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speaking world. In the central German Harz mountain range, two villages put themselves on the map last year by advocating special routes through their forested slopes as an ideal stomping ground for naked hikers.



and partake in naked sports, from canoeing to horse-riding.

The practice of "FKK" (which stands for "free body culture") is a serious pursuit in Germany. Nudism was already popular at the beginning of the 20th century. It regained popularity after the war, especially in communist East Germany. Since reunification, German FKK fans of all ages sunbathe in the nude

*from: Der Spiegel*



Sleeping on straw

efforts have conspired to keep agrotourism from reaching its full potential. In fact, other places with less to offer are making nearly twice as much.

The study is based on research on farmers, local authorities and rural holiday promoters like Swiss Holiday Farms, Sleep on Straw and the website rural-tourism.ch. It found agrotourism had a lot of potential.

*from swissinfo*

## Rural tourism struggles to take root

Staying on farms and experiencing rural Swiss life first-hand is a sorely underdeveloped sector of the tourism economy, a study has found.

With its pastures dotted with cows and its scenic valleys, Switzerland is an ideal country for agrotourism, yet the industry lags well behind neighbouring countries that have less to offer.

Switzerland could bolster its rural holiday market with focused marketing efforts, comprehensive funding and better industry standards. If these measures take root, farmers and rural innkeepers stand to reap millions of more francs each year in income while helping to preserve the country's celebrated open spaces.

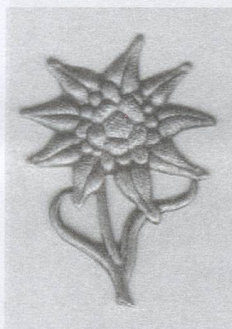
Although Swiss farmers have been enjoying robust sales recently, high production costs are eating into profits. The Federal Agriculture Office has encouraged farmers to be creative in finding ways to bolster their incomes through new activities.

Agrotourism is an understandable solution and is not new to Switzerland - the first official farm stays began in the southern canton of Ticino in 1975.

Yet the state of agrotourism in Switzerland is relatively unknown. Splintered marketing work, a lack of quality standards and poor brand-building

## Checkered history of the Edelweiss

The Edelweiss was established 1907 as the sign of the Austrian-Hungarian alpine troops by Emperor Franz Joseph I. These original three regiments wore their Edelweiss on the collar of their uniform. During World War I the Edelweiss was granted to the German alpine troops for their bravery. Today they are still the insignia of the Austrian, Polish and German alpine troops.



Edelweiss was also a secret badge of the Edelweiss Piraten, the anti-Nazi youth groups in the Third Reich.

The Edelweiss flower was the symbol of Wehrmacht and Waffen-SS Gebirgsjäger, or mountain troops, worn as a metal pin on the left side of the mountain cap, on the band of the service dress cap, and as a patch on the right sleeve.

The rank insignia of Swiss generals have Edelweiss signs instead of stars. A Korpskommandant for example (equivalent to a Lieutenant General in other countries) wears three Edelweiss signs on his collar instead of three stars.

*from Wikipedia*