

FINDINGS PILOTING COMPANY LEVEL

Interreg
Baltic Sea Region



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 RESILIENT ECONOMIES AND COMMUNITIES
BASCIL

Piloting BASCIL Company Level 2024

Overall Conclusions

☀️ Culinary Tourism as a Growth Driver

- Despite varied scales (small family farms vs. more established food SMEs), nearly all pilots found that adding or refining culinary tourism experiences (e.g., tasting events, farm tours, cooking workshops) boosted brand visibility and direct sales.
- On-farm experiences and events proved especially important in countries with strict alcohol or marketing regulations, providing a unique way to “tell the story” behind products.

☀️ Seasonal & Off-Season Innovation

- Many producers successfully addressed their “low season” by developing new activities (e.g., cooking classes, indoor tastings, orchard/winery tours for small groups).
- Off-season experiences helped stabilize revenue throughout the year, even if these services brought smaller, more intimate visitor groups.

☀️ Collaboration & Cooperative Models

- Several pilots showed that joining forces—whether through a cooperative (e.g., “Provinces Produkti” in Latvia), local tourist boards, or cross-promotional events—amplified impact.
- Shared stands at festivals, pop-up markets, or “farm clusters” allowed small producers to pool resources, draw bigger crowds, and offer richer visitor experiences.

☀️ Direct-to-Consumer Channels

- Pop-up stores, local festival participation, e-shops, and even vending machines (for fresh beef in Latvia) connected producers to consumers eager for short-food-chain transparency.
- By combining onsite tastings with product sales, many SMEs found that visitors purchased more after learning the backstory and sampling the goods.

☀️ Time & Capacity Constraints

- The major limiting factor for almost every farmer or small producer was balancing production work with new tourism tasks (hosting groups, marketing events, travel to fairs).
- Often, a single family or a very small team runs the entire operation—leading to scheduling bottlenecks and limited ability to expand tourism offerings quickly.

Key Lessons Learned

☀ Hands-On Experiences Drive Engagement

- Workshops (cheese- or bread-making, beef or fish cooking, orchard/winery tours) significantly boosted visitor satisfaction.
- Interactive elements—like nature trails with QR-code quizzes, the chance to pick garden produce, or direct contact with animals—created memorable impressions and stronger word-of-mouth.

☀ Well-Targeted Packages & Tiered Offerings

- Several wineries and farms introduced multiple package tiers to cater to different audiences (e.g., small private groups, larger tour operators, families with kids).
- Tailoring the content (e.g., simpler cooking for families, advanced tasting notes for foodies) increased appeal and repeat business.

☀ Off-Farm & Collaborative Events Matter

- Producer success was not limited to on-farm visits alone. Pop-up stands at regional festivals or community markets exposed them to new clientele, effectively acting as mobile “brand ambassadors.”
- Partnerships with local restaurants, manors, or other attractions created multi-stop routes—a strong draw for organized tour groups.

☀ Importance of Storytelling & Education

- In pilot after pilot, visitors proved very receptive to the farm’s or winery’s narrative: sustainable methods, animal welfare, local traditions, or historical building tours.
- Educational components (nature conservation, pollinators, “field to fork” demonstrations) added intangible value and justified premium product pricing.

☀ Infrastructure & Marketing Support

- Even relatively small investments—a pop-up sales stand, bilingual signage, simplified workshop spaces—helped producers accommodate guests more smoothly.
- Where external mentors/consultants provided marketing assistance (e.g., branding, social media promotion, website translations), visitor numbers and sales typically rose.

Recommendations for Future Development

☀ Scale Up Incrementally

- Start with small, high-quality experiences (e.g., weekend workshops or seasonal pop-ups), then expand capacity and frequency as staff and facilities allow.
- Avoid overcommitting to large visitor groups if the farm infrastructure or staff is not yet ready.

☀ Strengthen Cooperative or Thematic Clusters

- Clustering with neighboring producers, local tourism boards, or thematically similar farms (e.g., “wine route,” “cheese trail”) appeals to visitors seeking diverse, all-in-one regional experiences.
- Consider joint marketing, shared booking platforms, and cross-promotional events.

☀ Engage Tour Operators & Local Tourism Centers

- For wineries, breweries, or farms near tourist routes, forging ongoing relations with tour operators ensures a consistent flow of group bookings.
- In rural regions, official tourism info centers can highlight farm visits or tasting packages as part of their recommended itineraries.

☀ Combine Digital & On-Site Sales

- Festivals and on-farm workshops drive interest but also funnel new customers to e-commerce sites, subscription services, or direct farm pick-ups.
- Maintain user-friendly online presence (social media, e-shop) to retain visitors’ loyalty after their trip.

☀ Keep Innovating & Diversifying

- Some farms are adding new experiences (e.g., fish smoking, orchard-based cooking, nature trails with interactive technology).
- Ongoing creativity fosters repeat visitation—visitors return to see “what’s new” each season.

