



Good Practice Story Title: "Agroecological Fair: cultivating sustainable tourism in São Miguel do Gostoso-RN, Brazil."

Destination: São Miguel do Gostoso-RN

Country: Brazil

Submitting Organization: Linhares, Janielle - Tourism and Communication Secretary of City São Miguel do Gostoso-RN

Category:

- Destination Management
- Nature & Scenery
- Environment & Climate
- Culture & Tradition
- Thriving Communities**
- Business & Marketing

Destination description:

The city of São Miguel do Gostoso, located on the coast of northeastern Brazil in the state of Rio Grande do Norte, is a region popularly known as the "corner of Brazil or the continent", at a distance of approximately 68 miles from the capital Natal. Is considered a charming fishing village, with about 10,500 inhabitants. The city has been looking for visitors that values the care and respect for the local community, culture and natural environment. Since 2019, the municipality has joined the DEL Tourism program, a participatory planning methodology that resulted in the following vision of the destination: "TO BE THE MOST SUSTAINABLE TOURIST DESTINATION IN THE NORTHEAST OF BRAZIL". The DEL program arrived precisely to harmonize the dense and growing flow of tourists in São Miguel do Gostoso, which brought visible economic benefits.



Summary of Good Practice Story:

The Agroecological and Solidarity Economy Fair of São Miguel do Gostoso emerged a few years ago as an income opportunity for residents of the rural area of the city, who in their daily lives faced little chance of commercialization due to their location outside the urban area and which worsened during the pandemic period.

However, in recent years the São Miguel do Gostoso agroecological fair has become indispensable for those who sell their products and for those who consume them. It has gained visibility, great proportions and has had a great impact on the local production chain, through the strengthening of the solidarity economy, the generation of income for producers and its integration with local tourism, providing improvements in the quality of life of the inhabitants, cultural appreciation, female empowerment and consolidated itself as a tourist attraction in the city.

Issues faced:

- The excessive use of pesticides in conventional agriculture. This issue affects public health and the food security of the population.
- The predominance of products from conventional sources in supermarkets.
- The fair played an important role in empowering women, especially those involved in agriculture and crafts. Many of these women faced challenges in terms of financial dependence and lack of social visibility.
- Resistance and challenges in implementing agroecological practices, as observed by the need for a change in consumption and production habits.
- Awareness for the education of conscious and responsible consumption.

Solution:

- Focus on the production and commercialization of food grown according to the principles of agroecology. This reduces dependence on pesticides and promotes sustainable agricultural practices.
- The Social Assistance Secretary of São Miguel do Gostoso city trained local farmers, teaching agroecological cultivation techniques and sustainable land management. This helps reduce the use of chemicals and improves food quality.
- Farmers focused on cultivating typical regional and seasonal products to enhance the value of local products and thus strengthen the local food culture.
- A noteworthy point is that the fair began to sell handicrafts made by women from rural communities, meaning they started producing not only agricultural goods but also crafts and homemade products like sweets, preserves, and typical dishes.



- The Agroecological Fair not only promotes sustainability and agroecology but also actively integrates with cultural events promoted in São Miguel do Gostoso, such as Fest Bossa and Jazz, Film Showcases, among other events, expanding its impact and visibility within the community and for visitors.

Methods, Steps, and Tools applied:

- Initially, the agroecological fair took place once a month. However, as cooperation networks and their production associated with local tourism strengthened, there arose the need to increase its frequency. Thus, today, the fair takes place every Friday from 7 am to 12 pm on Arrecifes Avenue, a strategic point considered one of the main tourism corridors of the city. This space serves not only as a point for selling products from family farming and handicrafts but also as a cultural and educational attraction that enriches the tourist experience.

- One of the fundamental steps was the establishment of strategic partnerships with different stakeholders, such as the Xique Xique network of solidarity marketing, the Municipal Government of São Miguel do Gostoso, through the Municipal Secretariat of Labor, Housing, and Social Assistance, and the Municipal Secretariat of Tourism and Communication. The support of the local government played an important role in providing political support and financial resources for the project. Additionally, local farmers were essential partners, sharing their practical knowledge and experience in the field, in a participatory process.

- With the partnerships established, training and education programs were carried out for farmers and members of rural communities. These programs included workshops, lectures, and practical courses on agroecological practices, sustainable cultivation techniques, natural resource management, and marketing techniques and quality in service.

- Meanwhile, investments were made in the fair's infrastructure, including standardization of stalls, lighting system during events, among others. These improvements were crucial to creating a conducive environment for product marketing, as well as drawing the attention of residents and visitors to the organization and visual appeal of the fair.

- Sensitization campaigns were conducted to promote conscious consumption and local products. This included dissemination through local media, social networks, and community events. The campaigns highlighted the environmental, social, and economic benefits of sustainable practices and encouraged residents to support local farmers and agroecological products.

Achievements and Results:

- One of the main outcomes of this initiative was the leadership of local female farmers. The significant presence of women in agroecological and solidarity economy activities not only strengthened the local economy but also highlighted the importance of women's role in sustainable development and the promotion of social and cultural values.

- Providing safe food for the local population and visitors, sold at fair prices and produced within the principles of agroecology.



- The Agroecological fair has contributed to prioritizing local agriculture, deserving public policy measures that strengthen the local economy and the social reproduction of those involved in it.
- The success of the project was driven by active community engagement, strategic partnerships, continuous education, and constant progress monitoring, as well as dissemination through local media. These initiatives not only promoted more sustainable agricultural practices in São Miguel do Gostoso but also strengthened the farming community, increased environmental awareness, and improved the quality of life of residents, who now operate in two major economies present in the city, agriculture, and tourism.
- From the visitor's perspective, the agroecological fair in São Miguel do Gostoso has offered tourists an enriching experience, providing access to quality local products and allowing an authentic experience with the community, not only through the consumption of products but also through cultural dialogue.

Lessons Learned and Advice:

- The Agroecological and Solidarity Economy Fair is an inspiring example of how cooperation, sustainability, and community engagement can generate positive outcomes for an entire locality.
- The exhibited products reflect the dedication of farmers to cultivate healthy foods in harmony with the environment. Furthermore, solidarity entrepreneurship is evident in the artisanal pieces that tell stories of the region and showcase the talent of local artists.
- The agroecological fair provides an opportunity to offer residents of rural communities in São Miguel do Gostoso a space for exchange/sale/acquisition of agroecological, artistic, and handicraft products, as well as for socializing, leisure, and exchange of skills, knowledge, and creativity.
- Visitors can taste organically grown delicacies such as fresh seasonal fruits, sweets, typical dishes, and explore a variety of artisanal products. The direct connection between producers and consumers reinforces the importance of conscious consumption and values the cultural identity of the city.
- At a time when communities seek to strengthen their autonomy and promote sustainable practices, the Agroecological and Solidarity Economy Fair of São Miguel do Gostoso stands out as a model to be followed.

Recognitions and Additional References

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