

REPORT ON WESTERN STARA PLANINA LEARNING AREA CROSS-VISIT TO TARNAVA MARE REGION IN ROMANIA

25 – 27 June 2018

The cross visit of the Bulgarian team to Romania (Tarnava mare region) took place between 25th to 27th June 2018. The hosting team of Eastern Hills of Dealurile Cluj organised a visit to the Tarnava Mare region, where the HNV innovation in the region were visited. The main initiator of the HNV innovations was Adept foundation, which organised the crossvisit.

The **reasons for visiting** the region were to see the following innovations, which are of interest for the stakeholders in Western Stara planina (WSP) Learning area (LA):

- The overall efforts of Adept foundation in Tarnava Mare to sustain the future of the HNV farming in the region;
- **SES Fruleco enterprise:** a food processing unit, established 10 years ago by Adept foundation. The enterprise was initially created to show the best practice for meeting hygiene requirements for processing of fresh fruits and vegetables. The enterprise was transformed in to a community food processing unit that uses an innovative marketing scheme: baskets with local products, local branding, mobile apps and a cooled delivery vehicle, that helps the local farmers to add value and diversify to their HNVF products;
- **Green Infrastructure Sheepfold Model:** a traditional sheepfold that uses solar panels, thus helping shepherds to improve their living conditions while staying with the flocks on the hills in the summer - electric light, power to charge their mobile phones to keep in touch with their families and to be able to use hot water to increase the hygienic condition up on the hills. In order to protect the pastures, an innovative “easy to move” mobile fence was used, but without great success.
- **Farmers association and milk collection unit:** the milk association was created to bring the small HNVF farmers together, to use the milk collection unit together and negotiate for milk prices in order to solve economic and landscape conservation problems with minimal expenses. The viability of the association was increased by the introduction of HNV innovative mowers and significant surfaces of abandoned meadows were restored.
- **Angofa farm and nature school:** Adept foundation decided to create a farm that will show in practice how HNVF grasslands have to be managed. They began by procuring grasslands and Angus Aberdeen cattle for creation of a farm. Next step is to create the Angofa Nature School that will allow schoolchildren from the Sighisoara Municipality and other towns to attend open farm and nature classes in a modern and innovative nature school.
- **SMS information system:** a free information service for Romanian farmers, who regularly receive SMS messages on their mobile phones, suited to their needs. The service is primarily aimed at helping small-scale farmers to have full-time access to announcements on funding opportunities, application deadlines, market opportunities, etc., even when they do not have regular access to Internet. This applies particularly to isolated farms and villages, and shepherds that are away from home.



Participants:

- ✓ Bulgarian group: 12 stakeholders from WSP LA participated in the visit: three farmers, owner of a small food processing unit, a representative of the regional advisory office; a representative of the local Initiative group, a researcher, a representative of the local municipality, a representative of a local association of mountain farmers and small food processing units, three STEP experts. The full list of the participants is presented in Annex 1;
- ✓ Romanian group: a group of 11 key actors from the Dealurile Clujului Est, Romania: researchers, farmers, LAG representatives. The full list of the participants is presented in Annex 2.
- ✓ Maite Puig de Morales – representative of the HNV Link project staff, France;
- ✓ Adept foundation team: Cristian Gherghiceanu, Ben Mehedin, Răzvan Popa.



Fig.1 Participants in the crossvisit

When selecting the participants in the cross visit we sought to invite representatives of different stakeholders from all of the five WSA LA municipalities. We invited the stakeholders that actively participated in the Innovation seminar in WSP LA, contributed to the baseline analysis and the development of the HNV vision for the LA.

Expectations of the participants and for the WSP LA:

STEP team has developed a simple feedback form asking the participant for:

- ✓ their expectations from the cross visit;
- ✓ the HNV innovations that impressed them;
- ✓ which innovations can be applied in WSP and can contribute for the conservation of the HNVF in the LA;

The main expectations of the participants conclude in the following:

- ✓ To understand how the visited innovations, contribute to the biodiversity conservation in HNV farmland in Romania;
- ✓ To meet Romanian farmers and see how they rear their animals, how they meet the requirements of livestock breeding, how they market their products; to see how the common /municipal grasslands are used by the livestock breeders;

- ✓ To see the similarities and the differences of the EU RDP measures and how they are applied;
- ✓ To exchange information and experience for the HNV farming practices and to meet new people from the HNVF area.
- ✓ To see how farmers are working: setup of the production process, legislation, what advisory services are offered to the farmers – private or state ones, to learn about the legislation regulating the relations between the state and the farmers.

