



Agri-Tourism Strategy

for

Samtskhe-Javakheti and Kvemo Kartli

Regions of Georgia

Tbilisi, Georgia

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Executive Summary

In many regions around the globe, farmers are recognizing the need and desire to diversify their farm products and supplement their agricultural incomes. Concurrently, recognition and benefits of tourism is being recognized as a major contributor to GDP, job creation, local economies and investment.

Though “tourism” is a single sector, it is made of numerous tangible and intangible elements that both affect and are affected by many other sectors. It therefore has the potential to be economically beneficial in numerous sectors and to the entire local economy.

With a strong agricultural history, many regions in Georgia have tremendous opportunity to diversify their list of product and service offerings with agricultural tourism. Agricultural tourism increases the potential for higher margin, on-farm sales of value-adding products and services, further diversifying the product line of the farm operation.

While work has been undertaken, an agritourism strategy has not previously been developed. Stakeholders of both the private and public sector have recognized the need for such a strategy and have played a collaborative role in the development of these strategies.

The objective of the strategy is to promote sustainability and competitiveness in rural communities through the production of products, experiences and services that link agricultural activities to tourism in ways that foster food security, environmental sustainability and sustainable use of natural and cultural resources, validate traditional knowledge and lead to the sustainable livelihoods.



Agritourism has been highlighted as a potential opportunity for development at a national level through the Agritourism Strategy, a regional level in Regional Development Strategies, at a local level through individual entrepreneurs, Municipalities, tourism and agriculture stakeholders, NGOs and development projects.



Strengthening links between agriculture and tourism through clear focus in regional economic development agendas is critical. Forging these links capitalize on the inherent ability of a tourism sector to diversify the regional economy, stimulate entrepreneurship, stimulate investment and assist in social development in rural communities. These linkages offer opportunities in agricultural production, they create employment throughout the tourism value chain, and they build resilience and sustainability of regional economies.

It is important to note that to avoid duplication of focus, while tourism activities such as horse trails, hiking trails, bird-watching etc relate to a well developed agritourism sector, they are not specifically addressed in this strategy as they have been addressed in other newly developed strategies such as regional development strategies, eco-tourism strategies and papers etc. However, consideration has been given to all available reports in the development of this strategy.

With a focus on the most successful strategic outcomes, the strategy has been addressed and presented based on the pillars of Product & Experiences and Marketing & Promotion which rest on the Enabling Environment Platform. The activities represented within each pillar will individually and collectively help drive growth to the sector, while the enabling environment platform provides the foundations conducive to agritourism development and economic advantages.



Acronyms

CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
DMO	Destination Management Organisation
EU	European Union
GNTA	Georgia National Tourism Administration
MSME	Micro, Small and Medium Enterprise
NACHP	National Agency for Culture Heritage Protection
MoA	Ministry of Agriculture
MoESD	Ministry of Economic and Sustainable Development
SLOW	Seasonal, Local, Organic
SME	Small and Medium Enterprise
UNDESA	United Nations Development Policy and Analysis Divisions
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNWTO	United Nations World Tourism Organisation
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WESP	World Economic Situation and Prospects

Strategy Development Methodology



The strategy development process was undertaken through information gathering about the region conducted through individual meetings with the public and private sector, the agricultural sector and the tourism sector, heritage and culture agencies and individual stakeholders.

A capacity-building introduction to agritourism was undertaken with stakeholders from throughout the region and delivered in two regions and three hubs.



Focus groups/regional strategy workshops were undertaken in two regions and three hubs to understand the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats in the region and a draft inventory of each regions key attributes as they relate to unique products, unique dishes, unique experiences and festivals.

Meetings were undertaken and reports reviewed of current and past development projects.

Particular focus was given to availability of resources to deliver, the potential of each proposed activity against strategic direction and potential to develop the region as an agritourism destination.

This strategy is the result of collaboration with a broad range of contributors whose input has been both invaluable and imperative, it is their strategy.

Defining Agritourism

While there are many definitions, agritourism can be defined as visiting a working farm or any agricultural, horticultural, or agribusiness operation for the purpose of enjoyment, education, or participation in the activities of the farm or operation.

Around the world, Agritourism has become vitally important to farmers for two key reasons:

- Pressures have forced farmers to use diversification strategies to increase their income opportunities
- The growing market demand for more non-urban vacation experiences and interest in travel within a rural environment

Tourists are seeking “country” destinations because of

- Desire to escape city life/urban centres
- Growing interest in natural environments
- Search for less commercialized and inexpensive holiday alternatives
- Interest in authentic culture, farming heritage, good quality local foods and lifestyles

These factors in combination with better access to rural areas are making agritourism a popular form of diversification for a growing number of farmers, rural communities, and tourism operators.

Agritourism Benefits

The potential benefits of agritourism development extend to farmers, rural communities, and tourism operators and in turn have a strong potential to contribute to the regional and national economy.

Farmer Benefits

- Improving incomes and revenue streams
- Supports additional on-farm revenues directly to family members
- Expanding farm operations
- Utilisation of farm based products in innovative ways
- Developing new consumer market niches
- Increasing awareness and in turn demand of local agricultural products
- Improved living conditions, working areas and farm recreation opportunities

Community Benefits

- Diversification and strengthening the rural economy via job and income creation
- Generates additional revenue for local businesses and services from tourists
- Increases protection of rural landscapes and natural environments for residents as well as tourists
- Upgrading and revitalization of community facilities for residents and visitors;
- Preserves local traditions, art and craft
- Supports promotion of inter-regional, inter-cultural business and communication
- Promotes the on-going use of local agricultural products and services
- Provides an active business environment in attracting other businesses and small industries

Tourism Benefits

- Diversification of mix of tourism products and services available to visitors
- Supports increasing tourism flows into rural regions
- Increases season length during traditionally off-peak periods
- Uniquely positions rural regions in key tourism markets
- Increased contributions of non-local currency to local businesses and local economy

What, Where & Who of Agritourism

Agritourism, one of the fastest growing segments of the travel industry, includes visits to working farms, wineries and agricultural industries. Agri-destinations offer a huge variety of entertainment, education, relaxation, out-door adventures, shopping and dining experiences.

Agritourism connects a farm and its products

- to other tourism operations
- to other regional retail outlets

Agritourism can be offered on the farm or within the region, offering different but complimentary products and experiences.

Farm Destination	Regional
Experiences	Festivals
Farmstay	Regional food
Farmhouse meals	Food trails
Pick your own fruit/vegetable	Wine trails
Working farm holiday	Participatory culinary/cooking lesson
Farm education "open farm"	Food stalls
Cooking with the farmer/learning to	Farmers markets
Products	Make your own...
Fresh foods	Seeing products being made
Secondary products (eg jam/cheese)	Food tastings
Oils	Events eg food and wine matching
Soaps	
Candles	

Who is the market?

Those that are already coming to the region who could spend more time and/or money....

Those that would come if there were more options...

Those that want what the region offers...

Of particular interest are related tourism niches that individually and collectively have a large overlap with agritourism while maintaining their own area of focus. While this strategy aims to address Agritourism only, it is important to note these niches as primary source markets as they develop in Georgia.

Related Niche Tourism

Food Tourism: Internationally, the demand for food tourism and experiences, the popularity of farmers markets and the appreciation of artisan producers are all on the rise, an increasing number are voting with their feet and with their wallets for authentic, good, clean and fair food – whether it be food that is produced locally or that which is imported such as fair trade coffee etc.

For many potential food destinations, particularly those that have not experienced/changes faced by those in international cities where the a large percentage of the food is imported and produce is available (at a price and at times questionable taste/quality), culinary tourism does not have to mean gourmet food. It is increasingly about unique and memorable experiences. It includes the dining experience itself, a taste of how it should be, but it also an awareness that supporting such endeavours has the ability to generate rural development. It helps to diversify revenue sources, and improves rural employment and income levels.

Local foods – both produce and secondary products, are disappearing. To counteract this effectively, potential must be measurable and implementable, via better prices, quantities produced, and numbers employed. Producers must have economic assurance about their future, economic objectives and environmental objectives are crucial.

The Slow Food movement continues to grow around the world. With the aim to prevent the disappearance of local food cultures and traditions, counteract the rise of fast life and combat people's dwindling interest in the food they eat and where it comes from the global movement now engages millions of people in over 150 countries.

Slow Food believes food is tied to many other aspects of life, including culture, politics, agriculture and the environment. Through our food choices we can collectively influence how food is cultivated, produced and distributed, and as a result bring about great change. During a recent visit to Georgia, a Slow Food Ambassador, celebrating her second visit highlighted the opportunities for Georgia as an organic food destination with a rural environment that in the main supports naturally local produce.

Rural Tourism: There are numerous definitions of rural tourism. Generally it focuses on sustainable improvement to the quality of life of rural people, the poor in particular; encompassing a wide range of attractions and activities that take place in agricultural or non urban areas, offering visitors the opportunity to directly experience agricultural and/or natural environments.

Sustainable Tourism: Focus on making a low impact on the environment and local culture, while helping to generate employment and future employment for local people.

Ecotourism: According to the International Ecotourism Society, ecotourism is responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the well-being of local people. It is about uniting conservation, communities, and sustainable travel. This means that those who implement and participate in ecotourism activities should follow the following ecotourism principles of minimizing impact, building environmental and cultural awareness and respect, providing positive experiences for both visitors and hosts, providing direct financial benefits for conservation, providing financial benefits and empowerment for local people, raising sensitivity to host countries' political, environmental, and social climate.

Adventure Tourism: the Adventure Travel Trade Association (ATTA) defines adventure tourism as containing three main components for the traveler: 1) physical activity, 2) a connection to nature and the environment and 3) an immersive cultural experience. As tourism is one of the largest employers on the planet, it has a major impact on peoples' economic well-being and the planet's health.

Furthermore, adventure tourism is inextricably dependent on human- and nature-capital; protection and promotion of these resources is key.

Responsible Tourism: As defined at the World Travel Market 2007, focuses on making better places for people to live in and better places for people to visit. Responsible Tourism requires that operators, hoteliers, governments, local people and tourists take responsibility, take action to make tourism more sustainable

Pro Poor Tourism: Focus on net benefits to poor people from tourism. It is an approach to tourism development and management as opposed to being a specific product or niche sector.

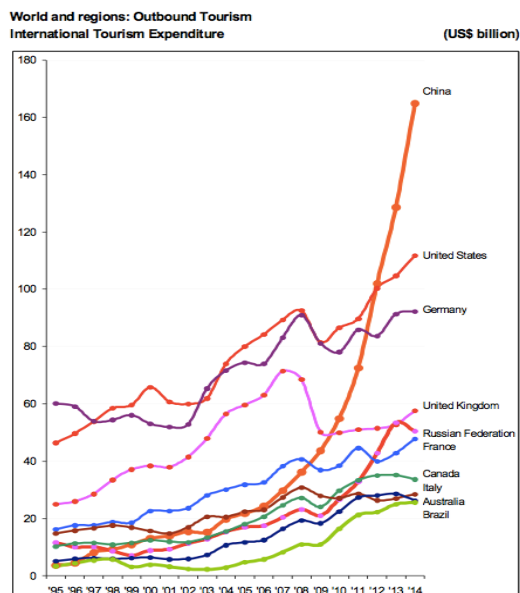
The Global Tourism Environment

In 2014, international tourism set record numbers with more than 1. billion tourists crossing international borders for at least one night during the year, achieving growth of 4.4% despite regional and international challenges.

International tourism receipts achieved growth of 3.7% in real terms, reaching an estimated US\$1,245 billion (€937 bn) in 2014. Adding up the export earnings generated through international passenger transport services (US\$ 221 bn in 2014), total exports from international tourism were up to US\$1.5 trillion, or US\$4 bn a day on average in 2014 according to the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO).

Europe international tourism receipts achieved a US\$17bn increase in absolute terms to reach US\$509bn (€383bn) in 2014 and accounting for 41% of worldwide international tourism receipts. Asia and the Pacific which accounts for 30% share achieved an increase of US\$16bn to reach US\$377bn (€284bn). The Americas, representing a 22% share, increased by US\$10bn to reach US\$274bn (€206bn). The Middle East, representing a 4% share, reached an increase of US\$4bn to reach US\$49bn (€37bn) and Africa, representing a 3% share increased by US\$1bn to reach US\$36bn (€27bn).

World's Top Tourism Spender



The World's top spender, China reached a total expenditure of US\$165bn in 2014 an increase of a staggering 28% on the previous year. Important traditional markets moved up the scale with the US (2nd second biggest spender) reaching a 7% increase, Germany is the 3rd biggest spender, followed by UK which, after a 4% growth moved up from 5th place to 4th place. The Russian Federation is the 5th largest spender in 2014 after a decline of 6%. Currently, Georgia receives low numbers of visitors from these high spending markets, apart from Russia with visitor numbers to Georgia bucking trends and increasing by 6% to 811,621 in 2014. Target marketing of the highest potential of these markets based on research of the highest potential source market, provides a great opportunity for tourism growth to Georgia.

Source: UNWTO Tourism Barometer April 2015

Tourism's contribution to international trade for both advanced and emerging economies was highlighted in the 2015 World Economic Situation and Prospects (WESP) report, released by the United Nations Development Policy and Analysis Division (UNDESA). In 2013 Tourism generated US\$ 485 billion in exports for emerging economies, the fourth export category after fuels, food, and clothing and textiles. In developed economies, tourism generated US\$ 924 billion; ranking fourth as an export category after chemicals (including pharmaceuticals), fuels and automotive products, but ahead of food.

Fostering business linkages in tourism MSMEs

While the tourism industry generally comprises many small and micro enterprises that provide a wide range of services, in developing countries, most tourism Micro and Small Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) struggle to survive, yet alone develop to full potential. In order to support tourism development, particularly at the grassroots level, technical assistance to foster business linkages in tourism MSMEs to build their capacity in business management, networking, market reach and access is critical. Improved business linkages in tourism MSMEs contribute greatly to tourism product while ensuring that the socio-economic impacts of tourism accrue directly at the local level.

