



Vitality for Koillismaa from food services and nature

Wild food

Summary

The wild food project aimed to advance collaboration between businesses in the tourism, retail and food industries in the Kuusamo-Taivalkoski area. The idea was to collect businesses under a shared brand for wild foods. This was achieved through jointly organised events by businesses, workshops on the food and tourism industries, study trips, training events, attendance in expositions and benchmarking visits. Social media was utilised efficiently during the project. Around 50 businesses participated in the project.



Wild food promotes Finland's arctic nature internationally

Developing the local food and tourism industries by promoting the unique arctic nature of the Kuusamo-Taivalkoski area was the key task of the wild food project. The project focused on increasing profitability through facilitating collaboration between local businesses and institutions. This was achieved through a variety of measures from shared study trips to the establishment of a wild food co-operative.

The Koillismaa area possesses all the ingredients of success for the culinary tourism and food exporting industries. Combined with expertise in global food trends, innovative product development and high food safety standards, the pristine waters and beautiful



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Naturpolis Oy

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Budget: 397 363 €

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arctic nature of the area provide a significant competitive edge. The arctic image of the wild food brand provides a robust base for marketing.

A wide range of measures was taken to achieve the project's goals. Local expertise was bolstered by organising study trips and wild food cooking courses for beginners and professionals. For example, there were courses on productising from local ingredients. Reinforcing the wild food brand was crucial for advancing marketing and internationalisation. The increased collaboration between businesses resulted in the establishment of an organised buyer-seller network. Demand for local products increased and grew in variety. A dedicated website for the brand was created, **wildfood-kuusamolapland.com**, which directs visitors to the websites of businesses working under the brand.

Active marketing and communication are vital for brand building

Gaining national publicity was a key part of the project and was pursued actively. The Kuusamo Wild Food Street Market in 2017 was a resounding success with over 3,000 visitors during two days. The project also participated in organising annual fishing events for local school children. Publicity was increased further by utilising local newspapers and regional travel magazines; by the end of the project, there were around 200 published articles in different media. The project also won an award from the Foundation for the Promotion of Finnish Food Culture.

Project Manager Elisa Kangasaho describes the publicity of the project: "Kuusamo is the perfect place for wild food to emerge into public awareness. The locals think that we've always had wild food here, to which I've responded that it is time to proudly proclaim its value." Kangasaho held 43 presentations about the project in different localities.

Social media had an important role in advancing the goals of the project. For example, a contest was organised through Facebook during the premiere of the Taivalkoski-based movie Hevi reissu. Over 400 people throughout Fin-

land directly participated in the contest, providing publicity on a national level despite a small media budget. The media efforts were optimised through careful target group selection, well-established channels, good-quality video content, a clear campaign message and interesting prizes. Social media was utilised successfully in other events as well.

Internationalisation leads to export markets

Perhaps the most important event for internationalisation during the project was the organised visit of master chefs from French Michelin restaurants in Kuusamo, which helped create contacts to Europe. Two of the chefs have received an honorary title given by the President of France for excellence in craftsmanship. Local businesses were given the opportunity to present their products to the chefs for tasting. The entrepreneurs also productised local fish, game and berries with the chefs.

Contacts were created during the visit with the purpose of advancing future export opportunities. After the visit, Petäjälammen Herkku, one of the local businesses, travelled to Paris to introduce itself and managed to get a product to a local wholesaler's selection and the menu of a restaurant. Other businesses also organised visits to France and an Arctic Cuisine seminar in Murmansk.



Goals

- Increasing collaboration between businesses and developing expertise locally through establishing practices for co-operation and organising training events and productisations.
- Increasing visibility through communications and marketing. Strengthening the wild food brand and generating publicity domestically and internationally.
- Internationalising the local industries by organising study trips and arranging visits from foreign professionals.

Results

- Collaboration between businesses, demand for local products and availability of ingredients increased. An organised buyer-seller network was established. A website for the wild food brand was created, which directs buyers to the websites of businesses working under the brand.
- A total of 13 training events and productisations organised with over 45 businesses participating. Many participants successfully developed new products for their selections.
- Eight study trips organised with 31 businesses participating. International contacts were created, especially in France and Russia.
- The wild food brand was strengthened by organising 27 seminars and events with 6,700 people attending. The project manager gave 43 presentations on wild foods. Around 200 articles were published in the media about the project. The project won a food culture award.
- The importance of wild food as an attraction is recognised in the Kuusamo-Taivalkoski area.

Oulu Regional Council allocates funding for regional development from the ERDF

Oulu Regional Council is a Managing Authority for the Sustainable growth and jobs 2014–2020 – Finland’s Structural Funds Programme in Northern Ostrobothnia.

European Regional Development Fund’s (ERDF) main objectives are to improve the competitiveness of SMEs and produce and use the latest information and knowledge.

‘Sustainable growth and jobs 2014–2020 – Finland’s structural funds programme’ has two priority axes and seven specific objectives for ERDF. Each project must deliver at least one of these specific objectives.

ERDF priority axes and specific objectives:

1. Competitiveness of SMEs
 - Generating new business
 - Improving transport and logistic connections that are important to SMEs (Eastern and Northern Finland)
 - Promoting growth and internationalisation of enterprises
 - Promoting energy efficiency in SMEs
2. Producing and using the latest information and knowledge
 - Development of the centres of research, expertise and innovation on the basis of regional strengths
 - Strengthening innovation in enterprises
 - Developing solutions based on renewable energy and energy-efficient solutions

More information on Structural Funds in Finland from the dedicated website www.rakennerahastot.fi



Leverage from
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