



# 2023 TOP 100 GOOD PRACTICE STORY

**Title:** The Oyster's Smile

**Destination, Country:** Tibau do Sul, Brasil

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**In the category:**  Destination Management     Environment & Climate     Thriving Communities  
 Nature & Scenery     Culture & Tradition     Business & Marketing

**The Story in a picture:**

The smile of the oyster is the way that producers refer to the opening of the shell, but the image shows something beyond that. It shows the smile of the producer and the joy of his community in being able to carry out his work. They guarantee the preservation of the oyster for future generations. Leaving the environment and the species with dignity, empowerment and autonomy.



**Summary:**

APROOSTRAS – Association of Oyster Producers of Rio Grande do Norte, situated in the rural area of Tibau do Sul/RN, Brazil, engages in the cultivation and commercialization of organic oysters. This is carried out in a natural environment on tables constructed with 1mx2m dimensions using ecological wood, known for its increased durability in aquatic environments. The primary objective is the sustainable breeding of the species, coupled with community involvement in both production and the final product's destination. In 2015, APROOSTRAS achieved formalization and, with the assistance





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of the Brazilian Micro and Small Business Support Service (Sebrae), an entity dedicated to promoting the development of micro and small businesses, pursued professionalization for sustainable oyster cultivation.

The extractivists, initially involved in oyster extraction within the natural mangrove environment or attempting cultivation by utilizing mangrove space, incorporated the wood extracted from the area to modify spaces. These modified spaces were then sold by them as street vendors on the municipality's beaches, lacking the necessary food security guarantee for consumption. They obtained an environmental license through IDEMA to conduct oyster breeding in the APA Bomfim-Guaráiras, deemed an ideal location for species cultivation. Utilizing appropriate equipment without harming the established ecosystem, they participated in courses to comprehend proper handling, hygiene, and safety practices. Subsequently, they began purchasing seeds from a local company, thereby supporting the production chain.

They installed a float named "Sorriso da Ostra" to sell the final product and established the oyster route, a tour commencing from the port and proceeding along the Guaráiras lagoon towards the cultivation area in wooden canoes. Producers, acting as guides, share information with tourists during the journey. The tour culminates with a docking at the floating boat, offering tourists an impressive view and a varied selection of fresh oysters (family farming) served by the producers. The oyster route delivers a distinctive community-based tourism experience to tourists, serving as an alternative production associated with tourism. It acts as a sustainable alternative for environmental, economic, social, and cultural development in alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals - ODS.



## Good Practice Story:

### Destination description

*Brief background of the destination.*

The municipality of Tibau do Sul, situated in the northeast region of Brazil, in the state of Rio Grande do Norte, occupies an area of 102,680 km<sup>2</sup> with an estimated population in 2022 of 14,694 inhabitants, according to data from the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics - IBGE. The destination is located approximately 75 km south of the capital Natal and is one of the most visited tourist destinations in the state by national and international tourists. With 14km of coastline, Tibau do Sul is known for its beautiful beaches and stunning landscapes. It is located in a natural space with a predominance of the original Atlantic forest, uniting vegetation with beaches, cliffs, and rivers, forming one of the most beautiful postcards of Brazil. It is a stronghold of sea turtles and dolphins, with approximately 60% (59.7%) of the area composed of legally protected environments at municipal, state, and federal levels. The municipality has been adopting sustainable practices and aims "by 2027 to be a tourist destination of excellence, with national and international visibility in cooperation, tourism organization, and sustainability."

Since 2019, Tibau do Sul has been a member of the DEL Turismo program, a council management methodology focused on participatory planning that is divided into working groups through Technical Chambers (CTs), allowing for active and democratic popular participation and directing the works focused on sustainability. Tibau do Sul was the first destination in Latin America to acquire the Silver Green Destinations seal in 2020, revalidating the Silver seal in 2023, confirming its intention and path in pursuit of sustainability.

With all this natural diversity, the most famous attraction in the region is Praia de Pipa, which attracts tourists from all over the world. In addition to Praia de Pipa, Tibau do Sul is also home to other beautiful beaches, such as Praia do Madeiro and Praia do Amor. Another important attraction is the Environmental Protection Area – APA Bonfim-Guaráiras, which houses part of the Estuarine Ecosystem of Tibau do Sul and five municipalities, comprising an area with mangroves, dunes, rivers, and lakes.