World Tourism Trends

Aging Populations

Increases in the proportions of older persons (60 years or older) are being accompanied by declines in the proportions of the young (under age 15). By 2050, the number of older persons in the world will exceed the number of young for the first time in history. By mid-century, there will be some 2 billion older persons, a tripling of this age group in a span of 50 years. Marked differences exist between regions in the number and proportion of older persons. In the more developed regions, almost one fifth of the population was aged 60 or older in the year 2000; by 2050, this proportion is expected to reach one third. According to the World Travel Monitor the number of travellers aged 55+ has increased to 23%. Holidays remain the dominant reason for taking an international trip (71%) ahead of business (16%) and VFR (13%). More people are flying on holiday than using their car or another means of transport.

Responsible Tourism

The trend in demand for responsible tourism is continuing to rise and greater account is being taken of the congestion tourism generates and of the negative effects on resources and host communities that can come with it. Although some developers are giving extensive emphasis to Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), in many destinations are still to include it as a basic requirement in development and potential for growth/sustainability. Green winners Green practices, such as reducing waste and emissions, using alternate energy sources, and producing natural products, have become something of a “me too” cause in recent years. Yet companies and destinations with a history in green innovation have reaped the most benefits and are making real cost savings, and will continue to do so through economic recession and beyond. Green Key program for hotels for example, are ethical but also have potential to be marketed.

Community Based Tourism

There is a growing demand for transparency in social and economic benefit to communities and tourism contribution to preservation and promotion of cultural heritage. There is a growing support by the international tourism trade, including major international operators, to recognize destinations and businesses who are actively addressing these sustainability themes. There is an increasing trend among tour operators in transparency in their choice of suppliers based on these themes. To support the development of community based tourism, the implementation of ongoing tourism awareness and training plans is required as a priority.

Culinary Tourism

The tourism market internationally is increasingly being influenced and motivated by food and culinary experiences. Visitors are increasingly demanding a wide range of quality dining experiences and the availability of these experiences are influencing both destination choice and the perception of the quality of the overall holiday experience and satisfaction criteria. In addition, there is a growing demand for a variety of quality, authentic local food and culinary specialties. Tourists want to try distinctive foods that reflect the tradition, heritage and culture of a place, and which preserve traditional forms of agriculture and cultural heritage. As food, wine and dining events are a major component of Georgia's history and culture, from authentic dishes to seasonal dishes, Georgia and its regions have an enormous opportunity to benefit from this growing market if the range of experiences are increased and promoted and if standards and quality are aligned with international best practice.

Digital Tourism

The trend in digital tourism continues to grow at an exponential rate, resulting in changes to the tourism supply chain and transformation of effective tourism marketing across the purchase cycle. Today's tech savvy traveler, whether 65 or 25, use technology at every stop of their travel experience, they are being influenced on destination choice online, they are being motivated to actually choose destinations to research through online influences, they undertake pre-trip research online, packaging and booking and paying online and they post travel reviews and recommendations to their networks during and post travel - thereby influencing their peers in destination choice. In 2013 tourism bookings online reached \$400 billion (PhoCus Wright). Hotel bookings alone reached \$162.4 billion. A recent survey showed mobile owners who booked travel in the past 90 days, only 53% used a single device (smartphone, tablet, or laptop) to do so. More than 60% of travellers use their smartphone to research travel while they're traveling. There is enormous latent potential for Georgia to reach source markets online, to increase the share of voice the destination has vs every other destination in the world, to maximize every marketing dollar and ensure maximum return of investment and to ensure the best return and benefits from the social media area - to ignore could be detrimental.

Background - Agriculture and Tourism in Georgia

Agriculture in Georgia

With a wide variety of climatic zones, the diverse Georgian biosphere is made up of 12 different zones and 49 soil types. Agriculture has contributed to the economic development of Georgia and it has played an integral role in Georgia's history, culture and traditions. Full utilisation of the nation's agricultural potential has been highlighted by the MoA as vitally important for the national economy. However, while Georgia's climate and natural environment are conducive to agricultural development, over recent decades Georgian agriculture has been lagging behind other sectors of the economy.

While agriculture accounts for 52% of the Georgian labour force, 98% of farmworkers are considered self-employed. More than 3 million hectares or 43.4% of Georgia is designated to agricultural land. However, more than 75% of land users own less than 1 hectare of land and only 0.15% own between 50-500 hectares¹.

Farm Size (Ha)	Number of Farms	%
To 0.1	57,019	8.24%
0.1-1	462,340	66.85%
1-5	160,993	23.28%
5-50	10,112	1.46%
50-500	1,041	0.15
Over 500	72	0.01%
Total	691,577	100%

Source: GeoStat, Agricultural Census of 2004 cited in Strategy for Agricultural Development in Georgia 2015-2020

While the percentage share of the elderly population in rural areas is growing, the income gap between the urban and rural population is widening and currently, beyond agriculture, employment opportunities in rural areas are, at best, minimal. Maintaining youth in rural areas through the development of strategic opportunities is imperative to rural areas and communities. Therefore, a key objective of the MoA going forward is economic diversification through off-farm job creation, promotion of family farming and agritourism.

The process of agricultural cooperation began in Georgia in 2013, with assistance from the government, and is currently proceeding successfully. As of 31 December 2014, 464 entities have received the agricultural cooperative status; comprising 3,450 shareholders members, 783 of them women. Capital accumulated in agricultural cooperatives exceeds 7,666,599.5 GEL.

There continues to be a strong focus on agriculture and food security in Georgia. A specific focus has been on management and education in the use of pesticides, growing organic, certification and reaching international best practice such as Global Gap, but truly impactful changes are in the early stages. Changes underway include regulations in regards to labeling and listing of all contents on honey production.

Department of Agriculture Vision

To create an environment that will increase competitiveness in agro food sector, promote stable growth of high quality agricultural production, ensure food safety and security, and eliminate rural poverty through sustainable development of agriculture and rural areas².

¹ Agricultural Census 2004, cited in Strategy in Strategy for Agricultural development in Georgia 2015-2020

² Strategy for Agricultural Development in Georgia 2015-2020

Tourism in Georgia

According to GNTA, approximately 59% of Georgia's service export revenue comes from tourism.

The direct contribution of Travel & Tourism to GDP was GEL1,726.4mn (5.9% of total GDP) in 2014, and is forecast to rise by 4.2% in 2015. The total contribution was GEL5,867.6mn (20.0% of GDP) in 2014, and is forecast to rise by 4.2% in 2015, and to rise by 6.5% pa to GEL11,508.4mn (23.5% of GDP) in 2025. Travel & Tourism directly supported 85,000 Georgian jobs (4.8% of total employment). This is expected to fall by 0.4% in 2015 and rise by 1.6% pa to 99,000 jobs (5.8% of total employment) in 2025. Total contribution, including jobs indirectly supported by the industry, was 16.9% of total employment (300,500 jobs). This is expected to fall by 0.4% in 2015 to 299,500 jobs and rise by 1.5%pa to 346,000 jobs in 2025 (20.4% of total).³

After a decade of growth, international tourism arrivals to Georgia reached an historical peak of more than 5.5 million in 2014. A total of 2,229,094 of total arrivals spend 24 hours or more in Georgia. While first quarter figures for 2014 are not available, in the remaining nine months domestic tourism visits amounted to 10.8 million.

While tourist arrivals continue on a growth trajectory, tourism source markets and average tourism expenditure have remained relatively stagnant and are low by international standards.

International tourism receipts in Georgia reached 1.79bn USD in 2014 while total expenditure by domestic visitors during the last nine months of 2014 reached 1.57bn GEL and average visit expenditure of 146GEL – considerably less in total expenditure and visitor expenditure.

The four source markets of Turkey (26%), Armenia (24%), Azerbaijan (23%) and Russia (15%) represent 88% of all arrivals, Ukraine represents 3% and arrivals from all other markets represent 9% of total international arrivals. The two source markets of Tbilisi (24%) and Imereti (21%) represent 45% of domestic source markets.

While an increase in visitors is considered positive, increasing visitor yield – daily expenditure and length of stay – is vital to maximize tourism potential.

While the full Georgian National Tourism Development Strategy is not available, the Tourism Products chapter highlighted that the most significant development potential for Georgia lies within four major international leisure travel market segments:

Nature and Adventure
Cultural Heritage
Wine and Cuisine
Sun, Sand and Sea

While it is important to note that the four segments represent primary motives for travel, potential visitors are likely to partake in experiences represented in more than one segment. Similarly, while wine and cuisine are a primary driver for agritourism tourists, a large percentage of total visitors (both international and domestic) are a primary source market for the Georgian agritourism sector, particularly the Nature & Adventure and Cultural Heritage segments, generally interested in rural tourism, SLOW food (seasonal, local and organic), food and agriculture as it relates to cultural

³ WTTC *Travel and Tourism Economic Impact 2015 Georgia*

heritage, local dishes and specialties and responsible tourism (including spreading the value of tourism to local communities).

GNTA Mission

The mission of Georgian National Tourism Administration is to ensure sustainable tourism development through positioning Georgia as a unique travel destination on the international tourist map, improving visitor experience and maximizing their expenditures to significantly contribute to the national economy by effective cooperation with strategic partners.

GNTA Vision

To showcase Georgia as an undiscovered unique travel destination to the world, encourage to explore once and inspire to come back.

Strategic Direction

Diversification of paths to income for farmers

Increase the value of tourism to the region and to local communities through the development and marketing of unique agritourism experiences.

Guide budgetary decisions related to developing and positioning the region as an agritourism destination.

Ensure that agritourism is recognized and incorporated in all agricultural and tourism strategies for the region.

Ensure support is provided to micro and small businesses in the set up, development and sustainability of agritourism products and experiences.

Increase provision of quality cultural experiences and best practice tourism services.

Support initiative to reduce exodus of young people to urban areas.

Support preservation of cultural heritage (that could be lost such as particular cheese etc)

Agritourism Market Readiness Matrix in the Regions

	Samtskhe- Javakheti	Kvemo Kartli
Agritourism designation in Official Plans		
Agritourism specific strategy		
Agritourism initiatives (outside of local food initiatives)	✓	✓
Agritourism Boards/Committees		
Agriculture Boards/Committees	✓	✓
Agritourism directions in Economic Development Strategies	✓	✓
Local food map		
Agritourism website		
Tourism Strategy	✓	
Inventory of Assets		

The regional government and the various stakeholders engaged in the development of this strategy for both Samtskhe-Javakheti and Kvemo Kartli have shown strong recognition in regards the potential benefits of, as well as the natural assets to fulfill requirements of, an agritourism sector. The foundations are being developed through service providers, entrepreneurs and SMEs, considerations are being made such as inclusion in the strategies such as the Agricultural Strategy and support networks are evolving. Both regions, individually and collectively, have enormous latent natural potential however, to truly harness full potential concerted efforts must be increased, ownership created and momentum increased to develop a true, strong and sustainable agritourism sector and economy.

While some areas of support do exist, a dedicated Agritourism Resource Centre would provide the support and impetus to cultivate development in each of the two regions. The following pages outline the purpose of a well functioning Resource Centre and an overview of three Agritourism Resource Centre Models.

Developing Agritourism Resource

The high potential for agritourism development in many regions means it is critical that mechanisms be created to nurture and support the industry's growth. One of the most effective ways involves developing an Agritourism Resource Centre that can provide various forms of 'one stop shopping' support for nascent and established agritourism operators.

Services Provided

Agritourism Resource Centres generally provide an ever-evolving set of services customized to their stakeholders. These services and resources reflect a combination of the capacities of the organization to develop and deliver them, as well as the industry and government issues and priorities that require attention. While it is not unusual for many of these services to be promoted as being part of a centralized 'one stop shop' office, in many cases such 'support products' are delivered by specialized suppliers such as specific government agencies, commercial consultancies, non-government organizations, universities, etc.

- **Information**– providing customized (often contract based) contacts, references, background information, and supporting documentation in hard copy and /or digital formats;
- **Technical Summaries** – preparing tailored (often contract based) agritourism policy, planning, development, and management reports on specific issues in hard copy and/or digital formats
- **Newsletters** - periodic digital and/or hard copy newsletters concerning agritourism business topics such as new products and services, market trends, management strategies, legislation changes, upcoming conferences etc
- **Conferences and Workshops** - periodic regional and national workshops on agritourism issues, business management, partnership development, leadership and management strategies, emerging legislation interpretations etc
- **Product Quality Assurance Programs** - development and delivery of quality assurance programs for approved agritourism products and services
- **Marketing and Promotion Programs** - development and management of web- based agritourism business directories, destinations, products and services. Development and distribution of agritourism, advertising and public relations information with tourism industry, agricultural and community partners etc
- **Risk Management Programs** - development and management of agritourism risk management insurance programs in conjunction with insurance companies
- **Human Resource Recruitment** – development, management, and delivery of agritourism labour force recruitment, training, and retention programs
- **Advocacy** - providing advocacy positions and lobbying support for initiatives requiring the approval of governments and other stakeholder organizations (e.g. facilitating legislation, funding and technical support etc
- **Reference Centres** – collecting, classifying and distributing print and/or digital book, periodical, report, audio-visual materials on issues related to various agritourism management issues

Information Resources

Effective Agritourism Resource Centre provides leadership in the development and distribution needed to support the development of competitive agritourism products and services. Information should relate to specific planning, development, and management issues deemed to be particularly important to key stakeholders. An important role is to actively work with its partners to establish these priorities. Required and effective information generally covers particular themes:

- Understanding agritourist markets and their behaviours
- Assessing agritourism's fit with current farming operations
- Dealing with government policies
- Addressing financial considerations
- Establishing effective marketing programs
- Developing customer friendly service programs
- Creating responsive risk management programs
- Establishing credible product and service quality standards
- Building strategic partnerships
- Managing agritourism product development opportunities

Agritourism Resource Centre Models

Agritourism is recognised as a viable contributor to agriculture, tourism and regional economies, and with it the accelerating recognition of the need to nurture the sector's development as a business. Therefore, comprehensive support systems, designed to nurture the development of this sector are growing. In general, Agritourism Resource Centres operate as one of three models with each providing varying types and levels of 'one-stop shopping' services.

The Government Agency Service Model

With roots in interests associated with agricultural land, food security and food quality, a growing number of governments are developing agritourism units, usually within ministries responsible for agriculture. They are supported primarily via on-going government funding for a small group of 'agritourism specialists' and related administrative staff. At times, they receive additional resources for 'one-off' projects that foster public-private sector partnerships with farming organizations (e.g., training workshops, research, and quality standards program development) or through development projects etc. They provide "one-stop shop" information to both established agritourism operators and prospective operators concerning:

- Policy and regulatory requirements
- Business development and management resources
- Incentives such as available grants, access to finance etc
- Relevant training programs
- Product and service promotional opportunities

Some government government run resource centres play a proactive role in helping industry and community organizations fund and manage applied research projects designed to address current and emerging agritourism challenges (e.g. market research, risk management, market development, etc.).