Narrative: who, where, when, what?

The cross visit was 3 days and took place between 25th to 27th June 2018. The detailed programme is attached in Annex 3.

Day 1 – 25 June 2018

The cross visit began with an introduction of the three teams (BG team, RO team and the Adept foundation team), followed by a presentation of the activities and projects of Adept foundation by Cristian Gherghiceanu. Adept foundation works for sustainable development of the region and maintenance of high nature value grasslands, development of touristic activities and promotion of the environmental and cultural traditions of the region. The foundation buys fruits from the farmers and produces juice and jams, supports a workshop for traditional ceramics production and touristic information centre for the Tarnava Mare region (<http://www.tarnava-mare.ro/ro/contact>).



Fig. 2 Briefing of the crossvisit participants in the Adept office

The first visit was to the office of the Local Action group (LAG) in Saschiz. Anca Gaspar – LAG animation expert presented the activities of the LAG. The territory covered by the LAG is in the Mures county, covering 9 settlements, closer to Sighisoara. The region (Tarnava Mare) is named after the river. It covers an area of 85, 000 ha and the population is 27,000 people. The local development strategy of the LAG was approved in 2016 with 10 measure and budget of 1.6 M€. Five of the measures are for small farmers, one for short supply chains, one for quality schemes and geographical indications, one for social services, one for cultural and natural heritage and one for tourism and services tofor the local population. There is no measure specifically targeted at HNV farmland, but the selection criteria give advantage to projects with positive impact on the HNV areas. Example was given with an approved project for production of soap that uses herbs collected from HNV grasslands.



Fig.3 Visit of LAG Dealurile Târnavelor, Saschiz, Mureș County

A project was financed under the measure for geographical indications for production and processing of rhubarb - a specific plant for that region. All rhubarb products from this region will be designated as produced within the HNV area. The plant was first introduced by the Saxon population and currently each family has such plant in their homes. One can find different types of food with rhubarb: soups, jams, juices, cakes, main dishes, etc. Adept is developing a new recipe for pizza with rhubarb.



Fig. 4 Rhubarb

The representative of the LAG “Berkovitză –Godech” – Ms Latinka Simova presented the activities of the Bulgarian LAG in WSP and its experience in funding local development projects. The activities of the LAG from Cluj-Napoca were also presented. Their strategy consists of 10 measures as well as advantage is given to projects from HNV areas.

The main conclusion from the discussions in the LAG office was that the Leader approach both in Romania and Bulgaria is somehow funding unified (similar) projects that currently are not taking account of the needs of HNVF regions and farmers. The HNV term, concept and the needs are not understood by the institutions at local, regional and national level and therefore the local development strategies (LDS) of the LAG are not focusing on the support of HNV farming systems. When developing the LDS, it is necessary to use also the help from experts understanding and better targeting the needs of HNVF systems.

The next visit was at the information touristic center developed by the Adept foundation. The center is positioned near the old tower of Saschiz and is receiving at least 7000 visitors annually.

The place of the touristic information centre was chosen carefully by Adept experts, because it is close to the tower and the fortified church (UNESCO heritage). It was open in 2007 and played an important role for the local population because it was a cold room, without windows, filled with ice from the river where the meat from 6 cows and other food was stored. The meat was sold to the local population.

In the beginning the tourists stopped at the centre to ask for the region, the churches, the food, routes and maps. The experts of Adept foundation developed maps and brochures for the tourists that can help

them to explore the region by themselves. Then they decided to start the production of local jams and traditional ceramics that can be sold at the touristic centre. This offers a diversification of the income for the local population. They have restored the traditional ceramics workshop.



Fig. 5 Touristic information centre in Saschiz

A 100 km bicycle path was created and annually 1000 cyclists are riding that path. It is 80 cm wide and made of trampled gravel, so it cannot be used by carts, cars, and motorbikes. More than 50% of the path passes through Natura 2000 site in the forest, so ATVs can also not be used thus damaging or destroying it. It connects the most attractive touristic destinations. The development of the idea for the bicycle path took two years and constant meetings with the local community and different stakeholders. The national legislation was analyzed (especially the one for the land ownership) and environment impact assessment was performed. Its construction was done under a Swiss funded project by local people and a tractor, trailer and 4400 tons of gravel were bought. It took 3 years.

