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LOCAL AND ORGANIC FOOD AND FARMING AROUND THE BALTIC SEA

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Baltic Ecological Recycling Agriculture and Society (BERAS)



Centrum för uthålligt lantbruk



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INTRODUCTION

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The interest in local and organic food chains and systems has many reasons. One of them is environmental. The situation in the Baltic Sea with increased levels of nitrogen and phosphorus pollution has raised the need for recycling and the restructuring of agriculture.

Among researchers in organic farming and sustainable agriculture there is an increasing awareness that the restructuring of agriculture cannot be made by focusing only on farming and primary production within the limits of the farm gate. The restructuring of agriculture is necessarily linked to structural changes in the rest of the society. Creating new local food chains and systems has potential to go forward with the restructuring task. Local integration of food production and consumption requires that farming is considered in a wider system of production, processing, and demand instead of a production system only. (Lockie & Kitto 2000) And for this purpose, cooperation among farmers, processors, consumers, shopkeepers and many others is needed.

Another reason for the interest in local and organic food is rural development. Value adding and processing brings employment and economic welfare to small rural communities. Local and organic food systems and chains can potentially strengthen local identities and build creative environments for innovation and quality of life. Local recycling and close relations between producers and consumers are of importance also from the point of the organic agriculture movement.

These perspectives are considered in the project Baltic Ecological Recycling Agriculture and Society (BERAS, see page 3). It studies local and organic food chains and systems around the Baltic Sea with the aim of analyzing, on the one hand, their environmental, economic and social impact, and on the other hand, of developing knowledge of how local and organic food chains and systems can be developed further. This publication is produced by one of the five work packages of the project that aims at documenting and promoting cooperation, interaction and learning within the food systems for more sustainable rural development.

The purpose of this publication is to describe the cases around the Baltic Sea that are involved in or linked to the BERAS project. In them, active people, projects and organizations have taken initiatives towards local and organic food chains and cooperation. The cases documented are seen in the map on page 2. Part of the cases deal with food systems that are located in one municipality or village, such as Järna in Sweden, Juva in Finland, Kluczbork and Zbizno in Poland, and Raseiniai in Lithuania. Other cases, such as Nørregaard and Bakkedalen in Denmark, Zempow farm in Germany, Pahkla Camphill Village in Estonia and Solmarka in Sweden are farms which have developed local or regional food chains with their customers, or enhanced processing activities. Some of the cases follow the biodynamic and anthropo-

sophical ideas, while others emphasize organic or local nature of food and agriculture. The cases from Poland, Lithuania and Estonia are especially interesting because the new members of the European Union are actually facing rapid changes. Common to all cases is the linkage between agriculture and society that concretely takes place in cooperation between farmers, local processors, shopkeepers, municipal kitchens, administrators, consumers, project people, and researchers. Besides food, these chains or systems often have cultural, rural or environmental activities. The authors describe / present the cases in their varied geographical, historical and cultural contexts that exist around the Baltic Sea.

The authors of the case descriptions include researchers as well as consultants, and people in ecological and environmental movements (see our biographies in chapter three). The descriptions often rely on authors' own experiences with the cases and initiatives, and therefore we hope that this publication will be of interest for anyone interested in local and organic food, rural development or sustainability issues. The narrative form of expression hopefully mediates to the readers the successes, obstacles and future possibilities of the cases in a 'naturalized' (Stake, 2000; 19) and accessible way. The environmental, economic and social impacts of these types of chains and systems remains to be studied further, in the BERAS project and elsewhere.

The concept "organic" here means farming and products which are certified according to the national and international guidelines of organic agriculture. In this publication the word ecological differs from "organic" because "ecological" emphasizes especially recycling and the ecological features of production and consumption, and this does not always coincide with the certified organic. The concept 'food chain' refers to a value adding and consumption continuum from primary production through processing and distribution to consumption. A food system always includes a food chain, but it is more than that: it includes as well other actors than those dealing materially with food and its production, such as project people, social movements concerned with food, educative and administrative agencies etc. A food system also includes the natural environment which is used or affected in food chains. The concept "local" is open: what it means needs to be judged separately in each case, according to the existing and potential conditions.