The Self-Regulating Service Model

In some areas, Agritourism Resource Centres exist as part of a self-regulating industry organization, specifically designed to be at arm's length from government control. Typically they are initially funded by a government grant or public-private sector agreement covering a prescribed incubation period, eg 3-5 years, and are then expected to be self-sustaining. Usually their mandate includes:

- Sharing and coordination of information on farm business management practices which prevent duplication, encourage cost-sharing, and build partnerships
- Act as a dialogue forum on farm business management issues
- Assist in the development and distribution of information concerning products and services which help increase the competitiveness of agritourism businesses

The University Extension Service Model

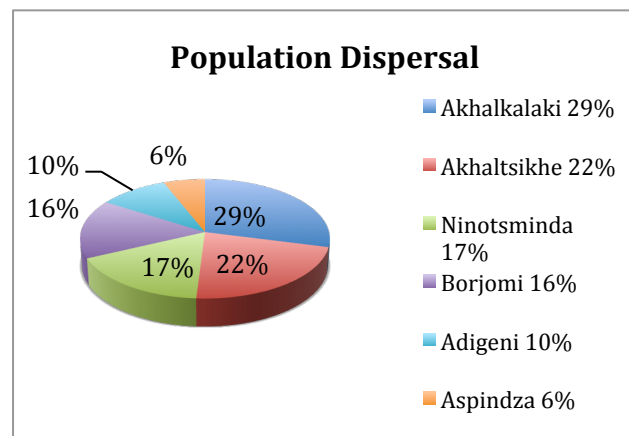
Agritourism has emerged in recent years as a new 'product line' for some post-secondary academic institutions. Typically they are supported by a combination of funding

- University budgets for core faculty and administrative staff
- Government contracts for limited term, eg 3-5 years, for on-going program initiatives (e.g. education and information dissemination); and shorter term contract based consulting and research for specific industry and government agencies.

Samtskhe-Javakheti

The South-East Georgia region of Samtskhe-Javakheti, which shares international borders with Turkey and Armenia and internal borders with the regions of Adjara, Guria, Shida Kartli and Kvemo Kartli, comprises of six self-governing municipalities of Akhalsikhe, Adeigeni, Aspindza, Ninotsminda, Akhalkalaki and Borjomi. Akhaltsikhe is the seat of the regions government administration.

Following a decade of growth, the population of Samtskhe-Javakheti reached 213,500 (January 2013



figures)⁴ with 31% of the population residing in cities and 69% in villages. The population is dispersed throughout the region with the highest concentration in Akhalkalaki (29%) and Akhaltsikhe (22%). There are 2448 internally displaced people in the region, Borjomi Municipality home to the absolute majority. No information is readily available regarding their specific social and economic situation.

Source: Samtskhe-Javakheti Regional Development Strategy 2014-2021

Economic Development

Investment attraction and SME development in the region were highlighted as the most important factor for the region in the Regional Development Strategy. Challenges requiring responsive measures include raising awareness of investment potential of the region among stakeholders and development and provision of support services for investment activities in the region. Priorities included an advisory service for potential SME developers and building cooperation between the public and private sectors.

Agriculture

The level of commercialization of agriculture is the highest in Georgia. Though average parameters of productivity both in plant growing and cattle breeding are higher than national average, only one third of the existing potential is utilized. Further, major challenges exist with local producers being unable to compete with imported products. A very small number are extending product offering to include organic, requiring extra work but, higher demand and higher profit margin.

Tourism

Samtskhe-Javakheti enjoys a range of attractions including historical, cultural, adventure, nature and healing. It is home to a large range of historical cultural monuments including Vardzia cave monastery, Khertvisi, Rabati castles, Tmogvi, Zarzma and Sapari Monasteries, natural environments of Borjomi-Kharagauli National Park and Javakheti Protected Areas offering unique hiking and horse-riding trails, lakes, ski resorts of Bakuriani, it is rich in mineral waters such as Likani and Borjomi,

⁴ National Statistics Office of Georgia figures cited in Samtskhe-Javakheti Regional Development Strategy 2014-2021

healing environments, plants and plant species protected by the Red Book and is home to a number of natural habitats for birds and bird-watching including mass migration.

Developing eco-tourism has become a significant focus and the recently developed Samtskhe-Javakheti Regional Tourism Development Strategy Vision is that the Samtskhe-Javakheti region achieves recognition as an emerging international and growing regional destination linked to culture and nature roots. The Strategy⁵ supports urban regeneration and development of tourism circuits that incorporate existing prime visitor attractions and currently under-visited attractions.

There are three natural “hubs” within the region, Akhaltsikhe the regional government administrative centre, Borjomi a primary destination for rest and rejuvenation and Vardzia a primary visitor attraction in the region. With the opening of new accommodation and as the numbers of visitors to Bakuriani increases, that too could be considered as a future hub; while the primary focus of the destination is currently as a winter ski resort, further tourism development, addressing seasonality, has the potential to provide a year round destination. The Ministry of Economy and Sustainable development of Georgia in cooperation with TBC Group of companies reported that Bakuriani, through extension and diversification of available product and experiences, will soon welcome tourists all year round.

General feedback across the region but, of particular importance in hub areas, is the need for more entertainment, evening entertainment in particular. Festivals and participatory events were highlighted as potential solutions while providing an additional outlet for agritourism and the potential to promote the regions agritourism brand.

Tourism Numbers

Tourism numbers are growing, with a potential for growth as a result of the increasing number of hotels, particularly four and five star hotels in the region. To ensure maximum returns from tourism, a focus on higher spending visitors and increasing average expenditure is required.

III Quarter, 2014		IV Quarter, 2014		I Quarter, 2015		II Quarter, 2015	
Number of Visitors (000)	Number of Visits ('000)	Number of Visitors (000)	Number of Visits (000)	Number of Visitors (000)	Number of Visits (000)	Number of Visitors (000)	Number of Visits (000)
73.2	89.5	45.5	52	52.6	64.2	35.2	44.7

Source: GNTA

Accommodation

The current number of accommodation units is 200 with bed capacity of 7,808. The target growth of accommodation bed places forecast for the region by 2020 is 14,152, double the current figure in addition to increasing occupancy rates across all accommodation while also maximizing revenue per room.

Tourism Related SMEs

There are a total of 60 tourism related SMEs⁶ in the region, including trading facilities (shopping centres and wine shops) and food service facilities (restaurants, cafes and others). The target for the region by 2020 is 138 tourism related SMEs.

⁵ Samtskhe-Javakheti Regional Tourism Development Strategy 2015-2020

⁶ GNTA Figures 2013

Review of the Agritourism Development Climate in Samtskhe-Javakheti

A review of the agritourism development climate, potential products and experiences etc was undertaken through a number of focus groups and individual meetings. A SWOT analysis was developed, for the region. To provide background and aid in planning stages, a preliminary inventory of unique produce, dishes, experiences and festivals was drafted by the focus group, see Annex II.

Strengths	Weaknesses
Growing number of tourists in region	Locals may consider tourist involvement in farm activity as hindering
The natural environment	There is only one hotel with sulphur pool
Borjomi-Kharagauli and Jakavkheti parks and protected areas	There are many tourists in Borjomi but none in the villages
Guest house network developed and certified by Elkana	License is required to produce water
There are 15 guesthouses in Tsagvere (to be certified)	Tourists don't have enough information
There is an information centre in Borjomi and Akhaltsikhe	Locals don't speak English
Dairy and cheese products are well known and in demand	Infrastructure
Some villages around Tsagvere are producing organic	Information boards and trail markings
There is some tourism information already produced	Lack of information for locals
Diversity of historical objects and mix of cultural products	Lack of resources, high costs, high interest rates
Traditional crafts	Little information on how start an agritourism business, support mechanisms etc
Horse trails	Not enough communication between public sector/private sector/
Hiking trails	Limited quality accommodation
Marked routes	Lack of entertainment facilities
Medicinal resorts (sulphur springs, mineral water, spring water)	Lack of quality dining and food outlets
Range of produce in the region	Poor or no access to credit
Clean eco-system	Lack of motivation
Diversity of landscape, flora, fauna and in turn agricultural products	Lack of involvement/inclusive involvement
Increasing trend of establishing agricultural cooperatives because of tax breaks	Budget to support agritourism training and capacity building
Beekeeping, dairy and fishing co-operative	Lack of training and resources in packaging and branding of products
Individuals and legal entities in mountous region are tax exempt for 10 yrs according to Law on Development of Mountainous Regions	Lack of resources to support business development and therefore sustainability of enterprise – could have negative impact on regional potential
Native and migratory birds and bird-watching (internationally of high importance)	Quality of roads connecting Batumi – limits access of growing number of tourists in Batumi

Opportunities

Threats

To develop guesthouses on tourist routes, in villages and close to protected areas and bird-watching areas	Some unique cheese varieties are at threat of being lost
Opening of high end hotels attracts higher spending tourists	Waste management
In Tadzrisi, Saksiari etc in upper zone, infrastructure not well developed due to small visitor numbers but locals wish to develop agritourism and have potential – horses, honey production etc	Infrastructure – toilets
Develop baths at sulphur springs in forests and villages	Stability of service provision
Municipalities cannot fund private projects but they can support training, marketing etc	Not enough will power to take the agritourism opportunity
Fishing in the lake Tabatskura (2000m above sea level)	Visa legislation
Tourism information showing agritourism around region	Tourist safety needs to be improved
Develop and present tradition of using medical plants	If tourism development strategy is not implemented or does not include agritourism
Preserve, present and promote threatened cheese varieties	Natural disasters
Number of bee-keepers in different climates	Migration of population from the region
Promote the region as an agri-tourism and food destination	
Develop cross border and inter-regional projects (eg Adjara)	
An agritourism association for the region to undertake marketing and to provide information to stakeholders	
More information centres	
Develop information database through (Rtsmunbulis)	
Vardzia region going for UNESCO world heritage listing	
Regional tourism development strategy has been developed	
Agritourism is included in the national Agriculture Strategy	
Baku-Tbilisi-Kars Railway – international terminal in Akhalkalaki	

The two primary catchment areas of Borjomi and Akhaltsikhe provide potential as regional hubs to undertake key regional activities as well as starting points/promotional points for activities/attractions throughout the region. Secondary hub points could include Bakuriani as more accommodation opens and new developments attract more visitors and Vardzia once development work in the region is completed.

New hotel developments in Borjomi include internal hotel chains the Rixos and the yet to be opened Crowne Plaza Hotel, while the Vardzia Resort has recently opened in Vardzia. The opening of these hotels has the potential to attract higher spending visitors to the area and therefore increase the level of tourism receipts to the region however, to truly maximize potential through agritourism an increase in the availability of quality products and experiences are required, as is effective strategic marketing.

The natural environments and development focus of Borjomi-Kharagauli National Park and Javakheti Protected Area is already changing the landscape of tourism to the region and have the potential to further attract international visitors wishing to undertake a wide range of adventure and eco experiences, sectors that are traditionally compatible with agritourism. In 2003 when Borjomi-Kharagauli National Park management started visitors to the park reached approximately 1,000 in 2014 that number reached 50,000. International visitors represent 40% of all visitors, a much higher

representation than total visitor numbers to the region and highlighting that international visitors will come if the right products and experiences are developed (and marketed). Feedback from these visitors, and the APA, has highlighted the real need for a substantial increase in homestays, homebased meals as well as other traditional agritourism experiences. The need for community awareness in the benefits of agritourism, and followed by support factors including training and financial, was highlighted as critical

Further opportunities include the opening of the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars Railway, which goes through Samtskhe-Javakheti and includes a stop at Akhalkalaki, increasing international tourism potential to the region. Forecasts include 30 passenger trains on the route in the next twelve months, by 2030 it is expected to carry 3 million passengers.

It is important to note however, that development of authentic cultural experiences in the Vardzia area and surrounds cannot wait, as one of the most visited attractions there is an existing need for quality development and the potential to support UNESCO heritage listing for intangible heritage.

A common challenge facing tourism entrepreneurs in developing tourism economies, is the lack of access to accurate market data and analysis that aids decision making and aids them to compete in international markets. Recognition of the need for Destination Management Organisations (DMOs) has resulted in plans, underway by MDF, for a DMO in each of the regions including Samtskhe-Javakheti. Developing this region specific research, both supply and demand side, should be undertaken by the DMO in conjunction with GNTA, with analysis that aids decision making presented to the sector.

Training in tourism marketing and social media was highlighted as critical for the promotion of Samtskhe-Javakheti as an agritourism destination and for individual agritourism businesses. While individual projects have supported SMEs, many of an agritourism nature, there has been, at best, limited success after the life of the support project, particularly in the areas of business development, packaging, branding and marketing. While some producers have been able to gain income, it has been ad hoc. Feedback and history suggests that SMEs and particularly micro enterprises, will never be able to fulfill both business development/marketing as well as technical /production. Therefore, support is needed on an ongoing basis to support individual M/SME's in marketing and business development, and concurrently support the region as an agritourism destination.

It was highlighted by MDF that Samtskhe-Javakheti is a focus in a program that includes 32 sub-projects, to develop infrastructure and present cultural heritage sites. The program is at design stage and will also address regional infrastructure such as roads, toilets, waste management etc.

Strategic Opportunities

With a strong agricultural history, Samtskhe-Javakheti has tremendous opportunity to diversify their list of product and service offerings with agricultural tourism. Agricultural tourism increases the potential for higher margin, on-farm sales of value-adding products and services, further diversifying the product line of the farm operation. The development of agritourism products and experiences must be based on natural assets and on market demand.

Market demand is based on the demand of existing markets and on targeting prioritized markets that are not currently visiting but have high potential to visit based on their travel preferences and demand for products and experiences the destination provides, coupled with effective target marketing prior to travel to increase desire and actual booking of the destination and individual experiences; and during a visit to increase incremental spend and support engagement of tourists network through social media.

Marketing starts with the product and experience, and if the product and experience is not right for the higher spending visitor, no marketing strategy aimed at them will succeed. An integrated approach to product/experience development, training and marketing is essential.

