control) – which in the end, these are things that any conventional farmer should also be doing.
**Interview 2**

**Name:** Mr. Joseph Sciberras (Certified organic farmer)

**Visited:** 6/4/2013

1. **How long did it take to become certified organic?**

Two years to convert.

2. **Is the process of becoming certified organic complicated? Do you experience any challenges?**

Not that much. It is mostly because of pests mostly snails. Also it is expensive as one has to pay a fee of €500 with MCCA.

3. **What products do you offer that are certified organic?**

Grape vines and olives but will have more produce throughout the year. I aim to start producing all vegetables and have all animals as certified organic.

4. **For how long have you been certified organic?**
Since 2003 – 10 years ago.

5. What inspired you to convert to organic farming?

I always felt I should produce organic and I did not like using pesticides but one must remember that organic farming is much more than just not using pesticides. What mostly inspired me to convert to organic farming was my son when he was going to eat a strawberry which I had just sprayed with pesticides and I told him not to eat it. He asked me how and why he was selling them to other people then if it was not safe to just eat it. That mostly inspired me to start offering genuine organic produce.

6. What are the main benefits that you have experienced since you became certified organic?

Land benefits because since I became organic I see more new insects such as the ladybird; I can produce and eat the produce at the same time; more satisfaction in my work and it is more sustainable because while you are producing the land benefits also increase. However I have experienced some challenges for example two years ago a new law was passed by the EU that everything has to be organic which also includes the soil.

7. What is the demand for organic produce (seeing from your customers)?
It is increasing however demand for organic produce is increasing but supply is not.

8. Do you also include agri-tourism activities? If so, how and if no, do you plan to do so in the future?

Yes, we started to. The problem is to get permission from MEPA (example to have toilets for visitors and a kitchen). We often work together with Ms. Annalise Falzon from Majjistral Nature and History Park.

9. Do you think organic farming can help increase and develop agri-tourism in Malta?

Yes it makes sense that it should be organic so when people visit, the produce is healthy, genuine and safe to cut and eat at that moment.

10. What do you think the future is for organic farming in Malta?

It is not very popular in Malta up to now. It is a bit impossible for Malta geographically because everywhere is too close since Malta is such a small island. I am lucky for my area. Conventional farming however, is not sustainable and has less nutrients.

11. Do you think organic farming is more sustainable for agriculture in Malta?
Definitely. Organic produce is all natural and it also tastes better.

**Interview 3**

**Name: Ms. Mary Mallia (Converting farmer)**

**Visited: 7/4/2013**

1. In your opinion, what are the main benefits of organic farming?

No chemicals are used that cause harm to health (therefore increased health for customers and also for us farmers), environmental benefits (because for example with conventional farming chemical fertilizers end up in the water table when it rains)

2. What products do you offer / aim to offer that are certified organic?

We produce grapes for wine, olives, wide range of citrus fruits, free range organic eggs and more throughout the year, depending on the season.

3. Since when have you been waiting to become certified organic? When do you plan to be officially certified?

I have been waiting to become fully certified organic since 2004 however I will be hopefully by the end of this year (2013)
4. Is the process of becoming certified organic complicated? Are there any challenges?

It is complicated but it should not be. We experienced various challenges from MSA (Malta Standards Authority now known as MCCAA) and BioZoo (as I am awaiting to be certified through BioZoo which is Italian).

5. Do you believe organic farming is more sustainable (i.e for the long term) than conventional farming?

For sure; Conventional farming is destroying soil, natural insects and harming the environment.

6. What inspired you to convert to organic farming?

My husband inspired me mostly to convert. The reasons were mostly for the environment and because we are aware that conventional farming is not sustainable.

7. What are the main challenges you are experiencing to become a certified organic farmer?

Mostly because of the government (departments of the government – MCCAA, MEPA and Ghammieri).
8. Why do you think it is important to be **certified** as an organic farmer?

So tourists, consumers, visitors and anyone in general will believe you more that your products are genuine and truly organic. Also, no one can invent or say that they are organic when in reality they would not be fully organic.

9. What is the demand for organic produce?

Demand is quite low; many come because they are interested only. The majority of people who buy organic from us are sick people with cancer as their doctors would suggest for them to eat organic foods to avoid more chemicals (from conventional produce) in their system.

10. Do you organise agri-tourism activities? If yes, how? If no, do you plan to do so in the future?

Yes. It is very important because if you have organic produce, it yields less so you need agri-tourism to be sustainable. At Fuklar we have school outings and also tourists who visit. We organise wine tours and olive oil tasting and then they buy our products.
11. Do you believe that through organic farming, agri-tourism can increase in Malta?

Yes definitely. Agri-tourism comes through organic farming as tourists come and search for organic not conventional. Such agri-tourism activities offering organic produce will be possible only if the government allows it.