The next visit was to the local ceramics workshop which restores the traditional production of blue ceramics. The workshop products are sold in the touristic centre and is now getting requests for traditional utensils for guest houses.



Fig. 6 Saschiz pottery workshop

The final visit of the first day was in a fruits and vegetables food processing enterprise “SES Fruleco” located in the Adept office building. The food processing unit was created 10 years ago by the Adept foundation initially to show the best practice for meeting hygiene requirements for processing of fresh fruits and vegetables. The enterprise was transformed into a community food processing unit which uses an innovative marketing scheme: baskets with local products, local branding, mobile devices apps and a cooled delivery vehicle, which helps the local farmers to add value and diversify to their HNVF products. The people from the village can process their plant production and can receive a certificate of origin that aids them to sell their products (both the logo of SES Fruleco and the region Tarnava Mare).



Fig. 7 SES Fruleco / Food Processing Unit

Day 2 – 26 June 2018

The groups were accommodated in Viscri village – a Saxon village with old colorful houses with big gates and traditional agricultural yards. The name of the village means “white church” and the whole village is part of the UNESCO World heritage.



Fig. 8 The colorful houses of Viscri village

The first visit of the day was a cart ride to a green infrastructure sheepfold in HNV grasslands area. The traditional way of sheepbreeding was explained by Adept experts on the way to the sheepfold. In the spring the sheep of the village are taken to the grasslands, where they graze till the autumn. Romanian legislation and the severe winters are not allowing grassland grazing from October to April. All families are mowing hay and alfa-alfa to feed the animals during the winter. All families in the village have around 20 to 40 sheep, which are commonly grazed during the summer months. The sheep are milked at the sheepfold, where the sheep cheese is produced. The milk price is 0.8€/litre, and the price of the meat at live lamb weight is 1.8 €/kg.

The EU support is 170 €/ha for direct payments; 142 €/ ha – Agrienviromental payments; 27 €/ head for sheep and 30€/head support for local breeds. All farmers with animals have to go to the village hall and have to provide information on the number of livestock. 70% of the grasslands are private and 30% are owned by the municipality. Each farmer has the right to rent grasslands corresponding to the number of animals he has. These grasslands are commonly used by the shepherds for grazing the sheep during the summer. The common grasslands (municipal grasslands) are mainly used for grazing cows that during the night are coming back to their owners in the village.



Fig. 9 Cart riding to the sheepfold

Currently two or three times more sheep than in previous years are being grazed on the grasslands around the village and concerns were expressed for the grazing density on the HNV grasslands.



Fig. 10 Grasslands of Viscri

More than ¼ of the sheep of the village (280 sheep out of 1000) are kept in the sheepfold that was visited. Adept foundation implemented a project for improving the hygiene conditions in three sheepfolds in the region. A solar panel is used for electric power supply – light, hot water, mobile phones charging which improves the living conditions for the shepherds. The sheep are milked on the site and cheese is produced. The grasslands are around the sheepfold and mobile fences are used to control the grazing on the grasslands. The fences are moved each 2 to 3 days to prevent overgrazing of the grasslands. There are 3 fulltime shepherds working in the sheepfold and a fourth one is hired during the lambing period.



Fig. 11 Green infrastructure sheepfold

In 2018 600 lambs were sold. Only carts are used to transport the food, water, supplies, etc. Around 300 – 400 litres of water per day are needed. Each family is paying 6-7 €/sheep/year for grazing and receives 7 kg of cheese/sheep. Half of the subsidies, that the sheep owners receive are paid to the shepherd. He pays to his workers 350€/ month plus food, cigarettes and shelter. The milking is done by hand. At the period of the visit 250 sheep were milked and when the lambs are sold the milking will be done twice

per day. Sometimes the milking takes 9 hours/day. The cheese is made at the sheepfold and is sold at the site for 2,7 €/kg. The main problem of the shepherd is the constantly changing work force. The shepherd and the workers sleep in small shelter-beds at the four edges of the sheepfold to protect the sheep from bears and wolves.



Fig.12 The milking and the sleeping places of the sheepfold

The next stop was at the blacksmith where horseshoes are made.



Fig.13 Viscri blacksmith and his family

The group visited the church of Viscri, where the debriefing of the day was done. The main point of the discussions is which of the innovations seen are useful for HNV farmers in Bulgaria. The prevalent part of the Bulgarian group was very impressed by the community center for processing of fruits and vegetables (SES Fruleco).