Following are an overview of activities for development, followed by a matrix addressing key implementation considerations and an in implementation matrix that highlights stakeholder responsibility. Activities are segmented by the pillars of Product & Experience, Marketing & Promotion and finally the Enabling Environment Platform on which all development is based.

Agritourism Product & Experience Targets Samtskhe-Javakheti

On the Farm

- Homestay
- Home based meal experiences
- Home based demonstration/participation in cooking
- Participatory culinary experience (Learn to)
- Participation in farm activities
- Catch and cook your own fish
- Wool processing and handcraft experience
- Beekeeping/honey production tour
- Candle making demonstration/participation

Region

- Cheese Route/Trails
- Honey Route/Trails
- Festivals (Harvest, SLOW, Cheese etc)
- Farmers Market
- Natural medicine tours

Product & Experience Targets

- Increase quality homestays in region by 100% over 3 yrs
- Twenty new demand driven agritourism experiences in 1.5 yrs
- Two trails developed encouraging dispersal throughout the region 2 yrs
- Two annual festivals/events launched

Homestay

It could be claimed that home or farmstays are at the heart of agritourism, whether it be in mature agritourism destinations such as Tuscany or in developing agritourism destinations. Interestingly, it could be claimed that with the growth of such services as AirBnB, the concept has moved, at a spectacular pace, to cities and urban areas around the world.

Home based meal experiences

Home based dining as a stand alone offers visitors the opportunity to experience authentic regional cooking and local wines while offering home based opportunities for additional income to local communities.

Home based demonstration/participation in cooking

Providing visitors with the opportunity to see and/or participate in cooking of local and traditional dishes/meals provides for home based income as well as differentiating these small businesses from traditional hotels and restaurants.

Participation in farm activities

Depending on the destination and/or farm, the potential range of participatory activities is extensive. While some farms choose to avail of extra hands needed for harvesting, others open sections of the farm up to learning activities for adults and/or children whether it be pick your own fruit, feeding barnyard animals, harvesting grapes or cattle mustering.

Wool Processing and Handcrafts

While the tourism sector provides a source market for handcrafters, visits to handcrafters provides the opportunity for an additional experience such as learning about the fleece to fabric process of processing, scouring, carding, gilling, combing, drafting and spinning; visits also support additional sales on site and therefore increased incomes.

Beekeeping/honey production tour

With a substantial number of bee-keepers, in a variety of climates, the potential exists to offer visitors the opportunity to engage in the experience and therefore increase incomes from existing activities.

Candle Making

Candle making is a craft that has a traditional market with demand for religious purposes however, candles for decorative purposes, particularly beeswax candles are in growing demand. Seeing or participating provides a unique experience in a cultural tradition. It provides additional income opportunities for local communities, women in particular.

Cheese Trails

Trails create an experience that tourists can enjoy and can also showcase high quality regionally produced goods and services on a collective basis in one geographic area. There are approximately 20 cheese producer factories in the region, producing a variety of traditional and European cheese. A tasting experience, seeing how cheese is made, learning about traditional/unique cheeses in a range of outlets, linked by a trail that would support dispersal as well as promote the region's cheese heritage. See Annex II Attributes of Samtskhe-Javakheti for Unique Produce in region.

Honey Trails

Honey Trails are a growing trend in regions where bee-keeping and honey production is popular, particularly as knowledge spreads in regards to the decline of the honey-bee. Experiences can include learning about bee-keeping, honey harvesting etc as well as tasting/sales of dishes using honey such as honey ice-cream, beeswax candles, and skin care products.

Farmers Markets

The popularity of farmers markets has grown exponentially around the world. Reflecting the areas culture and economy they reflect a shift towards locally produced foods and produce that is available in season and in many cases is organic. The growth has been enhanced by the rise of the SLOW Food movement (usually seasonal, local, organic) which strives to preserve traditional and regional cuisine and encourages farming of plants, seeds and livestock characteristic of the local ecosystem.

Operational Considerations

- Sustainability vs community participation and support: with high dependency on sponsorship, such projects require striking the balance between income generation for sponsors, profit for local exhibitors and cost of extending the services to the visitors.
- Standards of products, standards of service and hygiene – high standards for products and service along with strict hygiene practices must be implemented in order to maintain a high-spending target audience
- Community engagement – it is imperative that the entity managing this project has a good relationship with the community, has a relationship developed on trust that will enable ongoing community support and buy-in.
- A well developed timely marketing plan to draw visitors to the hub and engage those staying/passing through the hub is vital to success and sustainability.

Festivals and Events

Festivals and events are based on an agricultural theme such as harvesting, seasonal produce, seasons, agricultural fairs, food festivals and a stand-alone category within the agritourism product mix. All events from agricultural fairs to seasonal and holiday festivals are included in this category.

Natural Medicine/Health and Wellbeing Tours

Agritourism can be connected with health & wellbeing services or health-related products as some tourists travelling to rural areas expect the possibility of a specific therapy, e.g. horse riding therapy (one of the methods for rehabilitation of disabled persons) or a special diet therapy, including consumption of “healthy” / “organic” products. The demand and provision of health, social and/or educational benefits through farming is growing as is the base for promoting mental and physical health through farming and environmental activities. Therapies include the use of plants e.g., horticultural therapy, forest therapy, flower therapy, herb therapy, etc. Other forms of rural and agri-therapy involve api-therapy (use of various bee products) and spas and health resorts in rural areas. While advantage has been taken of unique health/medically advantageous climatic conditions throughout the region, access to information and the traditional use of herbs and natural medicine is not as well known.

“Off-Farm” Channels

Incorporating “off-farm” channels such as hotels, restaurants, retailers and outlets that showcase the local food into their program, provides both an additional income opportunity and provides additional evidence of the region as both an agri and food tourism destination.

Considerations

- Sustainability – the availability and ongoing distribution of product through this outlet requires both commitment to deliver and price. Such projects require co-ordination and planning to be effective.
- Packaging and Branding – if the product is to truly represent the region then quality produce and quality packaging and branding are imperative.

Feedback suggests that while hotels, the newer five star hotels in particular, wish to present as well as utilize local produce as a feature in their menus, there is an overall lack of contract farming as small producers wait to avail of the best possible price post production. If this is not addressed it could negatively impact the development of tourism, particularly in attracting higher spending tourists through international hotel chains. Other important considerations in this regard is the need for many international hotel chains to ensure quality and best practice (eg Global Gap) in produce. While this is primarily an agriculture sector challenge, it is relevant as it links with tourism.

Agritourism Product & Experience Activities Samtskhe-Javakheti

Home Stay	On Farm Activities	While numbers are increasing there is still a strong need for homestays throughout the region, in particular in areas close to the National Park and Protected Area trails, 4X4 trails and with easy access to the bird-watching lake areas. Natural settings lend themselves to this market that are looking for good quality accommodation and authentic cultural experiences.
Home based meal experiences		Home based dining as a stand-alone offering and as part of a homestay would fulfill an existing need, that exists throughout the region, for quality food experiences as well as providing a cultural experience to increase visitation. While opportunity exists throughout the region, the areas with the greatest current need exist close to the national parks/protected areas trails, 4x4 trails, bird-watching areas and along traditional driving routes.
Home based cooking demonstration/participation		The ideal locations are in or close to hubs and particularly, as an offering of all existing and potential guesthouses. Please see Annex X for a draft list of authentic regional dishes.
Participatory culinary experience		A local kitchen/learning to cook regional dishes experience can be in hub locations attracting individual and group visitors or organized in as a once off as a special group activity.
Participating in Farm Activities		Activities such as harvesting, animal feeding/petting, wine making, fruit picking activities are the most popular among recreational on-farm activities and have potential to provide additional income as well as providing additional hands for harvesting etc.
Wool processing and handcraft experience		A fleece to fabric experience offers visitors an educational experience while also providing handcrafters the opportunity to sell their work. Ideal locations include individual artisans or co-operatives such as Women's Handcraft Co-op in Aspindza. A small card that includes information on the crafter and/or brief outline of the work adds added value and provides additional value as a gift.
Beekeeping/honey production tour		Offering visitors the opportunity to learn about bee-keeping, honey harvesting etc provides an additional source of income for existing bee-keepers as well as for potential guesthouses who could include hives/bee-keeping in their development plans.
Candle making demonstration/participation		Potential for development at either a home workshop or a dedicated handcraft outlet. Buying something they have seen/participated in making personalizes the product and therefore maximizes sales potential and incomes. While candles for religious purposes are traditional, diversification to include decorative beeswax candles will provide a unique opportunity.
Cheese Route/Trails	Regional Activities	An inventory of all producers, cheese variety both current and those at risk of being lost should be developed. Creating a network of producers, maintaining their unique offering while unified under one brand that commits to quality, best practice etc. In addition to marketing materials, signage should be installed for travelling in multi directions.
Honey Route/Trails		Linking a range of producers along a route/trail, presenting the honey from different climates, learning about bee-keeping, harvesting, tasting and opportunity to buy from the source. Individual strengths and unique attributes of each producer should be presented, yet unified under one brand that commits to quality, best practice etc. In setting up the trail, the linking of co-operatives that already engage in demonstrations is imperative (eg in Moski), and support in packaging and labeling is required across all producers. In addition to marketing materials, signage should be installed to direct visitors travelling in multi directions.
Festivals		Given the rich history of the agriculture in the region, the opportunity for a range of authentic themes is limitless, from harvest, seasonal produce, wine, cheese festival, bread festivals etc While a number of festivals have been developed and have enjoyed success over a period of years, some have ceased to exist despite that success. Therefore a sustainability plan is vital in the design of any regular event or festival. The existing catchment and hubs of Akhalsikhe and Borjomi are ideas locations for well attended festival, while Vardzia will provide an addition catchment area as projects develop in that area. Another possible hub is Bakuriani where a month long festival could be planned during the Winter ski season initially adding an entertainment opportunity for existing visitors and later, during the off season, to attract more visitors to the region and alleviate challenges of seasonality in the region.
Farmers Market		Borjomi and Akhalsikhe as natural hubs and catchment areas for overnight visitors are strategic locations for farmers markets that feature a range of quality produce requiring a regular outlet, support local community and small producers to benefit from tourism and

	provide an engaging experience to attract more visitors to the region and extend length of stay and expenditure by those staying within the hub and/or transiting through the hub.
Natural Medicine /Health and Wellbeing Tours	Stand alone or as a component of regional tours could include learning about traditional use of herbs in various regions as well as opportunity to purchase traditional natural remedies. Guidelines in regards to claims, labeling and use should be developed.

Agritourism Product and Experience Implementation Matrix Samtskhe-Javakheti

Agritourism Product Implementation Matrix Samtskhe-Javakheti									
Public and Private Sector Stakeholders									
X represents Implementation Partner/Responsibility	Government	Regional Government	Municipality	GNTA	Regional Development Agencies	Business Associations/Enterprises	Industry NGOs	Private Sector	Investors & Developers
Product									
Homestay	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	
Home Based Meal Experience	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	
Home Based Demonstration/Participation in Cooking		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	
Participatory Culinary Experiences		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	
Participation in Farm Activities		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	
Catch and/or Cook Your Own Fish		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	
Wool Processing and Handcraft Experience			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Bee-keeping/Honey Production Tour			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Candle Making Demonstration/Participation			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Cheese Route/Trails		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Honey Route/Trails		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Festivals (Harvest, Seasonal etc)		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Farmers Markets		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Natural Medicine Tours	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	

Agritourism Marketing & Promotion Targets Samtskhe-Javakheti

- Agritourism Marketing Strategy Developed
- Strong Digital/Online Presence Developed
- Domestic Tourism/Taste of Samtskhe-Javakheti Marketing Campaigns
- International Market Campaigns
- Increase Length of Stay, Spend and encourage Dispersal of Visitors
- Quality Agritourism Brochures and Materials
- Marketing skills and capacity of the agritourism industry developed to maximize their potential

Marketing & Promotion Targets

- Agritourism Marketing Strategy is developed and implemented
- Minimum 3 Domestic Marketing Campaigns Implemented Annually
- Minimum 2 International Marketing Campaigns Implemented Annually
- Agritourism materials developed and available region/national
- 200 Stakeholders trained in Agritourism Marketing & Promotion

Agritourism Marketing & Promotion Activities Samtskhe-Javakheti

Agritourism Marketing Plan	The development of a full, detailed agritourism marketing plan, that considers factors included in this strategy, together with the yet to be released Samtskhe-Javakheti Tourism Development Strategy and the National Tourism Strategy is imperative.
Develop a strong digital presence	<p>A database of agritourism products and experience that includes information on individual products, trails, clusters and themed experiences.</p> <p>A regional agritourism website, a manager to oversee the quality of uploading and of information (by municipality representatives) An interactive mapping program allows maps to be customized with points created for agritourism sites, attractions, trails etc.</p> <p>A web page for food trails that shares information on the various food, honey, cheese (and other) and wine trails in the region, listing (with contact details) the range of product and foods available, a directory of the “cellar doors”, related restaurants, recipes, demonstration and participatory experiences – and a map highlighting the location of each listing.</p>
Develop marketing campaigns such as “A Taste of Samtskhe-Javakheti” to stimulate visitation of domestic market and expat market residing in Georgia.	<p>Work with hotels and guesthouses to develop and promote packages that feature unique local produce.</p> <p>Work with the protected areas and national parks to promote a calendar of events and agritourism experiences that will serve to promote agritourism and repeat visitation to the protected area.</p> <p>Develop social media campaigns targeting the domestic market and expat market.</p>
International Market Development	<p>Work with GNTA to develop region/agritourism specific online marketing campaigns</p> <p>Work with the protected areas and national parks to promote an international market specific calendar of events and agritourism experiences that will serve to promote agritourism and repeat visitation to the protected area.</p> <p>Work with GNTA to support familiarization trips of visiting international media and tour operators to increase coverage of agritourism in the region. Work with agritourism operators and guesthouses in the region to host visiting media/tour operators.</p>
Increase Length of Stay, Spend and encourage Dispersal of Visitors	<p>Develop marketing campaigns to increase awareness of visitors both pre and post arrival of the range of agritourism products and experiences available throughout the region (provision of information should be pro-active as well as providing information when requested).</p> <p>Ensure timely distribution of materials to a database of potential visitors as well as tourism information resource and marketing agencies such as local and out of region (particularly Tbilisi) information centres, GNTA, tour operators and other tourism industry stakeholders.</p> <p>Cultivate and develop attractions, experiences and service based businesses with local SMEs to enhance visitor experience and increase yield.</p>
Agritourism Brochures and Materials	In addition to tourism promotion online and offline materials promoting the region AND individual experiences, trails etc A media pack and press releases should be developed for distribution to both domestic and international media.
Develop skills and capacity of the agritourism industry to maximize their potential	<p>Accredited training programs have been shown to be most effective. Topics could include :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marketing for the domestic and international markets • Enhancing understanding and developing highest potential source markets • Excellence in service and enhancing sector competitiveness in agritourism (or related niche) marketing through understanding of market requirements.
Regional Agritourism Brand	Develop a regional brand, brand guidelines and identity developed around specific food and wine products and experiences, aimed at raising value of produce and secondary products from the region. It is imperative that only credible products should utilize the brand – and specific consideration be given to best practice in health and hygiene as well as packaging and labeling.