12. Do you believe that organic farmers should include agri-tourism activities?

Yes as explained, it is very important.

13. What do you think the future is for organic farming in Malta?

It depends on the attitude and actions of the new government. There is a future for organic farming unlike conventional farming because it can compete in the EU.
Interview 4

Name: Mr. Louis Cini (Certified Organic farmer)

Visited: 19/4/2013

1. How long did it take to become certified organic?

Two years to convert.

2. Is the process of becoming certified organic complicated? Do you experience any challenges?

Not really. It is more challenging financially mostly. Also, organic produce is of better quality however aesthetically conventional produce looks better- it is made to look better.

3. What products do you offer that are certified organic?

Wide range of seasonal vegetables and fruit but no citrus fruits.

4. For how long have you been certified organic?
For three years now.

5. What inspired you to convert to organic farming?

I have always been conscious that conventional farming is not genuine. My parents who used to take care of the fields were also organic without being certified as they used very primitive techniques and I continued using same methods and became certified organic.

6. What are the main benefits that you have experienced since you became certified organic?

Benefits for the environment such as for the water table and also health benefits for the farmer and consumers.

7. What is the demand for organic produce (seeing from your customers)?

They are conscious especially tourists and sick people with cancer because the doctor suggests to them to eat organic to avoid chemicals in conventional produce.

8. Do you also include agri-tourism activities? If so, how and if no, do you plan to do so in the future?
No I do not because I am alone and I do everything myself here but I dream about it.

9. Do you think organic farming can help increase and develop agri-tourism in Malta?
Yes, it would help.

10. What do you think the future is for organic farming in Malta?
Not sure but it is important if it is sustainable but till now it is looking positive.

11. Do you think organic farming is more sustainable for agriculture in Malta?
It depends.
Interview 5

Name: Ms. Jeanette Borg (Owner of Merill Eco Tours)

Date of interview (via email): 12/4/2013

1. Do you think the demand for agri-tourism is increasing in Malta?

Yes.

2. Do you think there is the potential to offer more agri-tourism experiences in Malta? If so, why should it be encouraged?

Yes there is potential. It is a diversified kind of business. If all rules and regulations and proper marketing is carried out it should be a win win situation for everyone.

3. Do you believe organic farming can help increase agri-tourism in Malta?

Not really. Organic farming has various meanings. Sustainable agriculture is definitely the way forward. Farmers are more aware about the inputs they use but definitely more efforts need to be done become more sustainable. Instead of discussing organic farming and tourism, the issue of having hotels, restaurants and other tourism outlets utilising local produce is of paramount importance. Tourists want to eat local products in all the outlets and not only in agri tourism experiences.
4. Do you think organic farming is more sustainable for agriculture in Malta? Why?

If the whole territory of Malta adopts EU organic farming principles it’s a yes. If not scientifically speaking, we cannot have one farmer organic and the one next to him spraying. We lack the area to do it properly unless as I said it is done on a territory basis.

P.S most of our farmers in Malta are sustainable though they are not certified organic. With the ever increasing costs of pesticides, no farmer would spray pesticide if there isn’t a real need to do it!
Interview 6

Name: Ms. Carmen Chetcuti (GAIA Foundation)

Visited: 23/4/2013

1. How long did it take to become certified organic?

Two years

2. Is the process of becoming certified organic complicated? Did you experience any challenges?

No, it was not complicated for us

4. For how long have you been certified or organic?

Since 2005

5. What inspired you to convert to organic farming?

The main reasons are because organic produce is healthier and to offer genuine produce to customers and visitors or tourists.
6. Why did you stop selling organic produce? What were the main challenges you were experiencing?

Because it was very time consuming and we needed a lot of people to be able to produce a wide variety.

7. What type of activities are organised at GAIA Foundation? Any activities related to agriculture?

There are various kinds of projects but those mainly relating to agriculture and tourism are ‘Project Apollo’ (a visitor centre), ‘Project Odysseus’ (which promotes eco-tourism), ‘Project Persephone’ (that promotes agriculture which is sustainable) and more.

8. Since you organise various workshops, who are the main people that attend for such workshops? Locals or tourists? What is their main aim when attending?

Mainly tourists. Schools and tourists also visit and we also offer hands on experiences for them. Various foreigners also volunteer to come and help us while they gain experiences.

9. Do you think organic farming can help increase and develop agri-tourism in Malta?
Yes, it is important to be organic in order to offer genuine products.

10. What do you think the future is for organic farming in Malta?

It is a bit challenging since Malta is such a small island.

11. Do you think organic farming is more sustainable for agriculture in Malta?

There is a need for organic produce for sure. Also, there is a demand for organic but it is challenging mostly because it has to come from the government.