

# Environmentally-friendly fishing gear



## Seal-Safe Trap-Nets

**Fishermen in East Finland worked with conservationists and scientists to develop trap-nets that protect their catch from preying Saimaa ringed seals, without harming this endangered species.**

Conservation measures to protect the freshwater Saimaa ringed seal, including the banning of trap nets, significantly affect commercial fishing conditions in the area – and the livelihood of the 30 households that earn their living by fishing on Lake Saimaa. Local fishermen made a joint proposal to the East Finland FLAG to develop and trial seal-safe pontoon trap-nets based on the Baltic Sea experience but adapted for inland conditions.

By bringing together fishermen, conservationists and scientists, the project was able to foster an unbiased discussion platform which generated a shared vision on how to accommodate the various interests. The FLAG then secured funding from Axis 3 of the EFF to develop and trial a trap-net for perch, pike-perch and vendace which Saimaa ringed seals cannot enter. A coordinator was hired to organise the project and 6 commercial fishermen tested the trap-nets for over three years.

### EAST FINLAND FLAG, FINLAND

#### RESULTS (AFTER 4 YEARS):

- > New seal-safe trap net designed, built and tested successfully
- > National legislations under revision to allow trap net fishing on the lake
- > €5 million LIFE project secured to build on this EFF work to improve the conservation status of the Saimaa ringed seal and further develop fishing selectivity and diversification.

#### SUCCESS FACTORS:

- > Close cooperation of the commercial fishermen, researchers and nature conservationists
- > Focused strongly on professional fishermen's real needs
- > Use of modern underwater photography and videos to demonstrate the seal-friendliness of the new traps

#### TOTAL PROJECT COST: €239 000

- > EFF Axis 4: €102 770
- > National / Regional co-financing: €136 230

#### Project promoter

East Finland FLAG  
Pekka.sahama@kerimaki.fi  
+358 50 550 2100  
[www.kalatalous.wordpress.com](http://www.kalatalous.wordpress.com)