Agritourism Marketing Implementation Matrix Samtskhe-Javakheti

Agritourism Marketing Implementation Matrix Samtskhe-Javakheti									
Public and Private Sector Stakeholders									
X represents Implementation Partner/Responsibility	Government	Regional Government	Municipality	GNTA	GTA	Business Associations/Enterprises	Agritourism Resource Centre	Industry NGOs	Private Sector
Marketing									
Agritourism Marketing Strategy Developed	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Strong Digital/Online Presence Developed		✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓
Domestic Tourism/Taste of Samtskhe-Javakheti Marketing Campaigns			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
International Market Campaigns		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Increase Length of Stay, Spend and Encourage Dispersal of Visitors		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Quality Agritourism Brochures and Materials			✓						✓
Marketing Skills and Capacity of the Agritourism Industry	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	

Agritourism Enabling Environment Samtskhe-Javakheti

A fully operational Agritourism Resource Centre
M/SME Business Development Representative within each Municipality
Regional Network of Municipality M/SME Representatives and Tourism Information Representatives
Certified agritourism courses are developed and promoted
Policy and institutional framework for agritourism is strengthened
Investment plan developed and promoted
Infrastructure developed and improved to ensure growth potential
Farms/guesthouse receive grants and incentives to make necessary conversions of building and other improvements
Farms/guesthouse receive low interest loans to encourage agritourism activity

Enabling Environment Targets

- Agritourism Resource Centre Fully Operational
- MSME Business Development/Marketing Representative within each Municipality
- Regional Network of Municipality M/SME Representatives and Tourism Information Representatives
- 100 Stakeholders Certified following Agritourism Courses Developed and Promoted
- Investment Plan Developed
- Infrastructure (roads/toilets/waste management) meets sector needs
- Financial Support/Incentives Plan Implemented
- Availability of Grants and Low Interest Loans

Agritourism Resource Centre

While a range of quality information is available through such bodies as RICC and to an extent as it relates to setting up a business etc through Qartuli.ge. Feedback suggests that agritourism businesses/SMEs/service providers don't always know what to ask for, are unaware of opportunities, support, regulations etc and therefore suggests the need for a funded one stop shop Agritourism Resource Centre, either stand alone or as a component of an existing active body such as RICC.

M/SME Business Development Representative within each Municipality and Regional Network of Municipality M/SME Representatives and Tourism Information Representatives

While a DMO representative could in the future undertake much of this role, support is needed in the medium to short term. Currently, a Tourism Information Representative (TIR) position is provided by each Municipality, an additional position to fulfill the much needed additional tasks of business development and development of M/SME marketing materials would support development of each enterprise as well as the Municipality and support sustainability. A regional network of both TIR and the M/SME Business Development/Marketing Representatives could undertake responsibility for regional marketing and campaigns, website development and maintenance, brochures/materials and marketing & promotion capacity building.

Certified Agritourism Courses are Developed and Promoted

A range of training and capacity building has been undertaken relating directly and indirectly to agritourism. Examples include Elkana who have a focus on rural tourism and have provided training in a range of topics including those aimed at guesthouse owners in a range of topics such as guesthouse design and requirements to facilitate tourists, managing guests needs, menu design, safe food handling and hygiene etc. They have also developed a guesthouse classification system and providing training (and at various times grants - under supporting project funding) in implementing interventions that maximize classification ratings. Elkana are also working with other NGOs in the region, such as Green Valley in Tsagvere, providing training and using the pre-developed network of guesthouses as a pilot example of what can be achieved. While other training is being delivered by Elkana, currently and in the past, such as bee-keeping, farmers markets, handcrafts etc, it is sporadic and in the main reliant on international donor funding which, based on feedback limits development potential as donor projects are time bound etc.

Policy and institutional framework for agritourism is strengthened

An inefficient institutional framework has been cited as one of the major barriers in agricultural, tourism and agritourism development. Increased funding for physical infrastructure, improvement in fair access to credit and dissemination of market information are necessary to understand the full potential.

Investment plan developed and promoted

Development and promotion of an investment plan designed to attract agritourism specific investors plus incentives and guidelines offered to all tourism/agriculture investors to support the regional agritourism brand and development is imperative to the successful development of the region as an agritourism destination.

Infrastructure developed and improved to ensure growth potential

While plans for development of infrastructure is in place, it is critical that potential growth is not inhibited by delays in delivery of planned infrastructure. Lack of quality roads will inhibit access and therefore economic spend, while issues such as waste management and toilets present a high risk in health issues as well as negative coverage.

Farms/guesthouse receive grants and incentives to make necessary conversions of building and other improvements

Based on local and international development practice and outcomes, incentives and financial support is required in order for farmers/guesthouses to make necessary upgrades and improvements to ensure international standards are met, while supporting development targets.

Farms/guesthouse receive low interest loans to encourage agritourism activity

The lack of availability of low interest loans has been highlighted as one of the single biggest inhibitors to development by M/SMEs. While this has been addressed for agriculture it is crucial to agritourism for the development of new enterprises and expansion of existing businesses to grow potential.

Agritourism Enabling Environment Matrix Samtskhe-Javakheti

Agritourism Enabling Environment Implementation Matrix Samtskhe Javakheti									
Public and Private Sector Stakeholders									
X represents Implementation Partner/Responsibility	Government	Regional Government	Municipality	Regional Development Agencies	GNTA	Business Associations/	Industry NGOs	Universities	Private Sector
Enabling Environment									
Agritourism Resource Centre	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓	
Certified agritourism courses are offered and promoted	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		
Policy and institutional framework for agritourism is strengthened	✓	✓	✓						
Investment plan developed and promoted		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓
Infrastructure developed and improved to ensure growth potential	✓	✓	✓	✓					
Farms/guesthouse receive grants and incentives to make necessary conversions of building and other improvements		✓		✓		✓			
Farms/guesthouse receive low interest loans to encourage agritourism activity	✓	✓		✓					✓

Other Potential Activities Moving Forward

An engagement strategy and education program focused on providing farmers with information as to the benefits of agritourism.

Creation of a regional label by the Farmers Union which becomes recognized as a quality trademark. (a successful example of this is the “Red Rooster” label for Farm Inns, Baras and quality farm products in the South Tyrol region of Italy)

Education

As agritourism sector grows as will the need for a well educated workforce. While some of the load will be alleviated by plans for tourism education, accredited agritourism programs will be required. Accredited agritourism programs are currently being delivered at Aisi in Kakheti Region and could be extended Vocational Education campuses in Samtskhe-Javakheti.

Some of the key areas that require addressing, by the public sector in particular, to create an enabling environment include the need to:

- Legally define the term agritourism and how it will be used in the Regional and National context .
- It is important that the synergies between agriculture and tourism be recognised at a national policy level and both agriculture and tourism policies be developed with the objective of growing agritourism in Georgia and in the regions.
- The Agriculture Strategy should continue to include agritourism as a component of development and address key areas such as developing new products and securing new markets, agritourism should also be included as an area of focus in tourism strategies.
- Government could allocate funds to assist farmers in renovating their properties to be suitable for tourists. An imperative of the terms of farmers receiving this funding should be that they must commit to a period of operation as a tourist venue. Additionally, terms could include a basic training requirement so that we provide visitors with a skilled industry. Regulations on courses for operators should take into consideration that some farmers are time deficient and therefore allow for a partner/key permanent staff member to undertake training. The course should be available to any family member who commits to running the agritourism side of the business.
- GNTA could conduct further research on agritourism in terms of demand side as well as supply side and expand the information provided to industry on a regular basis.
- GNTA to market agritourism to key international markets, domestic markets and the expat markets based in Georgia.
- Develop specific agritourism sign posting in rural areas and include agritourism signs in the future plans for better tourism signage –a clear ‘agritourism’ road signage system helps to create recognition of the agritourism label and promote the experience while it assists travellers in the countryside to find agritourism destinations and accommodation.
- Develop national guidelines on quality standards and facility development for agritourism businesses together with relevant tourism bodies (ie GNTA and DMOs as and when they are launched). It is important to develop a national quality standard so that tourists are not confused by multiple standards. It is confusing for tourists travelling between areas. The Elkana classification system for guesthouses provides a strong basis on which the national quality standard can be based.
- Negotiate with insurance companies through GNTA, RICC and/or the Farmers Union, to provide economically viable insurance packages for farmers wishing to open agritourism businesses.
- Build awareness on the value of agritourism to the region and of the agritourism products and

experiences in the community through utilization of a range of marketing methods such as websites, media releases, national and regional media features, brochures, publications etc

- GNTA to develop a specific information kit for operators wishing to start an agritourism business, with a key focus on accessing and benefitting from the tourism sector.
- Develop a regional brand and identity developed around specific food and wine products and experiences.
- Work with the GNTA to develop awareness of agritourism and develop an agritourism awareness campaign in rural areas.
- Develop community awareness at a school age level through including agritourism as a component of learning activities in such programmes as eco-clubs which are running in schools such as Tzagvere Public School.
- Design and implement a tourism/agritourism specific infrastructure development plan that address key concerns such as waste management, toilets and road linkages such as those with Batumi

Kvemo Kartli

Kvemo Kartli, situated in the south-east part of Georgia shares internal borders with Samtskhe Javakheti, Tbilisi, Shida Kartli and Mtskheta-Mtianeti and Kakheti and international borders with Republic of Azerbaijan and the Republic of Armenia. The region includes 347 settlements – 7 cities, 6 towns and 334 villages and comprises the seven self-governing municipalities of Rustavi, Dmanisi, Tsalka, Tetritskaro, Gardabani, Marneuli and Bolnisi.

The population of the region is 511,300, with 39% of the population of the region living in cities and towns, and 61% live in villages. Ethnic Georgians make up 44.7% of the population while 45.1% are Azeri, 6.4% is Armenian, and 3.8% is Abkhazian, Ossetian, Russian, Greek, Ukrainian and Kurdish.

With a strong agricultural history, many regions in Georgia have tremendous opportunity to diversify their list of product and service offerings with agricultural tourism. Agricultural tourism increases the potential for higher margin, on-farm sales of value-adding products and services, further diversifying the product line of the farm operation.

Economic Development

According to the Regional Development Strategy, the business sector comprises of 31,250 subjects, including 237 medium size and 106 large operating enterprises are registered in the region. While Kvemo Kartli is home to branch offices and service centres of almost all banks operational in Georgia and micro-financing organisations has increased, interest rates for credit and loans are high.

Agriculture

Climatic conditions of the region are particularly favorable for the production of agricultural products. Crops can be harvested 2-3 times a year, which conditions the high competitiveness of Kvemo Kartli as compared with other regions. While agriculture employs 29% of the population of the region and 47.8% of rural population, in the main they are small household farms (less than 1 hectare) and fall into the self-employed category. Due to the proximity with the capital city and neighboring states, they sell produce such as early potatoes, vegetables and various animal and farm products, there is little or no contract farming undertaken, rather farmers rely on getting the most competitive price post harvest.

Tourism

While geographic conditions, natural, cultural and historical monuments, together with close proximity to the capital, Tbilisi the main catchment area for overnight visitors, tourism to the region, in terms of visitors and in particular expenditure, is very low. The regional development strategy highlighted horse riding, hunting tourism, ecotourism, educational tourism, family tourism, ethnographic tourism, agritourism, treatment & rehabilitation tourism, etc as areas for potential development in the region.

Recreational zones such as Manglisi accommodate up to 10,000 persons per year in existing sanatoria and rest homes. While resort zones also exist in Dmanisi, Bolnisi, Tetritskaro, Gardabani and Tsalka municipalities, tourist facilities do not comply with modern standards. Improvement of tourism infrastructure is both a challenge and opportunity for the region.

Kvemo Kartli have high-lighted Improvement of Tourism Infrastructure as a key goal in the Regional Development Strategy⁷ with particular emphasis on:

⁷ *Kvemo Kartli Regional Development Strategy 2014-2021*

- Conservation, protection and maintenance of cultural and historical monuments (in cooperation with the Ministry of Culture of Georgia)
- Encouragement and facilitation of sufficient number of high quality hotels, restaurants, cafeterias, fast food facilities, camping sites, lighting systems, public toilets, vehicle parking areas and gift shops around tourist attractions
- Facilitation of transformation of real village homes into family hotels in small and remote mountainous regions together with the supply of ecologically pure agricultural products
- Facilitation of construction of huts, recreational pavilions and stables for hunters and fishermen
- Renovation and development of access roads and infrastructure to historical and cultural monuments
- Improvement of information infrastructure of the region; installation of road signs pointing to tourist facilities along the roads and truck roads in towns, villages, as well as boards with street names and numbers (showing direction) in Georgian and English languages
- Arrangement of bilingual (Georgian and English) boards displaying transport movement at official stops of municipal transport to make tourists' movement easier

Kvemo Kartli is home to a vast range of archeological, cultural and heritage sites of international importance including but not limited to Dmanisi, Imri, Gardabani Reserve and Algeti National Park. On the whole there are over 650 historical monuments in Kvemo Kartli, 300 of which are included in various tourist routes.

The pre-historic settlement of Dmanisi is considered a great archeological discovery on an international scale. According to finding, hominids lived in Dmanisi 1.8 million years ago. Consequently, Dmanisi could be regarded as the earliest settlement in Europe and Asia making it a site of international importance..

Tourism Numbers

Considering the major archaeological sites and natural attractions in Kvemo Kartli, tourism numbers are very low. Feedback suggests that quality of engagement on tourism sites, lack of quality accommodation and infrastructure is having a negative impact on potential growth. However, while these inhibitors are being addressed and a focus must be on overnight stay, it must be noted that with such close proximity to Tbilisi, the potential to increase one day visitors must be addressed while maintaining a clear focus on maximizing expenditure.

