Marekov Dvor

1. Introduction

The family farm of Marekov Dvor is located near the village of Drábsko, in the part Sedmák, in the Veporské Mountains, about 1000 meters above sea level, in central Slovakia. Family of Marekovci has 6 members, of which three work at the farm. They provide experience-oriented accommodation - guests can be directly involved in the works at the farm. This is extremely interesting not only for domestic but also foreign visitors. The farm offers typical Slovak rural agritourism, which is still very rare in Slovakia. Visitors can also enjoy horse riding and horse training (in cooperation with the NGO of Vydra Čierny Balog).

2. Promoter profile

First Name
Viera Marekova &

Last Name
Pavel Marek

Birth Year
1961

Gender
Female

Education

Secondary

3. Farm Profile

Address
976 53 Drábsko 112, Slovensko

Country
Slovakia

Farm area in hectar
25.00

Date of establishment of the farm

1999

Date since when the promoter owns/rents the farm
Fri, 01/01/1999 - 12:00

NUMBER OF WORKERS	**FAMILY MEMBERS**	**EXTERNAL WORKERS**
Full time	0	1
Part time	0	2

Farm description

The farm is located in the vicinity the of Protected Area Poľana. Marekovci family established the farm in 1999, following their dream. The farm is situated in highlands, in a natural environment offering many options for agritourism or hiking in the countryside. The farm is located to the east of the famous stratovolcano Poľana and belongs to the cultural and geographic region of Podpoľanie. The scattered settlement, although typical for Podpoľanie, is a rare urbanistic structure in Slovakia. Due to natural conditions, especially short vegetation period and cold long winters (800 - 1000 m. a.s.l.), limited agriculture and peculiar settlement patterns in the past caused that the region was slow to develop (18th and 19th century). The primary reason for the area colonization was wood processing, which is still reflected in the architecture of folk buildings. The farm has several business activities - horses riding, breeding of cows small domestic animals and pets, preservation of the surrounding landscape (predominantly pastoral land). Accommodation services at the farm are available from 1st May to 31th October. The current landscape adds value to farming activities taking place at the farm. Extensive pastures are great for horse riding. Views of the Low Tatras or Poľana from the nearby mountains is a breath-taking experience during all seasons of the year.

Website and social network links
www.makerovdvor.sk
www.drabsko.webnode.sk/products/marekov-dvor/
Facebook

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

Multifunctional & sustainable farming Key Words
Social farming
Cooperation
Tourism and recreation related to EAL
Traditional buildings
Traditional land use

Free Text

The family lived in the countryside where they had gained some farming skills. Then, the family moved to the city and for a certain time live there. The urban life helped them to understand what people living in a city expect from rural agritourism. When Marekovci family returned to the countryside and established the farm, they decided to pursuit typical Slovakian rural agritourism and create a homely and friendly atmosphere for the visitors visiting this remote rural region. The family bought a homestead on a traditional farmland next to the pastoral mountainous landscape with scattered settlements, an ideal place for livestock and horse breeding. The family takes good care of the surroundings (mowing and weeding). These activities prevent the agricultural landscape from being overgrown by woody plants, thus and helping to maintain its character since it is the landscape that attracts people to this remote rural region. The high-quality local agritourism is the key to their success and it is the main reason why visitors are happy to come back. The farm is far away from the main road but thanks to visible information boards it is not difficult to find it.

Advice/Recommendation

"We are care for and maintain the surrounding landscape as real "landscape gardeners" and the farm is an integral part of the landscape’s character. We love to make our guests to feel like at home here and we like to share the spirit of this landscape with them."

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

General considerations

Marekovci family went through several educational activities focused on good farm practices and farm success. However, they had to master business models and business strategies all by themselves without any kind of support. Since the family could compare the life in the city with the life in the rural area they were able to set up the business model and find the right locality for the farm – the traditional farmland with pastures located in the remote rural region. Their agricultural activities help to preserve the landscape character that is the main visual attraction for tourists. The family had to overcome various economic problems. Besides difficulties connected with natural conditions and hard accessibility due to weak infrastructure, bureaucracy, unwillingness of competent authorities to solve problems, maladjustment of financial aid and lacking or vague legislation for small and family-run farms ("gazdovský dvor" - a small farm officially does not exist in Slovakia) further limit the development of small and family-run farms. Endless discussions pointing to the system’s shortcomings are not a solution when money for real support for farmers tend to get lost somewhere on the way. The approach must be changed. Competent people in charge of supporting skillful and active farmers in regions should firstly come and see the farms in person and then decide on further steps. Without work of farmers and traditional agriculture these remote rural areas would disappear into forests.

Strengths	**Weaknesses**
• Isolation, a quiet and clean environment. • Typical Slovak mountainous landscape with traditional folk architecture.	• Abandoned or only occasionally used settlements in the farm’s surroundings and overgrown landscape. • Weak and lacking recreational infrastructure in the broader area.
Opportunities	**Threats**
• The civic association of Marekov Dvor supports business activities of young people. • Attractiveness for tourists - pastoral landscape.	• Natural conditions and hazards (torrential rain, drought). • Proprietary rights of neighbours on adjacent plots restrict the farm development.

Keywords

EAL Keywords
Farmland
Pasture

Farming Key words

~~Cattle~~
~~Grassland/Pasture~~
~~Horses~~
~~Livestock~~
~~Vineyard~~

Main Training/Skills/Competences

The farmers have been involved in youth education for a long time by providing various education activities in cooperation with Vydra Čierny Balog NGO. Marekov Dvor Civic Association (CA) (2005) is a non-profit organization aiming at active cooperation with young people aged between 15-25. It was established as the result of the need to train and educate young people directly on the farm. Young people who visited the farm as tourist or "campers" in the past wished to work there as volunteers. Such an experience will help young people later in life with own business activities. Furthermore, the CA promotes rural life, agritourism and traditional farming practices in mountains. Training and educational activities provided by the farm are very important in terms of sustainability of multi-purpose agriculture in economically marginal regions with unfavorable natural conditions which are still, however, suitable for agritourism activities (landscapes with valuable historical and traditional character).

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~~Traditional buildings~~
~~Traditional land use~~

Queries/Questions

- What initiatives would boost the interest of young people in business activities taking place on the farm?

- Are there any examples from other countries where young farmers maintain landscape values and character and present them as the main attraction to tourists?

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