

Business case ID Card

Name of the company: Eko Bajka

Country: Poland

Size of the business: 4 employees (family members)

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Background

‘It’s a meadow, a stone, a garden full of flowers, a cuckoo echo and a concert of crickets. It’s a friendly atmosphere where people are welcomed’. This is how the Jochymek family describe **Eko Bajka**, the organic farm they own. After a career in the coal industry, the owner decided to move to the mountains to become a farmer, taking advantage of cheap rural land prices. Surrounded by a beautiful landscape of forests and mountains in the Polish region of Sudety, the Jochymeks started producing beef for local customers in 1985. A few years later, in 1992, the family business extended its activities to become a guesthouse and they started renting small houses for families. The business started being profitable after 15 years, and nowadays the family is renting seven houses on their fields, as well as one apartment. On the farming side, they are also growing vegetables and fruits, and started breeding horses, sheep, chickens and rabbits. Products are used on-site for the preparation of delicious meals served to the guest families and sold on the local market.

Main activities

The Eko Bajka organic farm lies on over 110 hectares of land in the Sudety region in Poland. The farm produces quality organic products like fruits and vegetables, and breeds chickens, horses and cows. What sets the farm apart is the provision of a guesthouse deep in the countryside. Seven houses and one apartment are rented by the family to local and international tourists looking to spend some quality time in the Polish mountains. Together, these 64 m² houses can accommodate eight four-person families.

Guests come here to breathe clean air, go hiking in the peaceful surroundings or enjoy the playroom and playground. Yet for both children and adults entertainment is woven into education, as they get to know about the animals of the farm, the practice of organic agriculture and a healthy lifestyle.

Eko Bajka embodies its long-held "Clean Tourism" certification. In 2017 it was nominated the 2nd best organic farm in Poland and in 2018 achieved the highest category in the ‘Rural Accommodation Base’ rating system.



Market

The warm welcome offered in the family business helps tourists feel at home in Eko Bajka. The farm is located in a perfect location, in the middle of the Polish mountains. Sensitive to the social impact of the farm, Eko Bajka offers balanced prices with different houses to fit everybody's needs and budget.

The farm attracts its clients mainly through its webpage, and through its participation in local fairs and meetings. In the beginning, Eko Bajka attracted a lot of clients interested in organic agriculture coming from the Netherlands, but when tourism started to develop in Poland, the share of local and national clients increased significantly and they represent the majority of the customers nowadays.

Challenges and solutions

Eko Bajka has suffered from financial problems linked to hyperinflation in the past, but sound financial management enabled them to make comfortable profits no more than 15 years after the launch of their business. More recently, they also started noticing the impacts of climate change on their farming activities, and this might become a risk for their production in the future.

Funding

The family business was created using only private savings, since banks did not offer interesting loan opportunities. The guesthouses were built one by one, by the owners themselves, extending the business on a progressive basis. Owners followed the same principle to diversify their farming activities. These activities enable them to benefit from public subsidies related to the Common Agricultural Policy.

What makes this case innovative?

Eko Bajka is a family business created for families. By crossing ecotourism with organic farming, they champion the ideas of environmental protection and sustainable rural development. Educational activities offered on-site are also a good way for both children and adults to learn more about organic agriculture. In the near future, these activities are likely to create new jobs in the neighbouring rural areas, which benefit from the economic activity and good practices of Eko Bajka.

Key takeaways / Lessons learnt

The choice of the location and activities offered on-site are crucial to the success of ecotourism businesses like Eko Bajka. The hospitality offered to clients is very important in countryside guesthouses. As a small-size family business, Eko Bajka is able to make its guests feel welcome and comfortable, and it represents a real added value on the market. The farm's engagement with local activities is also well perceived by clients.