III Quarter, 2014		IV Quarter, 2014		I Quarter, 2015		II Quarter, 2015	
Number of Visitors (000)	Number of Visits ('000)	Number of Visitors (000)	Number of Visits (000)	Number of Visitors (000)	Number of Visits (000)	Number of Visitors (000)	Number of Visits (000)
78.5	104	61.2	72.3	57.2	66.9	61	72

Source: GNTA

Accommodation

The current number of accommodation units is 18 with bed capacity of 539. A new five star hotel is being planned for the region while a project is under way to open a 50 cottage and main wing resort in Dmanisi in 2016, with further accommodation planned for the resort in the years following. While developing new accommodation of all types, including guesthouses is critical for development of the region as a destination, increasing occupancy rates across all accommodation while also maximizing revenue per room is imperative.

Tourism Related SMEs

While information is not available on number of tourism related SMEs, it is important to note that support for Small and Medium Enterprises was highlighted as a key goal in the Kvemo Kartli Regional Development Strategy. Support outlined includes:

- Establishment of Kvemo Kartli Business Center, and, on its base, a modern business incubator
- Organization of vocational re-training centers in the municipalities of the region
- Determination of the real needs of the region with regard to vocational training; Forecasting the required profile and number of training centers
- Creation and organization job fairs and small and household business technologies expos; definition of the typical organizational structure and operation mechanisms of the fair
- Development, discussion and approval of the relevant projects for the above mentioned objectives, ensuring the attraction of public, private and donor funds

Other support outlined includes Ensuring Information and Consulting Services for Small and Medium Businesses and Support for the Establishment of Small and Medium-size Enterprises

Review of the Agritourism Development Climate in Kvemo Kartli

A review of the agritourism development climate, potential products and experiences etc was undertaken through a number of focus groups and individual meetings. A SWOT analysis was developed, for the region. To provide background and aid in planning stages, a preliminary inventory of unique produce, dishes, experiences and festivals was drafted by the focus group, see Annex III

Strengths	Weaknesses
Historical background	Lack of small guesthouses
Multinational traditions	Poor or no access to soft loans
Culture / Environment	Contaminated environment
Agricultural heritage	Lack of motivation
Unique German heritage in design, architecture and town planning	Low awareness
Infrastructure – near the Museum	Lack of trust
German Hotel, Restaurant	Lack of capacity building and tourism awareness programmes
Unique discoveries in Dmanisi	Limited skills base
Imri	Toilets
Pantiani Lake – as a new destination	Poor accommodation
Climate, weather, water	

Opportunities	Threats
Informing people on benefits of agro-tourism	Poor infrastructure
Information centers	Public transport
Tourism services established	Limited of access to the internet
New Museum being built in Bolnisi	Waste management
Eco-Cottage resort being built in Dmanisi	Pollution
New five star hotel being build on outskirts of Rustavi	
Development of Information Data Base	
New Project funded by the EU launched – Tourism development: (i) Training guides; (ii) Information brochures; (ii) Supporting establishment of the small guesthouses; (iv) Education, Training, awareness rising, Hospitality ethic	
Government program in place: building roads, bridges, necessary infrastructure in the region	

The two main tourism catchment areas are Dmanisi and Bolnisi, while traffic is also increased through Marneuli. Further development in these hubs is likely to attract more visitors and provide potential to be a starting point for activities throughout the region.

Addressing the quality of roads was highlighted as a key opportunity to encourage dispersal and primarily to attract more visitors to the region as a primary destination and in developing routes from

Samtskhe-Javakheti to Kvemo Kartli. Potential routes include Tbilisi – Tskaneti – Manglisi, Gardabamo – Rustavi – Kakheti, Tetratskaro-Tsalka-Samtskhe-Javakheti.

New developments include a Museum, planned for Bolnisi, aimed at telling the stories of individual sites while putting them in the regional and human development context. An international standard museum, presenting local heritage and culture of international importance, the museum design plans aim to include a range of facilities designed to attract and hold international and domestic visitors while also supporting dispersal throughout the region.

Plans are in the early stages to present and interpret some of the many archaeological sites in the region, doing so is critical for potential growth to the region.

Development of eco-cottages in Dmanisi has the potential to increase overnight stay, as will the development of the five star hotel and in turn attract higher spending visitors with the potential to increase tourism receipts in the region. The need for quality guesthouses, throughout the region, remains a priority, close to the hubs and protected areas and in villages on key regional and inter-regional roads and trails.

There is an active plan to preserve and present German heritage apparent in architecture, town planning and in both traditional contemporary farming methods. A sensitive approach has the potential to attract international visitors, high spending German visitors in particular and domestic visitors while also preserving the regions unique heritage.

Other unique heritage includes the farming of silk worms which is at risk of being lost and cheese making – including cheese unique to the region such as Motal and Lore. Key concerns include the potential loss of silk farms and unique regional cheeses which represent not only quality product but, also a component of the regions heritage. While bee-keeping is popular throughout regions in Georgia, the types of honey change depending on the region, climate etc including in Kvemo Kartli, where a bee-keeping is popular throughout the region.

A common challenge facing tourism entrepreneurs in developing tourism economies, is the lack of access to accurate market data and analysis that aids decision making and aids them to compete in international markets. Recognition of the need for Destination Management Organisations (DMOs) has resulted in plans, underway by MDF, for a DMO in each of the regions including Samtskhe-Javakheti. Developing this region specific research, both supply and demand side, should be undertaken by the DMO in conjunction with GNTA, with analysis that aids decision making presented to the sector.

Training in tourism marketing and social media was highlighted as critical for the promotion of Samtskhe-Javakheti as an agritourism destination and for individual agritourism businesses. While individual projects have supported SMEs, many of an agritourism nature, there has been, at best, limited success after the life of the support project, particularly in the areas of business development, packaging, branding and marketing. While some producers have been able to gain income, it has been ad hoc. Feedback and history suggests that SMEs and particularly micro enterprises, will never be able to fulfill both business development/marketing as well as technical /production. Therefore, support is needed on an ongoing basis to support individual M/SME's in marketing and business development, and concurrently support the region as an agritourism destination.

Strategic Opportunities

With a strong agricultural history, represented in living culture and many of the archaeological and natural sites, Kvemo Kartli has a unique opportunity to diversify their list of product and service offerings with agricultural tourism. Agritourism increases the potential for higher margin, on-farm sales of value-adding products and services, further diversifying the product line of the farm operation.

With a strong agricultural history, Kvemo Kartli has tremendous opportunity to diversify their list of product and service offerings with agricultural tourism. Agritourism increases the potential for higher margin, on-farm sales of value-adding products and services, further diversifying the product line of the farm operation. The development of agritourism products and experiences must be based on natural assets and on market demand.

Market demand is based on the demand of existing markets and on targeting prioritized markets that are not currently visiting but have high potential to visit based on their travel preferences and demand for products and experiences the destination provides, coupled with effective target marketing prior to travel to increase desire and actual booking of the destination and individual experiences; and during a visit to increase incremental spend and support engagement of tourists network through social media.

Marketing starts with the product and experience, and if the product and experience is not right for the higher spending visitor, no marketing strategy aimed at them will succeed. An integrated approach to product/experience development, training and marketing is essential.

Following are an overview of activities for development, followed by a matrix addressing key implementation considerations and an in implementation matrix that highlights stakeholder responsibility. Activities are segmented by the pillars of Product & Experience, Marketing & Promotion, and finally the Enabling Environment Platform on which all development is based

Agritourism Products & Experience Targets Kvemo Kartli

On the Farm

- Homestay
- Home based meal experiences
- Home based demonstration/participation in cooking
- Participatory culinary experience (Learn to)
- Participation in farm activities
- Catch and cook your own fish
- Wool processing and handcraft experience
- Beekeeping/honey production tour
- Candle making demonstration/participation

Region

- Agricultural Heritage Park
- Cheese Route/Trails
- Honey Route/Trails
- Festivals (Harvest, SLOW, Cheese etc)
- Farmers Market
- Silk farm/handcraft centre

Product & Experience Targets

- Increase quality homestays in region by 20
- Twenty new demand driven agritourism experiences
- Two trails developed encouraging dispersal throughout the region
- Two annual festivals/events launched

Homestay

It could be claimed that home or farmstays are at the heart of agritourism, whether it be in mature agritourism destinations such as Tuscany or in developing agritourism destinations. Interestingly, it could be claimed that with the growth of such services as AirBnB, the concept has moved, at a spectacular pace, to cities and urban areas around the world.

Home based meal experiences

Home based dining as a stand alone offers visitors the opportunity to experience authentic regional cooking and local wines while offering home based opportunities for additional income to local communities.

Home based demonstration/participation in cooking

Providing visitors with the opportunity to see and/or participate in cooking of local and traditional dishes/meals provides for home based income as well as differentiating these small businesses from traditional hotels and restaurants.

Participation in farm activities

Depending on the destination and/or farm, the potential range of participatory activities is extensive. While some farms choose to avail of extra hands needed for harvesting, others open sections of the farm up to learning activities for adults and/or children whether it be pick your own fruit, feeding barnyard animals, harvesting grapes or cattle mustering.

Catch and cook your own fish

Tasting fish at source is both a popular attraction and a dining solution close to well regarded fishing areas. The opportunity to “catch and cook your own” adds an additional experience and income stream. Most successful operators offer gutting and cleaning services as well as additional items such as accompanying dishes, condiments, beverages etc.

Wool Processing and Handcrafts

While the tourism sector provides a source market for handcrafters, visits to handcrafters provides the opportunity for an additional experience such as learning about the fleece to fabric process of processing, scouring, carding, gilling, combing, drafting and spinning; visits also support additional sales on site and therefore increased incomes.

Beekeeping/honey production tour

With a substantial number of bee-keepers, in a variety of climates, the potential exists to offer visitors the opportunity to engage in the experience and therefore increase incomes from existing activities.

Candle Making

Candle making is a craft that has a traditional market with demand for religious purposes however, candles for decorative purposes, particularly beeswax candles are in growing demand. Seeing or participating provides a unique experience in a cultural tradition. It provides additional income opportunities for local communities, women in particular.

Regional

Cheese Trails

Trails create an experience that tourists can enjoy and can also showcase high quality regionally produced goods and services on a collective basis in one geographic area and are complimentary to wine routes. Cheese producer factories in the region, are producing a variety of traditional and European cheese. A tasting experience, seeing how cheese is made, learning about traditional/unique cheeses in a range of outlets, linked by a trail that would support dispersal as well as promote the region’s cheese heritage. See Annex III Attributes of Kvemo Kartli for Unique Produce in region.

Honey Trails

Honey Trails are a growing trend in regions where bee-keeping and honey production is popular, particularly as knowledge spreads in regards to the decline of the honey-bee. Experiences can include learning about bee-keeping, honey harvesting etc as well as tasting/sales of dishes using honey such as honey ice-cream, beeswax candles, and skin care products.

Farmers Markets

The popularity of farmers markets has grown exponentially around the world. Reflecting the areas culture and economy they reflect a shift towards locally produced foods and produce that is available in season and in many cases is organic. The growth has been enhanced by the rise of the SLOW Food movement (usually seasonal, local, organic) which strives to preserve traditional and regional cuisine and encourages farming of plants, seeds and livestock characteristic of the local ecosystem.

Operational Considerations

- Sustainability vs community participation and support: with high dependency on sponsorship, such projects require striking the balance between income generation for sponsors, profit for local exhibitors and cost of extending the services to the visitors.

- Standards of products, standards of service and hygiene – high standards for products and service along with strict hygiene practices must be implemented in order to maintain a high-spending target audience
- Community engagement – it is imperative that the entity managing this project has a good relationship with the community, has a relationship developed on trust that will enable ongoing community support and buy-in.
- A well developed timely marketing plan to draw visitors to the hub and engage those staying/passing through the hub is vital to success and sustainability.

Silk Farm/Handcraft Centre

Silk Farm tours have proven to be extremely popular when combined with an exhibition area and a silk handcraft outlet. Experiences include worm farm, cocoon, thread to fabric and exhibition of quality products. While many centres don't charge entry fees, income is made through sales of a range of handcrafts and silk related products.

“Off-Farm” Channels

Incorporating “off-farm” channels such as hotels, restaurants, retailers and outlets (such as specifically designed outlets with information centres and/or national parks/protected area information centres) that showcase the local food into their program, provides both an additional income opportunity and provides additional evidence of the region as both an agri and food tourism destination.

Considerations

- Sustainability – the availability and ongoing distribution of product through this outlet requires both commitment to deliver and price. Such projects require co-ordination and planning to be effective.
- Packaging and Branding – if the product is to truly represent the region then quality produce and quality packaging and branding are imperative.

Festivals and Events

Festivals and events are based on an agricultural theme such as harvesting, seasonal produce, seasons, agricultural fairs, food festivals and a stand-alone category within the agritourism product mix. All events from agricultural fairs to seasonal and holiday festivals are included in this category.