The APA Bonfim-Guaráiras has an area of over 42,000 hectares and is the largest State Conservation Unit in an emerged area of the state, ensuring the environmental preservation of an extensive area of plateaus, dunes, dozens of lakes, as well as the important Lagoon Complex of Bonfim and Papeba-Guaráiras, a region with intense tourist activity (IDEMA, 2022). It is characterized by its rich biodiversity that plays a vital role in the maintenance of the local ecosystem. In addition to offering opportunities for tourist activities such as boat trips, ecological trails, and bird watching, it is also a

space for the artisanal cultivation of oysters, an important economic activity that unites respect for the environment, tradition, and social relevance.

In this context, the Association of Oyster Producers of Rio Grande do Norte - APROOSTRAS works to develop production associated with tourism. Members carry out the artisanal cultivation of oysters and recently started direct sales to tourists on the floating Sorriso da Ostra, increasing their income, strengthening the activity, raising the self-esteem of a community, and caring for the preservation of artisanal practices.

### Issues faced

*Problems/issues solved with the Good Practice Story.*

Extractivists from the district of Cabeceiras lived in a situation of financial need and engaged in fishing, agriculture, and oyster extraction in their natural habitat. However, this last activity was developed without due environmental concern on the part of the fishermen, focusing only on exploration. As a result, in 2013, after a local economic crisis, the need to professionalize the activity was awakened. However, some issues needed to be resolved: there were difficulties in terms of expertise for production; a need for a suitable place for breeding; a need to create an Association; concession of Environmental Licensing authorized by IDEMA - Institute for Sustainable Development and Environment of the state of Rio Grande do Norte; in addition to openness to commercialization and negotiation with companies and final consumers.

The solution to the mentioned problems materialized on August 18, 2015, with the establishment of APROOSTRAS - Association of Oyster Producers of Rio Grande do Norte. This initiative led to the sustainable cultivation of the product, environmental conservation, and the inception of the oyster route as an alternative production linked with tourism. These outcomes resonate with the pillars of sustainability across the social, economic, and environmental domains, benefiting both producers and the surrounding community.

### Methods, steps, and tools applied

*Solutions implemented to address the sustainability problems or issues.*

For the formalization of APROOSTRAS to occur, a consultancy from SEBRAE/RN - Support Service for Micro and Small Companies of Rio Grande do Norte, took place previously, guiding the steps that the community should follow for a more responsible activity. With that, the first step was in 2015 with the formalization of APROOSTRAS.

The formalization of the association had as its main activities:

- Representation of the interests of oyster producers before public and private bodies.
- Promotion of qualifications and training for producers, aiming at technical and productive improvement.
- Encouraging the adoption of good oyster farming practices, including concern for environmental sustainability.
- Publicizing the benefits and nutritional properties of oysters to encourage consumption and appreciation of this product.
- Support for the commercialization of oysters produced in the state, seeking suitable markets and distribution channels.
- Structure for commercialization and reception of customers/tourists: Floating “Sorriso da Ostra” through a partnership between SEBRAE and Fundação Banco do Brasil.

As a result, fishermen engaged in courses to gain a deeper understanding of oyster cultivation, eliminating the need for direct extraction from its natural habitat. They delved into the oyster maturation process, covering seed, fattening, and commercialization with a focus on hygiene and cleaning techniques. Extensive research revealed that the Lagoa de Guaraíras area excelled not only in oyster fattening but also in terms of flavor. Years of experience in oyster cultivation led to the development of new techniques and cultivation practices, resulting in an impressive 95% survival rate for the seeds.

With the support of SEBRAE, APROOSTRAS secured an environmental license from IDEMA for the sustainable cultivation of oysters in Lagoa de Guaraíras (APA Bonfim-Guaraíras). Notably, they adopted environmentally friendly practices, such as using appropriate wood instead of traditional mangrove wood.