Fig.14 Debriefing in Viscri church yard

The next meeting was with representatives of the local livestock association which organizes the rent of the grasslands, the grazing, the milk collection point and the gathering and purchasing of the cow milk. The representatives of the association are negotiating with local and national authorities the requirements for use of grasslands, subsidies, etc. 50 families are members of the association. Altogether they have 1000 sheep, 320 cows, 40 goats and 50 horses. The association organizes the rent

of the grasslands by submitting the number of the animals of its members. The association also submits a claim for the subsidies of its member farmers/ families. All farmers have registered permanent livestock barns, while the association is registering a temporary one. The subsidies are received by the association, which decides what to do with them – to distribute it between farmers or to invest in different assets. The association negotiates the price of the milk at the milk collection point with the processors. The milk collection point gathers around 1600 litres per day. The price of the cow milk is around 0,3 €/litre.

The association is registered as a NGO, but nevertheless it can claim the subsidies, which is not the case in Bulgaria. Bulgarian farmers asked if in Romania one is obliged not to sell or move the animals for 100 days after they are registered in IACS. The Romania experts explained that this requirement exists in Romania, but the veterinary doctor can justify the loss of an animal in certain conditions.



Fig. 15 Meeting with the association of livestock farmers

There are 2 organic farmers in the association that are selling their products separately. The whole territory of Viscri is certified and all farmers can certify their products if they want to. The farmers from the village, that are not members of the association receive 5 ha for common grazing.

The day ended with dinner, folklore dances and visit to the milk collection point.



Fig. 16 Folklore dances and milk collection point

Day 3 – 27 June 2018

The agenda of the 3rd day of the cross visit was modified due to bad weather conditions. The Adept livestock farm and Agofa farming school were presented by Razvan Popa in Sighisoara Central Park hotel. The idea to create a livestock breeding farm was adopted by Adept foundation in order to secure core funding for its activities since its biggest donor (Orange) cut their funding by almost 80% in the recent years. A decision was taken to buy high nature value farmland, create a farm and show the best practices for managing HNV grasslands. The process started by exploring the national legislation, the HNV land

price, the documents, time needed to purchase the land and the minimum quantity of HNV farmland that can secure their core funding. The foundation applied three times for funding, but it succeeded to get funding only by the fourth time. The funding was granted by “Flora and fauna international”, but the land price almost doubled by the time the funding was secured. Currently the foundation owns 140 ha and is finalizing the purchase of another 100 ha. The land prices have reached almost 4500€/ha and they decided not to buy any more land at that price. The land belongs to two settlements - Agofa and Sighisoara. Agofa is a depopulated area and they decided to create the farm there. They bought the old school and are transforming it into a training centre for young farmers. The training center will have 30 places. The foundation bought 65 Angus Aberdeen cattle. The funds for the animals were raised through a charity campaign in London with different clauses for ownership of the animals. The foundation has a contract with the company from where half of the animals were bought to purchase the calves and to market their products.

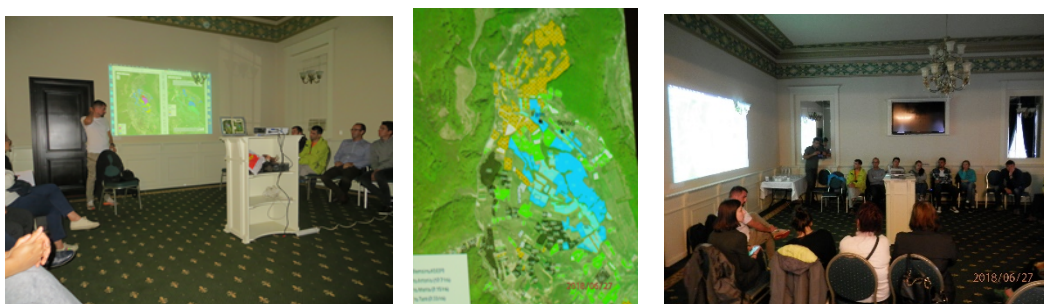


Fig.17 Presentation of Agofa training centre and Adept farm in Sighisoara

Razvan Popa shared the biggest challenges that their HNV farm is facing:

- Land consolidation;
- Insufficient water supply in the region – there are 16 springs, but the water is insufficient.
- Selling the meat;
- Managing the land: The land has to be managed in accordance to three management plans: Natura 2000 management plan, the requirements for Agri-environmental payment scheme and the technological plan developed by Adept experts for land and biodiversity conservation and receiving profit from livestock breeding activities.