Home Stay	On Farm	There is a strong need for the development of quality homestays throughout the region, in particular in areas close to protected area trails and 4X4 trails and tourist catchment areas of Dmanisi and Bolnisi etc. Natural settings lend themselves to this market that are looking for good quality accommodation and authentic cultural experiences, projects and guesthouse classification undertaken by Elkana is Samtskhe-Javakheti provide a strong basis for development potential.
Home based meal experiences		Home based dining as a stand-alone offering and as part of a homestay would fulfill an existing need, that exists throughout the region, for quality food experiences as well as providing a cultural experience to increase visitation. While opportunity exists throughout the region, the areas with the greatest current need exist close to the areas trails, close to the lakes of Tsalka, within reach of traditional driving routes and in the vicinity of tourism catchment areas of Dmanisi and Bolnisi.
Home based cooking demonstration /participation		The ideal locations are in or close to hubs and particularly, as an offering of all existing and potential guesthouses. Please see Annex X for a draft list of authentic regional dishes.
Participatory culinary experience		A local kitchen/learning to cook regional dishes experience can be in hub locations attracting individual and group visitors or organized in as a once off as a special group activity.
Participating in Farm Activities		Activities such as harvesting, animal feeding/petting, wine making and fruit picking activities are the most popular among recreational on-farm activities and have potential to provide additional income as well as providing additional hands for harvesting etc.
Catch and cook your own fish		While the opportunity for fish “restaurants” exists in areas such as the lakes of Tsalka etc, an additional opportunity to “catch and/or cook your own” adds an additional experience and income stream. Source markets include 4x4 driving tours, tour groups etc.
Wool processing and handcraft experience		A fleece to fabric experience offers visitors an educational experience while also providing handcrafters the opportunity to sell their work. Ideal locations include individual artisans or co-operatives. A small card that includes information on the crafter and/or brief outline of the work adds added value and provides additional value as a gift.
Beekeeping/ honey production tour		Offering visitors the opportunity to learn about bee-keeping, honey harvesting etc provides an additional source of income for existing bee-keepers as well as for potential guesthouses who could include hives/bee-keeping in their development plans.
Candle making demonstration /participation		Potential for development at either a home workshop or at a dedicated handcraft outlet. Buying something they have seen/participated in making personalizes the product and therefore maximizes sales potential and incomes. While candles for religious purposes are traditional, diversification to include decorative beeswax candles will provide a unique opportunity.
Agricultural Heritage Park	Regional Activities	A heritage park – including a historical farm presenting old agricultural techniques, cultivation, machinery etc as well as contemporary production techniques. A small traditional farm would provide visitors the opportunity to see and participate. Could include a restaurant serving local produce, wines and traditional recipes utilizing local produce. It has potential to include German and other cultural heritage and in particular to put some of the attractions of the region such as Dmanisi, Imri, Bolnisi etc in an agricultural heritage context.
Cheese Route/Trails		While there is potential for a stand alone cheese trail, a trail that is also an extension of a Samtskhe-Javakheti cheese trail could help draw more visitors to SJ to include Kvemo Kartli in their trip. A cheese trail including sampling local and unique cheeses also has the potential to draw visitors based in Tbilisi. Highlighting traditional cheeses that are at risk of being lost will increase interest, while supporting protection of cultural heritage. To develop the cheese trail an inventory of all producers, cheese variety both current and those at risk of being lost should be developed. Creating a network of producers, maintaining their unique offering while unified under one brand that commits to quality, best practice etc. In addition to marketing materials, signage should be installed to direct visitors travelling in multi directions.
Honey Route/Trails		While there is potential for a stand alone honey trail, a trail that is also an extension of a Samtskhe-Javakheti cheese trail could help draw more visitors honey and distinguishing between honey of different climates, also has the potential to draw visitors based in Tbilisi. Linking a range of producers along a route/trail, presenting the honey from different climates, learning about bee-keeping, harvesting, tasting and opportunity to buy from the source. Individual strengths and unique attributes of each producer should be presented, yet unified

	<p>under one brand that commits to quality, best practice etc. In setting up the trail, the linking of co-operatives that already engage in demonstrations is imperative and support in packaging and labeling is required across all producers. In addition to marketing materials, signage should be installed to direct visitors travelling in multi directions.</p>
Festivals	<p>Given the rich history of the agriculture in the region, the opportunity for a range of authentic themes is limitless, from harvest, seasonal produce, wine, cheese festival, German/Georgian agricultural heritage festivals etc. While a number of festivals have been developed and have enjoyed success over a period of years, some have ceased to exist despite that success. Therefore a sustainability plan is vital in the design of any regular event or festival. The existing catchment and hub of Bolnisi and/or Dmanisi are ideal locations for well attended festival.</p>
Farmers Market	<p>Bolnisi and Maneuli are natural hubs and catchment areas for visitors and are strategic locations for farmers markets that feature a range of quality produce requiring a regular outlet, support local community and small producers to benefit from tourism and provide an engaging experience to attract more visitors to the region, including those living in/visiting Tbilisi and extend length of stay and expenditure by those visiting the region.</p>
Silk Farm/ Handcraft Centre	<p>Presenting the silk farm to handcraft experience in a hub region or close by to a primary driving route such as the Marneuli-Bolnisi-Dmanisi road, would have the potential to attract paying visitors and increase sales while preserving local heritage and culture in the region. While this was traditionally a strong sector in Kvemo Kartli, it is currently at risk of being lost.</p>

Agritourism Marketing & Promotion Activities Kvemo Kartli

- Agritourism Marketing Strategy
- Strong Digital/Online Presence Developed
- Domestic Tourism/Taste of Kvemo Kartli Campaigns
- International Market Campaigns
- Increase Length of Stay, Spend and encourage Dispersal of Visitors
- Quality Agritourism Brochures and Materials
- Marketing skills and capacity of the agritourism industry developed to maximize their potential
- Regional Agritourism Brand Developed

Marketing & Promotion Targets

- An Agritourism Marketing Strategy is developed and implemented
- 20 Domestic Agritourism Marketing Campaigns have been implemented
- 10 International Agritourism Marketing Campaigns have been implemented
- 100 stakeholders have been trained in agritourism marketing and promotion

Regional tourism marketing activities that address each stage of the purchase cycle is currently weak and focused on visitors already in the region.

Feedback suggests that an enormous amount of support is required in marketing at all stages in the purchase cycle and in addressing requirements for varying levels of capacity, business development skills, language skills, computer/digital marketing skills etc. While capacity building is required, feedback suggests that micro/small businesses and service providers who have been trained by previous projects/supported by previous NGOs, fail or do not continue, once support is withdrawn. The need for ongoing business development and marketing support for agritourism Micro and SMEs was presented as critical to success.

Training in tourism marketing and social media was highlighted as critical for the promotion of Kvemo Kartli as an agritourism destination and for individual agritourism businesses.

Agritourism Marketing & Promotion Activities Kvemo Kartli

Agritourism Marketing Strategy	The development of a full, detailed agritourism marketing plan, that considers factors included in this strategy, together with the yet to be released National Tourism Strategy is imperative.
Develop a strong digital presence	<p>A database of agritourism products and experience that includes information on individual products, trails, clusters and themed experiences.</p> <p>A regional agritourism website, a manager to oversee the quality of uploading and of information (by municipality representatives) An interactive mapping program allows maps to be customized with points created for agritourism sites, attractions, trails etc.</p> <p>A web page for food trails that shares information on the various food, honey, cheese (and other) and wine trails in the region, listing (with contact details) the range of product and foods available, a directory of the “cellar doors”, related restaurants, recipes, demonstration and participatory experiences – and a map highlighting the location of each listing.</p>
Develop marketing campaigns such as “A Taste of Kvemo Kartli” to stimulate visitation from the domestic market and expat market residing in Georgia	<p>Work with hotels and guesthouses to develop and promote packages that feature unique local produce.</p> <p>Work with the protected areas and national parks to promote a calendar of events and agritourism experiences that will serve to promote agritourism and repeat visitation to the protected area.</p> <p>Develop social media campaigns targeting the domestic market and expat market.</p>
International Market	<p>Work with GNTA to develop region/agritourism specific online marketing campaigns</p> <p>Work with the protected areas and national parks to promote an international market specific calendar of events and agritourism experiences that will serve to promote agritourism and repeat visitation to the protected area.</p> <p>Work with GNTA to support familiarization trips of visiting international media and tour operators to increase coverage of agritourism in the region. Work with agritourism operators and guesthouses in the region to host visiting media/tour operators.</p>
Increase Length of Stay, Spend and encourage Dispersal of Visitors	<p>Develop marketing campaigns to increase awareness of visitors both pre and post arrival of the range of agritourism products and experiences available throughout the region (provision of information should be pro-active as well as providing information when requested).</p> <p>Ensure timely distribution of materials to a database of potential visitors as well as tourism information resource and marketing agencies such as local and out of region (particularly Tbilisi) information centres, GNTA, tour operators and other tourism industry stakeholders.</p> <p>Cultivate and develop attractions, experiences and service based businesses with local SMEs to enhance visitor experience and increase yield.</p>
Agritourism Brochures and Materials	In addition to tourism promotion online and offline materials promoting the region AND individual experiences, trails etc A media pack and press releases should be developed for distribution to both domestic and international media.
Develop skills and capacity of the agritourism industry to maximize their potential	<p>Accredited training programs have been shown to be most effective. Topics could include :</p> <p>Marketing for the domestic and international markets</p> <p>Enhancing understanding and developing highest potential source markets</p> <p>Excellence in service and enhancing sector competitiveness in agritourism (or related niche) marketing through understanding of market requirements.</p>
Regional Agritourism Brand	Develop a regional brand, brand guidelines and identity developed around specific food and wine products and experiences, aimed at raising the value of produce and secondary products from the region. It is imperative that only credible products should utilize the brand – and specific consideration be given to best practice in health and hygiene as well as packaging and labeling.

Agritourism Marketing & Promotion Implementation Matrix Kvemo Kartli

Agritourism Marketing Implementation Matrix Kvemo Kartli									
Public and Private Sector Stakeholders									
X represents Implementation Partner/Responsibility	Government	Regional Government	Municipality	GNTA	GTA	Business Associations/ Enterprises	Agritourism Resource Centre	Industry NGOs	Private Sector
Marketing									
Agritourism Marketing Strategy Developed	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Strong Digital/Online Presence Developed		✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓
Domestic Tourism/Taste of Kvemo Kartli Marketing Campaigns			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
International Market Campaigns		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Increase Length of Stay, Spend and Encourage Dispersal of Visitors		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Quality Agritourism Brochures and Materials			✓						✓
Marketing Skills and Capacity of the Agritourism Industry	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	

Enabling Environment Platform Activities Kvemo Kartli

A fully operational Agritourism Resource Centre
M/SME Business Development Representative within each Municipality
Regional Network of Municipality M/SME Representatives and Tourism Information Representatives
Certified agritourism courses are developed and promoted
Policy and institutional framework for agritourism is strengthened
Investment plan developed and promoted
Infrastructure developed and improved to ensure growth potential
Farms/guesthouse receive grants and incentives to make necessary conversions of building and other improvements
Farms/guesthouse receive low interest loans to encourage agritourism activity

Enabling Environment

- Agritourism Resource Centre Fully Operational
- MSME Business Development/Marketing Representative within each Municipality
- Regional Network of Municipality M/SME Representatives and Tourism Information Representatives
- 50 Stakeholders Certified following Agritourism Courses Developed and Promoted
- Investment Plan Developed
- Infrastructure (roads/toilets/waste management) meets sector needs
- Financial Support/Incentives Plan Implemented
- Availability of Grants and Low Interest Loans

Agritourism Resource Centre

While a range of quality information is available through such bodies as RICC and to an extent as it relates to setting up a business etc through Qartuli.ge. Feedback suggests that agritourism businesses/SMEs/service providers don't always know what to ask for, are unaware of opportunities, support, regulations etc and therefore suggests the need for a funded one stop shop Agritourism Resource Centre, either stand alone or as a component of an existing active body such as RICC.

M/SME Business Development Representative within each Municipality and Regional Network of Municipality M/SME Representatives and Tourism Information Representatives

While a DMO representative could in the future undertake much of this role, support is needed in the medium to short term. Currently, a Tourism Information Representative (TIR) position is provided by each Municipality, an additional position to fulfill the much needed additional tasks of business development and development of M/SME marketing materials would support development of each enterprise as well as the Municipality and support sustainability. A regional network of both TIR and the M/SME Business Development/Marketing Representatives could undertake responsibility for regional marketing and campaigns, website development and maintenance, brochures/materials and marketing & promotion capacity building.

Certified Agritourism Courses are Developed and Promoted

A range of training and capacity building has been undertaken relating directly and indirectly to agritourism. Examples include Elkana who have a focus on rural tourism and have provided training in a range of topics including those aimed at guesthouse owners in a range of topics such as guesthouse design and requirements to facilitate tourists, managing guests needs, menu design, safe food handling and hygiene etc. They have also developed a guesthouse classification system and providing training (and at various times grants - under supporting project funding) in implementing interventions that maximize classification ratings. Elkana are also working with other NGOs in the region, such as Green Valley in Tsagvere, providing training and using the pre-developed network of guesthouses as a pilot example of what can be achieved. While other training is being delivered by Elkana, currently and in the past, such as bee-keeping, farmers markets, handcrafts etc, it is sporadic and in the main reliant on international donor funding which, based on feedback limits development potential as donor projects are time bound etc.

Policy and institutional framework for agritourism is strengthened

An inefficient institutional framework has been cited as one of the major barriers in agricultural, tourism and agritourism development. Increased funding for physical infrastructure, improvement in fair access to credit and dissemination of market information are necessary to understand the full potential.

Investment plan developed and promoted

Development and promotion of an investment plan designed to attract agritourism specific investors plus incentives and guidelines offered to all tourism/agriculture investors to support the regional agritourism brand and development is imperative to the successful development of the region as an agritourism destination.

Infrastructure developed and improved to ensure growth potential

While plans for development of infrastructure is in place, it is critical that potential growth is not inhibited by delays in delivery of planned infrastructure. Lack of quality roads will inhibit access and therefore economic spend, while issues such as waste management and toilets present a high risk in health issues as well as negative coverage.

Farms/guesthouse receive grants and incentives to make necessary conversions of building and other improvements

Based on local and international development practice and outcomes, incentives and financial support is required in order for farmers/guesthouses to make necessary upgrades and improvements to ensure international standards are met, while supporting development targets.

Farms/guesthouse receive low interest loans to encourage agritourism activity

The lack of availability of low interest loans has been highlighted as one of the single biggest inhibitors to development by M/SMEs. While this has been addressed for agriculture it is crucial to agritourism for the development of new enterprises and expansion of existing businesses to grow potential.

Agritourism Enabling Environment Implementation Matrix Kvemo Kartli

Agritourism Enabling Environment Implementation Matrix Kvemo Kartli									
Public and Private Sector Stakeholders									
X represents Implementation Partner/Responsibility	Government	Regional Government	Municipality	Municipality Development Agencies	GNTA	Business Associations/ Enterprises	Industry NGOs	Universities	Private Sector
Enabling Environment									
Agritourism Resource Centre	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓	
Certified agritourism courses are offered and promoted	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		
Policy and institutional framework for agritourism is strengthened	✓	✓	✓						
Investment plan developed and promoted		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓
Infrastructure developed and improved to ensure growth potential	✓	✓	✓	✓					
Farms/guesthouse receive grants and incentives to make necessary conversions of building and other improvements		✓		✓		✓			
Farms/guesthouse receive low interest loans to encourage agritourism activity	✓	✓		✓					✓

Other Potential Activities Moving Forward

An engagement strategy and education program focused on providing farmers with information as to the benefits of agritourism.