### Key success factors

*Critical elements that led to successfully solving the issues.*

The partnership with institutions such as SEBRAE/RN, associated with the union and level of engagement of the producers, made this articulation possible so that all stages of the process were followed, as well as the support from the municipal public management. Currently, APROOSTRAS has started work aimed at community-based tourism, involving the 17 members of the association with

production associated with tourism, developing the local community through the offer of direct marketing to tourists.

The acquisition of the floating "Sorriso da Ostra," anchored in Lagoa de Guaraíras, led to the creation of the Route of Oysters by the producers. This route allows tourists, guided by the producers on their own boats through the picturesque Guaraíras lagoon, to access the oyster cultivation area. The guidance covers the entire oyster cultivation process, starting from the purchase of seeds from a local company, Primar Aquacultura, which was honored as the winner of the Top 100 Green Destinations - Tibau do Sul 2022. The experience concludes with the consumption of oysters, offering diverse options on the menu at the mentioned floating.

All tasks related to the oyster route and the floating Sorriso da Ostra are undertaken by the associated producers. Additionally, the added products for sale are sourced from family farms and local companies within the municipality, contributing to the encouragement of local economic development through the tourism production chain.

The municipality benefits from the DEL Turismo/SENAC program, wherein the Technical Chamber of Education and Culture is currently processing the capture of a SENAC course focusing on quality service provision. Subsequently, courses in Tourism of Community Base and Local Tourist Advisor are planned for better service and professionalization of members in the Municipal Council of Tourism.

### Lessons learned

*Challenges faced while implementing the Good Practice and their solutions.*

The producers' united strength brought about a transformative perspective on their reality. Recognizing the negative impact of extractivist practices on the near extinction of the species, they shifted their approach. Drawing on years of experience and training, they adopted cultivation techniques, using laboratory-reproduced seeds through collectors. This initiative increased sustainable cultivation practices, contributing to environmental preservation.

The producers, taking a leading role in partnership with institutions, not only achieved a shift in their environmental practices but also witnessed a positive change in their social reality. The sustainable profitability of the activity became a driving force for this transformation, demonstrating that collective efforts can make a significant impact. This collaborative endeavor not only made a difference but also reshaped their social context by reinforcing governance structures.

## Achievements and Results

*Direct and indirect results of the Good Practice.*

Today, individuals once engaged in extraction without concern for oyster repopulation in mangroves have evolved into environmentally conscious oyster producers. They embrace artisanal cultivation, emphasizing the significance of environmental respect. They focus on expanding supply, practicing good breeding and handling techniques, and prioritizing consumer safety. With support from SEBRAE, they formalized their operations through APROOSTRAS, enabling 17 associates to receive training in the entire oyster creation process.

This formalization has opened avenues for participation in projects and fundraising, contributing to social development, improved governance, and heightened community self-esteem. It has also streamlined creation and management within an IDEMA-licensed environment.

The procurement of the floating Sorriso da Ostra and the initiation of the Rota das Oysters granted direct marketing access to tourists, facilitating interaction with the local community. This empowerment enables producers to independently create and market their products. Subsequently, community-based tourism commenced, driven by community participation and leadership, advocating for fair, responsible, and sustainable activities. This approach places value on culture and the environment through production associated with tourism, receiving support from public management and local private initiatives. These supports play a crucial role in achieving positive results in sustainable development and serve as inspiration for the widespread adoption of this practice in other communities.

## Tips for other destinations

*Your suggestions or recommendations for other destinations facing the same issues or implementing similar solutions*

To encourage other destinations to emulate this practice, it is recommended to fortify collaborations with public and private institutions to comprehend the local reality and effect transformative changes. Such actions substantiate the empowerment of local producers, who assume the role of protagonists, actively seeking solutions through knowledge and contributing to the enhancement of local economic dynamics. The coordination of local tourism development projects supporting sustainable development is a noteworthy aspect. Tourism, positioned as an alternative to stimulate activity, holds the potential for economic and social benefits through the bolstering of community-based tourism. This dynamic economic activity can serve as an alternative to attract tourists and, consequently, promote sustainable development across economic, social, cultural, and environmental spheres.

## Recognitions and Additional references

Recognitions and awards the Good Practice received and supporting evidence.

Documentary:

[\(280\) O Sorriso da Ostra - YouTube](#)

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