

CASE STUDY

MERILL RURAL NETWORK



Background

“Merill brings together a number of farmers, breeders and artisans and thanks to this network, tourists and locals, have the opportunity to experience these beautiful rural areas and consume genuine local products.”

With very few social enterprises operating in Malta, and even fewer social enterprises focusing on agriculture, Merill aims to bridge the gap between the producer (farmers and artisans) and consumers (locals and tourists) looking for a form of agricultural tourism.

By providing tours of various destinations around Malta and providing locally sourced products, Merill is also aiming to deliver farmers and artisans with more diversified avenues of income.

Therefore creating an environment in Malta where agriculture will no longer be criticized and grow to benefit those visiting Malta and the Maltese people.

Customer objectives:

- Develop Maltese Eco-Tourism
- Empower the local community

“Merill” solution:

- Bring artisans/farmers together with tourists/locals
- Making Eco-Tourism more accessible

Customer benefits:

- Sustainable tourism destinations
- Maltese Environmental Products



The Problem

Before Merill there was no real form of eco-tourism operating in Malta. The creation of Merill aims to help local farmers and artisans, create awareness about local agriculture. Agriculture in Malta has struggled in the past to bridge the gap between producer and consumer. Merill aims to fill the gap and provide rural tours and local products to tourists visiting Malta.





“What?”– Stages of development and business model

Eco tourism in Malta was completely based on the way in which a product was made, by using Maltese materials. With negative foreign publicity about Malta’s agriculture sector, Merill fills a gap in the Maltese business environment. In 2010 Merill was founded to create the first ecotourism venture in the Maltese islands, while looking at the definition of such concepts. In the beginning with there being no domestic examples Merill looked outwards for foreign examples of eco-tourism, in order to form an independent opinion on what eco-tourism would look like in Malta. In order to conserve the environment there would have to be direct communication with the main actors in the environmental sphere, mainly being small-scale farmers and their families.

Along the years, the Merill Rural Network was established. The network now operates as a social enterprise and its main aim is to create awareness about local agriculture, revive traditions and empower the rural community to diversify their income in a sustainable manner. The two main pillars of the network are rural tours and local products. Merill strives to add value to farmers’ and artisans’ venues and products, by bridging the gap between producers and consumers. By doing this Merill aims to make these products and services more accessible to either tourists and locals, and help farmers or artisans continue investing in their daily endeavours.

“To Whom?” – Stakeholders and Target Groups

Merill targets both Customers and Producers. In terms of Customers, Merill targets tourists who have come to Malta and are aiming to explore a different avenue of tourist destinations on the island. While producers includes artisans and farmers all over the island. However it is difficult to grow the number of Farmers and artisans which are members of the Merill rural network. This due to the tight knit communities which exist in Malta. However Merill has had the unique opportunity to be included in the agricultural community in Malta and the Merill rural network continues to grow. Allowing tourists to have more of a choice when it comes to picking though options of agricultural tourism in Malta.



“For How Much?” – Business costs

Cost		Revenue	
Direct Labour (including members)	45.00%	Rural Tours	50.00%
Administrative Overhead	20.00%	Local Products	30.00%
Contribution to members (venue hire, workshops etc)	15.00%	Other income (grants, sponsorships, donations)	20.00%
Marketing	15.00%		
Operational (insurance, training etc)	5.00%		

Objectives and Activities

Maltese agriculture has long been undervalued by many in Malta and abroad. Merill aims to boost the agriculture sector and show some insight into the complex and unique farmers and artisans in Malta. By creating tourism based around Maltese agriculture, Merill is bringing consumers to farmers and artisans and enabling them to grow their trade and practices. These practices are also being shared for almost the first time to foreigners who are most likely seeing this side of the island for the first time. With Merill becoming a sustainable business which is distributing local products and rural tours, it is also going further. The Merill rural network is establishing a network of local experts in their individual crafts, to better represent the agricultural community in Malta.



Members of the Network





Online Content

 **Merill Rural Network**
27 August at 08:50 · 🌐

Chiara, currently working with some members of the Merill Rural Network, discovers the #rural areas of #Malta! Read more in the link...



MERILLECOTOURS.BLOGSPOT.COM
Discovering the rural areas of Malta
It is impossible to miss the caressing of the sun and the beautiful sight...

 **Merill Rural Network** shared a post.
17 August at 09:01 · 🌐

Jeanette featured on MaltaToday in her roles at the Malta Youth in Agriculture and our social enterprise!

 **Malta Youth in Agriculture**
18 August at 16:27 · 🌐 Like Page

"Borg is also active in the MaYA foundation (Malta Youth in Agriculture) which acts as voice for youths studying or working in agriculture and a strong advocate for innovation in the sector."



MALTATODAY.COM.MT
Meet the new farmer: confident, entrepreneurial and proud
Jeannette Borg's vision of agribusiness as a creative enterprise offers ...

Videos

<https://youtu.be/g50cmXEVmOQ>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pg8cC5WSFI8>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3kVJNIPAYDs>