The farming activities of Adept are done through two companies that are registered agricultural producers and rent the land for the foundation. The EU support is around 70,000 € for the grasslands and 30,000 € for the livestock. In accordance to the existing requirements they can apply for support for only 50 livestock units within the existing grasslands (240 ha).

An interesting discussion on the impact of land prices in HNV farming systems took part after the presentation. In Cluj region the land price of HNV grasslands has reached 10,000 €/ha. The HNV farmers that cannot manage them prefer to sell, and the new owners are intensifying the management practices of HNV grasslands. On the otherhand the young farmers, that are interested in managing the HNV grasslands extensively, cannot find financial resources to acquire enough HNV land that can guarantee the viability of their farm.

The crossvisit finished with a visit the old town of Sighisoara - a popular tourist destination and UNESCO World Heritage Site.





Fig. 18 Old town of Sighisoara

Lessons learnt and possible replications in WSP LA

The majority of the Bulgarian participants in the crossvisit (78%) think that the most interesting innovation was the community enterprise for fruits and vegetable processing as well as the trading of the products under a common label and certificate. We need to discuss with our regional and national authorities (Food safety agency) and to change the existing legislation if we want to replicate the community enterprise for processing of fruits and vegetables in Western Stara Planina Learning area. The other issue is securing funding for the enterprise, which can be done under different donors programmes in the area.

The existing partnership and cooperation between farmers and between Adept and the farmers is a good practice that takes time to happen but is worth the efforts.

Another interesting HNV innovation is the Green infrastructure sheepfold. The solar panels improve the living conditions of the shepherds and help them to meet the food safety requirements. 22% of the participants find this as the most interesting innovation that may be replicated in Bulgaria.

The livestock association in Viscri is also an interesting innovation example. However, this was tried in Bulgaria, but was not very successful, because Bulgarian legal acts do not allow for a NGO/non-profit organization to be a registered agricultural producer eligible to EU funds.

Other

We would like to express our special thanks to the Romanian teams (both Adept and USAMV Cluj) for their hospitality and organization of the cross visit, including all logistical details.

Annex 1

HNV-Link CROSS-Visits (Viscri/Saschiz, Târnava Mare, Romania)

25-27 June 2018

Cross-visits participation list from Bulgaria

| No. | Name and surname | Professional orientation | Organisation | Email adress |
|-----|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|--|
| 1 | Asen Petrov Petrov | Farmer, Varshets municipality | Farmer, Varshets municipality | iva.pepi@abv.bg |
| 2 | Dimitrina Zarkova | Advisor | Chiprovtsi municipality | di60z@abv.bg |
| 3 | Grigoriy Stefanov Dimov | Advisor | Regional agricultural advisory office (RAAS) | montana.m@naas.government.bg |
| 4 | Irina Veselinova Gerasimova | Researcher | Natural Science Museum | lizards2007@gmail.com |
| 5 | Iva Georgieva Haramliyska – Tsenkova | Legal expert | HNVLink; STEP | haramli@abv.bg |
| 6 | Latinka Saltirova Simova | LAG representative | LAG “Berkovitza-Godech” | lati_s@abv.bg |
| 7 | Mariya Marinova Yunakova | NGO/ researcher | HNVLink; STEP | myunakova@gmail.com |
| 8 | Maya Petkova Angelova | Food processing | Sinevka small enterprise for HNV products | sladka_maia@abv.bg |
| 9 | Miroslava Dikova Zervoudakis | NGO | NGO | miroslavadikova@yahoo.com |
| 10 | Petar Denkov | Farmer, Varshets municipality | Farmer, Varshets municipality | |
| 11 | Petyo Ivanov Krastev | Farmer/ Regional veterinary service | Farmer/ Regional veterinary service | ovichip@abv.bg |
| 12 | Vyara Konstantinova Stefanova | NGO/ researcher | HNVLink; STEP | v.stefanova65@gmail.com |



Annex 2

HNV-Link CROSS-Visits (Viscri/Saschiz, Târnava Mare, Romania)

