



COMMODITY CLUB  
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## **Agricultural Tour Visit Rural Alentejo (Portugal), June 1-3, 2018 Report**

The Commodity Club Switzerland organised an agricultural tour to Evora, Portugal on June 1<sup>st</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2018.

The 3-day trip had provided insights into the agriculture sector in the region of Alentejo as well as the rich culture of Portugal.

### **Why an agricultural tour?**

The food industry is a complex, global collective of diverse businesses that supplies most of the food consumed by the world's population. Covering a series of activities directed at the processing, conversion, preparation, preservation and packaging of food, the food industry today has become highly diversified, with manufacturing ranging from small, traditional, family-run activities that are highly labour intensive, to large, capital-intensive and highly mechanized industrial processes.

Modern food production aims to find more intense and more efficient solutions to feed the world, and it is currently defined by sophisticated technologies: agricultural machinery, biotechnology, agrochemicals, plant breeding and food processing. The industry as a complex whole requires an incredibly wide range of skills: several hundred occupation types exist within the food industry, and 1 in 3 people worldwide are employed in agriculture. Yet, agriculture only contributes 3% to global GDP.

Together with Nora Green Consulting, we explored the local agricultural industry by visiting a cork forest, an olive grove and mill, a vineyard and a dairy farm located in the surrounding countryside of Evora.



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### **Cork Forest**

We walked in a 312-ha cork forest, and we had the unique opportunity to assist to the process of the manual outer bark stripping. It is performed every 9 years: it's the time necessary for the bark to grow to the desired thickness. The bark is sold ca. 3 €/kg, the corks are shaped manually and sold from 0.15€ to 1.50€, depending on the quality.



### **Olive grove and olive oil mill**

In Ferreira do Alentejo, we visited the Sovena olive mill, built in 2010. The mill has the biggest crushing capacity in Portugal (up to 1'300 tonnes of olives per day). The olives contain 15% of oil and are processed right after harvesting in order to preserve their quality. 27 employees in 3 shifts process in the mill to produce up to 250'000 litres of olive oil per day.

We also visited a 500-ha super high-density olives grove, with 1'200-1'600 (up to 3'000) trees per hectare. Harvesting is performed with machines that can harvest 95% of olives from the trees, up to 9 hectares per day. During the harvesting season, 1'300 tonnes of olives are collected per day, with an average production of 12 tons olives per hectare.

The global olive oil production is produced mainly in Spain (50%), followed by Greece, Italy, Tunisia and Portugal.



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### Vineyards

We visited the very particular **Quinta do Quetzal** *terroir* and, with a guided tour, we admired the 312-ha covered with Quinta do Quetzal's vineyards. After harvesting, the grapes are pressed in the modern wineries. The wine is stored in 225-500 litres wooden barrels in a cellar with perfect fermenting conditions: optimal temperature and classical music played 24/7. Tests on the quality of the wine are made every month.

After a delicious lunch with modern Alentejan food, paired with the Estate wines in the Quetzal restaurant, we visited the Quetzal Art Centre.







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### Dairy farm

We visited a **Hoogwegt group NL dairy farm** with 1'250 dairy cows.

The cows are milked in a 50-unit rotary three times per day for 305 days per year. With 10'200 litres of milk per cow per year, the milk yearly production is about 12'750 million litres. With high attention to the hygiene of the storage rooms, the milk is cooled from 37 °C to 4 °C.



### Evora

During the trip, we had time to walk in the **historic centre of Évora**, one of the most impressive cultural sites of the region and world heritage by UNESCO since 1986. We also had the opportunity to stay at the Luxury Collection Hotel & Spa **Convento do Espinheiro**, a 15<sup>th</sup>-century convent considered national monument.





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In case of interest in investing or having more information on the Portuguese agricultural sector, please find more information at:

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We would like to thank all the experts who shared their insights and know-how with the tour participants. A great thank also goes to the participants for their open minded-dialogue and their questions and interest. We are looking forward to seeing again an active group of our members and experts in our network on our educational trip 2019 (location and topic to be announced early 2019).

**Peter Sigg**

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