What is needed for local food systems to emerge? And in what ways can the important local cooperation be developed further? Based on the cases these questions will be discussed at the end of the publication (chapter 12). With these case descriptions the readers are invited to make their own judgments and initiatives concerning local and ecological food.

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Authors

BIOGRAPHIES

Åse Ditlefsen has worked both at Økologisk Landsforening and as a Demeter inspector for many years and through this work she came into contact with these farms. She also worked with Nørregaard in the process to make a Farm Development Plan. This is a tool to move the focus from inspection (made by Danish state inspectors) to the farmer's own interest in improving the farm and its methods. By going beyond the legislation it gives the initiative back to the farmers to improve organic farming.

Anna Ellström works at the Kalmar County Administrative Board as advisor in ecological agriculture.

Ann-Christine Eriksson works at the Kalmar County Administrative Board as advisor in ecological agriculture. Since 1985 she has managed her own ecological farm.

Holger Fischer started organic vegetable farming in 1999 after finishing his Diploma in Landscape Development and Landscape Planning at Kiel University. Since then he has had many opportunities to make contacts in and collect knowledge about local organic food chains in his daily organic producer life. At the end of 2002 he started work at the Centre for Agricultural Landscape and Landuse Research (www.zalf.de). His main research subjects are organic crop production and sustainability aspects of organic farming.

Artur Granstedt, Department of Ecology and Crop Production Sciences, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences. Associate professor in crop science at the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences and at Helsinki University in Ecological Agriculture, Head of the Biodynamic Research Institute in Järna. Agronomist and doctor in Plant Nutrient Sciences.

Andrew Haden M.Sc. is a doctoral candidate at the Department of Rural Development and Agroecology at the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences in Uppsala-Ultuna and is a research assistant at the Biodynamic Research Institute (SBFI) in Järna. His work is financed by the BERAS project. Andrew comes from the USA where he studied ecological agriculture at the Evergreen State College, and worked with innovation in local food networks as a form of sustainable rural development, before he came to Sweden.

Ewa Hajduk has since 1998 been engaged in the Polish Ecological Club, City of Gliwice Chapter initially as a volunteer and since 2000 as an employee. She works mainly on projects that promote organic agri-

culture products as well as sustainable consumption patterns.

Hillevi Helmfrid has a background as a free-lance consultant in change processes linked to sustainability. She has for many years reflected upon, and experimented with, how change is brought about in social settings, and how it is not. Before becoming a consultant she worked with the design of an interdisciplinary and action oriented research project on local sustainable development at the Swedish University of Agriculture. She has a MSc in Agriculture.

Salla Kakriainen, M.Sc. is a human geographer with an interest in rural questions and is, at the moment, involved in research of local and organic agro-food networks. She is currently working as a researcher at the Helsinki University, Institute for Rural Research and Training.

Anzelika Raskauskiene is lecturer at the Department of Ecology, Environmental Institute at the Lithuanian University of Agriculture and editor of the newsletter "Organic farm: science, production, market".

Vida-Marija Rutkoviene is director of the Environmental Institute at the Lithuanian University of Agriculture and is one of the pioneers of organic agriculture in Lithuania.

Laura Seppänen has worked with extension and research in organic farming since 1989. Through researchers and farmers she has had contact with the Juva case (chapter 4 of the book) for many years. She has currently finished her activity-theoretical doctoral thesis about learning challenges in organic vegetable farming. Employed at the Institute for Rural Research and Training of the University of Helsinki she is involved in research of local and organic agro-food networks.

Maria Staniszevska has a MSc in chemical engineering from the Technical University Gliwice, Department of Chemical Engineering (1978) where she has also done her post graduate studies (1986).

Since 1993 she has been the President of the Polish Ecological Club, City of Gliwice Chapter. In 1998 she was one of the founders of the Polish Coalition to Support Organic Agriculture and has been its President since 1999. Since 1997 she has coordinated the program "Polish model of sustainable agriculture". In 2003–2004 she has been the main coordinator in Poland of the BERAS project.