Creation of a regional label by the Farmers Union which becomes recognized as a quality trademark. (a successful example of this is the “Red Rooster” label for Farm Inns, Baras and quality farm products in the South Tyrol region of Italy)

Education

As the agritourism sector grows as will the need for a well educated workforce. While some of the load will be alleviated by plans for tourism education, accredited agritourism programs will be required. Accredited agritourism programs are currently being delivered at Aisi in Kakheti Region and could be extended Vocational Education campuses in Kvemo Kartli.

Some of the key areas that require addressing, by the public sector in particular, to create an enabling environment include the need to:

- Legally define the term agritourism and how it will be used in the Regional and National context .
- It is important that the synergies between agriculture and tourism be recognised at a national policy level and both agriculture and tourism policies be developed with the objective of growing agritourism in Georgia and in the regions.
- The Agriculture Strategy should continue to include agritourism as a component of development and address key areas such as developing new products and securing new markets, agritourism should also be included as an area of focus in tourism strategies.
- Government could allocate funds to assist farmers in renovating their properties to be suitable for tourists. An imperative of the terms of farmers receiving this funding should be that they must commit to a period of operation as a tourist venue. Additionally, terms could include a basic training requirement so that we provide visitors with a skilled industry. Regulations on courses for operators should take into consideration that some farmers are time deficient and therefore allow for a partner/key permanent staff member to undertake training. The course should be available to any family member who commits to running the agritourism side of the business.
- GNTA could conduct further research on agritourism in terms of demand side as well as supply side and expand the information provided to industry on a regular basis.
- GNTA to market agritourism to key international markets, domestic markets and the expat markets based in Georgia.
- Develop specific agritourism sign posting in rural areas and include agritourism signs in the future plans for better tourism signage –a clear ‘agritourism’ road signage system helps to create recognition of the agritourism label and promote the experience while it assists travellers in the countryside to find agritourism destinations and accommodation.
- Develop national guidelines on quality standards and facility development for agritourism businesses together with relevant tourism bodies (ie GNTA and DMOs as and when they are launched). It is important to develop a national quality standard so that tourists are not confused by multiple standards. It is confusing for tourists travelling between areas. The Elkana classification system for guesthouses provides a strong basis on which the national quality standard can be based.
- Negotiate with insurance companies through GNTA, RICC and/or the Farmers Union, to provide economically viable insurance packages for farmers wishing to open agritourism

businesses.

- Build awareness on the value of agritourism to the region and of the agritourism products and experiences in the community through utilization of a range of marketing methods such as websites, media releases, national and regional media features, brochures, publications etc
- GNTA to develop a specific information kit for operators wishing to start an agritourism business, with a key focus on accessing and benefitting from the tourism sector.
- Develop a regional brand and identity developed around specific food and wine products and experiences.
- Work with the GNTA to develop awareness of agritourism and develop an agritourism awareness campaign in rural areas.
- Develop community awareness at a school age level through including agritourism as a component of learning activities in such programmes as eco-clubs which are running in schools such as Tzagveri Public School.
- Design and implement a tourism/agritourism specific infrastructure development plan that address key concerns such as waste management, toilets and road linkages such as those with Batumi

Strategy Activity Impact Potential

Success and sustainability of agritourism product and experiences is dependent on an enabling environment as outlined and on marketing and promotion however, the potential to attract investor and donor support will be required for some key activities. One of the primary factors of success and sustainability however, is the potential for each individual and the collective group of activities to have an impact on both development of the region as an agritourism destination and the potential to benefit local communities.

Project	Increase spend/value of tourism to the region	Increase incomes to local community	Increase visitation/extend stay	Attract new markets	Support preservation of cultural heritage	Attract Investor support	Attract donor support	Impact Poverty	Create jobs	Jobs for women
Homestay	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓
Home meal experiences	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓
Home based cooking demonstraton/participation	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓
Participation in farm activiites	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	
Catch/cook your own fish	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓	✓	
Wool processing/handcraft experience	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Bee-keeping/Honey Production Tour	✓	✓	✓				✓	✓	✓	✓
Candle making demonstration/participation	✓	✓	✓				✓	✓	✓	✓
Cheese route/trails	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	
Honey route/trails	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	
Festivals	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Farmers markets	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Culinary experience	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓
Natural medicine/health and wellbeing tour	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Agricultural heritage park	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Silk farm/handcraft centre	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓

Conclusion

The Regional Agritourism Strategies identify a path to build upon what has been achieved and plans underway for development, while creating an opportunity for all stakeholders to contribute to a development effort and in turn positive returns and regional growth. The scale of activities proposed within the strategy and the targets set are ambitious yet, highly achievable, if collective commitment and engagement is forthcoming.

Annex I Consultations

Name	Company
Tornike Toradze	Municipal Development Fund of Georgia
Ana Tavdgiridze	Municipal Development Fund of Georgia
Giorgi Chogovadze	Georgia National Tourism Agency
Tamar Maisuradze	Georgia National Tourism Agency
Giorgi Bregadze	Georgia National Tourism Agency
Mtvarisa Gelashvili	Borjomi Guesthouse
Natela Papunashvili	College AISI
Shorena Niniashvili	GTA/Promothea Voyages
Ilia Okromelidze	Ecotourism Association
Richard Maxfield	ENPARD
Professor Dr David Lordkipanidze	Georgian National Museum
Zura Javakhishvil	Eco Tours Georgia
Giorgi Rajebashvili	Eco Tours Georgia
Mariam Jorjadze	Elkana
Kakhaber Gugeshashvili	Governor in Kvemo Kartli Region
Ramaz Gagoshashvili	Vocational collage "Modusi"
Tea Chitadze	Elkana
Tea	Gino Rabati Hote
Marina Gachechiladze	Governor Office SJ
Ucha Kakhniashvili	City Hall
Nikoloz Sakvarelidze	Regional Development Association
Tamaz Karapetiani	Agency of Protected Areas
Nuka Gambashidze	BTL (Business Travel Leisure) Phoka Monastery
Mikheil Gurtskaia	Kvemo Kartli Regional Development Agency
Rati Kiria	Kvemo Kartli Regional Development Agency
Keti Berozashvili	Borjomi Municipality Tourism Information Centre
Nodar Stefnadze	RICC Borjomi
Otar Alborishvili	Tomoti (Organic Co-Operative and Eco Cottages owner)
Nick Natenadzes	Vardzia Resort
Maka Ghonghadze	Green Valley
Lali Mekshi	Green Valley
Levan Tabunidze	UNDP
Otar Antia	Borjomi Kharagauli National Park
Rati Anjaparidze	Qartuli.ge
Davit Japharidze,	Qartuli.ge
Paata Gaprindashvili	National Agency for Cultural Heritage Preservation of Georgia
Manana Vardzelashvili	National Agency for Cultural Heritage Preservation of Georgia
Salome Khmiadashvili	National Agency for Cultural Heritage

	Preservation of Georgia
Kirk Ramer	USAID NEO
Levan Kobakhidze	RED Programme
Jemal Ghonghadze	Horse Association/Guide
Nunu Kholuashvili	Borjomi Culture House
Salome Naderidze	Chiko Guesthouse
Maia Jakuri	Women's Handcraft Co-operative
Teona Letodiani	Hotel/Restuarant
Darejan Khetsuriani	German Mill
Maia Khopheria	Bolnisi Museum
Shorena Jokhadze	Bolnisi Museum
Zoia Chkhikvadze	Bolnisi Museum
Nana Gavasheli	Bolnisi Museum
Medea Kavtaradze	Aspindza Municipality "Women's Room"
Marina Gogoladze	Akhalsikhe Municipality, Department of culture
Inga Diakonovi	Akhalsikhe Municipality, Department of Culture
Nino Mghebrishvili	Akhalsikhe Sakrebulo, HR Department
Maia Skhirtladze	Akhalsikhe Municipality, Department of culture
Rezo Andghuladze	Akhalsikhe Municipality, Department of culture
Gela Dزامunashvili	Akhalsikhe Municipality, Department of culture
Mariam Zazadze	Akhalsikhe Municipality, Department of culture
Tea Chitadze	Biological Farming Association Elkana
Tina Gelashvili	Samtskhe-Javakheti state university
Tamar Goginashvili	Akhalsikhe Municipality, Department of Legal issues
Ucha Kakhniashvili	Akhalsikhe City Hall, Department of Tourism and Monument protection
Nino Rukhadze	Women's room Akhalsikhe
Lika Marghania	Mercy Corps/ICCN
Medea Kavtaradze	Aspindza Municipality "Women's Room"
Levan Mikaberidze	Akhalsikhe Municipality, Department of culture
Nino Mghebrishvili	Akhalsikhe Sakrebulo, HR Department
Nana Chalidze	Borjomi Municipality
Rezo Andghuladze	Akhalsikhe Municipality, Department of culture
Giorgi Kulukhashvili	Borjomi Municipality
Keti Berozashvili	Borjomi Municipality
Natalia Despotashvili	Green Valley
Maia Khrikadze	Borjomi Municipality
Khatuna Khachidze	Chief specialist
Zurab Lomidze	Borjomi Municipality

Nona Lursmanashvili	Sakrebulo of Borjomi Municipality
Londa Philishvili	Borjomi Municipality
Lela Gogoladze	Borjomi Municipality
Izolda Guguberidze	Borjomi Municipality
Shorena Beridze	Sakrebulo of Borjomi Municipality
Levan Natbeladze	Sakrebulo of Borjomi Municipality
Ivane Shalutashvili	Sakrebulo of Borjomi Municipality
Giorgi Kulukhashvili	Borjomi Municipality
Marina Khudadze	Borjomi Municipality, Department of Culture
Izolda Mashadze	Entrepreneur
Marine Gavasheli	Newspaper "Bolnisi"
Pheride Tvildiani	TV "Bolnisi"
Tamar Bakuradze	Revenue Service
Lia Bubuteishvili	Bolnisi Museum
Fati Tvildiani	Bolnisi Municipality
Marine Bejanishvili	NGO "Kvemo Kartli ethnic unity"
Bela Nadiradze	
Naira Gabrichidze	RICC
Ekaterine Niniashvili	Bolnisi Municipality
Mareta Marutiani	Librarian
Naziko Togonidze	Accountant
Nato Kavlashvili	Tourism information center
Tinatin Phruidze	Bolnisi Municipality
Tsira Bjalava	Bolnisi Municipality
Marine Ghortlishvili	Newspaper "Bolnisi"
Darejan Okruashvili	Newspaper "Bolnisi"
Tamar Giorgadze	Tourism Information Centre Bolnisi

Annex II Samtskhe-Javakheti Unique Attributes

<i>Unique Products</i>	<i>Unique Dishes</i>	<i>Unique Experiences</i>	<i>Festivals</i>
Tenili Cheese	Nadughi	Third best bird-watching site in world	Ninooba (St Nino's Day)
Oak cheese	Matsone Soup	Process of breadbaking in Furne	Jivanoba
Silent cheese (Chumi)	Tatarberaki	Process of honey harvesting	Terianoba (Vehan Teryan Poetry Day)
Grains	Tutmaji	Process of cow milking	Vardavar
Rejuvenating Vine	Erishta	Process of cheese making	Tsagveroba
Local cheese "Chechili"	Goose Khinkali	Pine chewing gum	Akhalsikheloba
Malberry Jam "Bakmazi"	Snail Khinkali	Pine pollen	Shotaoba (Shota Rustaveli)
Dried fruit (furnace drying technology)	Cooked Cheese Bishi	Rafting	Saint Andria's Day (May 12)
Unique Alpine Honey	Chirikhta	Hunting	Berobana (Arili, Ude, Vale)
Winemaking	Pine Cone Jam	Fishing	Chilooba in Kvelieri
Vodka making	Mulberry Jam	Star-watching	Meskhethian Hall unique housebuilding technology restoration
Meskhethian Vine	Traditional Meskhethian Bread	Unique cure with pine pollen	Meskhethian festival
Oily Bread "Chimeri"	Halva	Observatory of Priests	Zarzmoba
Dzimera	Khavitsi	Medicinal plants	Antimozoba in Adigeni
Vater Bishi	Saqarlama	Georgian Grey Bee	Shalva Akhalsikheloba
-	Qada	Mountain Trout	
	Different Berry jams (sweetbrier, seabuckthorn)	Art of wood cut, stone cut, metal cut	
	Somini (Bread)	Wool processing	
	Rose flower jam		

	<p>Nazuqi</p> <p>Sweet plum jam</p> <p>“Phelverda”</p> <p>Apokhti Khinkali</p> <p>Kaurma</p> <p>Phokhindi (fried wheat and corn)</p> <p>Korkoti (wheat seed) with boiled butter</p> <p>Tserokhinkali</p> <p>Dried bread Kharsho</p> <p>Kuati – squizzed Matsoni</p> <p>Cornel dish</p> <p>Boghlitso</p> <p>Badamburi</p> <p>Katmari</p> <p>Moreuli</p> <p>Finger-bread</p> <p>Lavash bread</p> <p>Pear jam – Adigeni, Ude</p> <p>Tiremi</p> <p>Phatir Bishi</p> <p>Chimuri</p> <p>Dried Malbery</p>		
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Annex III Kvemo Kartli Unique Attributes

<i>Unique Products</i>	<i>Unique Dishes</i>	<i>Unique Experiences</i>	<i>Festivals</i>
Unique wheat species	Chikhirtma	Unique technology to cook dishes	Wine festival at the end of November
Dmanisi ancient city	Tolma	Unique technology to make wines	Sabaoba festival in November
Imri – history of winemaking	German dishes for dinner Bazhe Meat in white wine sauce	Gold mining	Sionoba
Gold mining	Khachapuri “Achma”	Silkworm / silk production	Ratevanoba
Sour mineral waters in village Rachisubani	Green salads with walnuts or nuts	Stone/rock mining/processing	Giorgoba
Walnut	Churchkhela	Wool producton, processing	Saint Peter’s & Paul’s Day
Honey/bee-keeping	German dishes: Karkae, Shkaburi, sausages, hams	Woodcutting, curving	
Grape varieties	Special Khinkali from dough, pastry	Candlemaking	
Fruit	Bread	Soap production	
Vegetables	Kubdari	Carpet-making	
Berries	Lobiani		
Mushroom			
Piglets			
Turkeys			
Corn			
Various cheese types eg			
Matsoni			
Potato			