25-27 June 2018

Cross-visits participation list from Romania

| No. | Name and surname | Professional orientation | Organisation | Email adress |
|-----|-----------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1 | Burzo Florin | Farmer | Tibles Association | florinburzo22@gmail.com |
| 2 | Crisan Andrei | Researcher | LPS NGO | andrei.crel@gmail.com |
| 3 | Dumitras Diana | Researcher | HNV-link; USAMV Cluj | ddumitras@usamvcluj.ro |
| 4 | Horvath Mihai | Farmer | Somes Aries Cooperative | escaladamihai@yahoo.com |
| 5 | Horvath Tatiana | Farmer | Somes Aries Cooperative | escaladamihai@yahoo.com |
| 6 | Incze Laura | Advisor | LAG Somes Aries | lauraincze@gmail.com |
| 7 | Ionut Lavinia | Farmer | Somesseana Association | lavinia.ionut19@gmail.com |
| 8 | Jitea Mugurel | Researcher | HNV-link; USAMV Cluj | mjitea@usamvcluj.ro |
| 9 | Katona Roland | Farmer | Somesseana Association | kroland19@yahoo.com |
| 10 | Mihai Valentin | Researcher | HNV-link; USAMV Cluj | valentin.mihai@usamvcluj.ro |
| 11 | Puig de Morales Maite | Researcher | HNV-link; | puigdemorales@iamm.fr |
| 12 | Rus Vasile | Farmer | Tibles Association | vasilerus1989@gmail.com |



Annex 3

HNV-Link CROSS-Visits (Viscri/Saschiz, Târnava Mare, Romania)**25-27 June 2018****Programme****Day 1 -25-06-2018**

15.00 – Arrival in Saschiz (this can vary accordingly to road traffic between Bulgaria and Romania)

15.00-16.00 – Presentation and accommodation of participants

16.00 – 16.30 - Lunch in Saschiz ADEPT office

16.30- 17.00: Short presentation of the HNVLink project. Briefing on LA Dealurile Clujului and visiting LA. Main needs. Goals of the visit

17.00-18.30: Briefing on the area and ADEPT; Visit SES Fruleco, Food Processing Unit, and Tourist Information Centre and Saschiz Pottery Workshop

Innovations in a nutshell:

1. SES Fruleco / Food Processing Unit: Community processing / marketing scheme.

Baskets, branding, mobile device apps and cooled delivery vehicle. Diversifying the products using local resources

2. Tourist Information Centre/ Saschiz Pottery Workshop

Alternative income sources for rural community. Develop a collectively tourist product to sell value added agricultural HNV products and craft products.

18.30-19.00: Debriefing after the first visits: lessons learns; success factors; needs in the learning area.

19.00-19.45: Transfer to Viscri

20.20-21.30: Supper and night in Viscri, no 22

Day 2 – 26-06-2018

08.30-09.30: Breakfast in Viscri no 22

09.40-11.00: Transportation to the Sheepfold (Viscri area)

11.00-12.00: *Green Infrastructure Model Sheepfold - study case*

Innovations in a nutshell:

1. Sheepfold model – combine traditional farming practices with technical innovations

Combining innovation with tradition to maintain historic management linked to traditional food and local incomes, and traditional way of life in villages; Touristic activities as income diversification.

12.00-13.00: Debriefing after the study case: lessons learns; success factors; needs in the learning area.

13.00-14.00: Transfer back to Viscri

14.00-14.30: Walk in Viscri area – horseshoe **making**

14.30-16.00: Meet Viscri association. LAG's representatives. Milk collection point and the common grazing system. Discussion about CAP payments problems. SMS System



Innovations in a nutshell:**1. Milk collection point – Strengthening the association as a tool for spreading innovation and improved milk Quality.**

Bringing together simple training, small equipment and negotiation on milk prices, solving economic and landscape conservation problems with minimal expense. Increased viability of the association with innovative mowers.

2. SMS System

A free information service for Romanian farmers, who regularly receive SMS messages on their mobile phones, suited to their needs.

16.00 – 17.00 Debriefing after the study case: lessons learnt; success factors; needs in the learning area.

17.00-18.00: Optional visit the Medieval fortified church in Viscri

20.00-22.00: Supper and night in Viscri, no 125

Day 3 – 27-06-2018

08.00-09.00: Breakfast in Viscri no 22

09.00-10.10: Transfer to Angofa (explain school, farmhouse and area)

10.10-12.00: Presentation of Angofa farm (explain school, farmhouse and area)

Innovations in a nutshell:**1. ANGOFA innovative nature school –**

Teach schoolchildren the importance of the natural heritage, and environment preservation.

12.00 – 13.00 Debriefing after the study case ; lessons learnt; success factors; needs in the learning area. Next steps and follow up activities

13.30-14.10: Transfer to Sighisoara

14.00-15.00: Lunch in Sighisoara

15.00 : Departure.