Suggestions - Selected For Manual

Pomorskie - “Podole Wielkie”

A high-volume distillery-tour and tasting concept that drew approximately 750 visitors in just a few months. Their well-coordinated tours, strong online reviews, and a clear storytelling approach around local spirits helped them stand out among the pilot participants. Even with relatively large groups, they maintained a quality visitor experience, showcasing the power of storytelling to connect guests with regional heritage and artisanal production.

Klaipeda Region - “Duonos Ponia”

Originally a traditional bread baker, this producer made a remarkable pivot to “edutainment” by hosting bread-baking workshops, folk-style parties, and on-demand mobile baking events. This transformation not only revitalised her personal enthusiasm but also attracted new audiences, including schools and international travellers. By focusing on interactive cultural experiences, she turned a routine product into a dynamic, story-driven attraction.

Central Lithuania - “ŠUŠVĖS MIDUS”

A mead producer who elevated its existing tasting experience—“Midaus upės tekėjo”—with multimedia enhancements (videos, slides) and interactive quizzes that integrated historical context. This refresh drew around 200 visitors, including a group from Japan, illustrating how a well-conceived educational element can draw both local and foreign audiences. The improved format enriched visitor engagement, showing that even heritage beverages can thrive with modern presentation.

Latvian Cider Route - “Abavas”

A cider winery that hosted roughly 4,000 visitors from June to November, implementing a systematic, ticketed tasting approach. They also introduced non-alcoholic options, appealing to a wide demographic. By structuring time slots and ensuring a balanced mix of experiences, Abavas successfully attracted both local Latvians and international travellers. Their consistent approach to scheduling, marketing, and product variety earned them a reputation as one of the route’s top destinations.

Latvian Farmers’ Piloting - “Provinces Produkti”

A cooperative in Saldus that adopted pop-up events, Friday markets, and participation in a major regional culinary festival, all while featuring multiple small producers under one brand. This strategy yielded 10-20% higher sales and significantly boosted brand awareness for the entire cooperative. By investing in a new sales stand, they showcased local products in fresh ways, demonstrating the advantages of cooperative marketing for small farmers.

Saimaa - “Kannelniemen Tila”

A Highland Cattle farm that hosted a pop-up dining experience alongside the seasonal spectacle of letting cows onto summer fields. Approximately 150 visitors attended the event, blending a routine farm task with a tourist-friendly attraction. The farm’s approach not only generated on-site sales but also offered a genuine, memorable glimpse into Finnish rural life—proving how creative event design can transform everyday farm activities into must-see experiences.

Vogelparkregion - “Männerhobby”

A brewery and distillery that introduced three themed workshops—rum tasting, gin-making, and chocolate sessions. These experiences quickly reached full bookings. Their success highlights the viability of hands-on, interactive content to educate and enthrall visitors, circumventing traditional marketing challenges by focusing on in-person, experiential learning.

Skåne - “Ivögården Mat & Vingård”

Located on an island accessible only by boat, Ivögården Mat och vingård overcame logistical hurdles by hosting “Vineyard Weekend” getaways and adding English-language materials for international audiences. Approximately 40 participants joined their inaugural weekend events, complemented by increased local tourism. Their story underscores how targeted marketing efforts and a willingness to adapt can breathe life into an otherwise challenging location.

Norwegian Cider Route - “Syse Gard”

In the scenic Hardanger region, Syse gard combined cider production with cured lamb meats for curated pairings. They welcomed 1,500-2,000 visitors, including many from cruise ships, showcasing how orchard tours and local produce can capture both domestic and international interest. Their ability to handle high foot traffic without compromising the authenticity of the experience set them apart in the Norwegian pilot.

Jögevamaa - “Meemeistrid”

A honey producer that noted a tenfold increase in visitor numbers, thanks to personalised honey tastings, where tasting cups were labeled in visitors’ preferred languages. This extraordinary level of attention, combined with strong ties to tour operators and creative travel packages, positioned Meemeistrid as a top farm for many tour guides—a testament to the power of small, thoughtful details in drawing repeat business.

Estonian Wine Trail - “Uue-Saaluse Winery”

This organic vineyard introduced seven distinct package offerings for various audiences, resulting in ~500 visitors over three months. By diversifying content—from corporate strategy retreats to family-friendly tastings—they dramatically broadened appeal. Moving forward, they aim to add further playful and educational activities, emphasising that flexible packaging and tiered experiences can significantly boost a winery’s visitor numbers.

Lubuskie - “Malinówka Farm”

A small fruit and berry wine producer that launched “wild cuisine” workshops combining foraging walks, nature immersion, and communal cooking. Though serving smaller groups (~50 visitors during low-season testing), these sessions quickly sold out, proving a solid market exists for forest-to-table, hands-on culinary adventures. Their story highlights the success of specialised activities in bridging seasonality gaps.