

Attracting young people to professional fishing

FLAG: South Finland
Southern Finland

Project overview

Thanks to the combination of an apprenticeship project for young fishers and FLAG support to improve a local fishing business, 33 year old Tanja is now a successful fisherwoman and entrepreneur, selling her fresh and processed produce directly to consumers.



Aging fishermen is among the main challenges of small-scale coastal and inland fisheries in Finland. Indeed, in the South Finland FLAG area there are only 110 full-time fishermen left, and two thirds of them are due to retire in the coming years. At the same time, approximately two thirds of fish consumed in Finland is imported, despite healthy local stocks and good demand for local fish. In this context, attracting young people to professional fishing is a particularly strong priority of the FLAG and Åkerfelt’s Fish, a family fishing company on Löparö island, benefited from FLAG support when fisherman, Kurt Åkerfelt, was set to retire, implying the closure of yet another fishing company in the area.

With the support of the South Finland (ESKO) FLAG, Mr Åkerfelt’s daughter, Tanja, participated in a “Master-Apprentice” project, along with five other young fishermen. This offered practical training to allow young people to learn from a network of more experienced fishermen. The training allowed her to learn fishing and processing techniques in a practical, “on the job” environment. She also learnt about fishing vessels and received support to identify specific development needs for her father’s company that she planned to take over.



In a second phase of the project, the trainee fishermen received advice on applying for company-related grants and, in Tanja’s case, this led to her submitting a project to the FLAG for support to finance the necessary equipment to improve the sales of her father’s fishing business. This included an ice machine to allow her to sell her fish from her mobile sales wagon, including at fairs and fish markets where proper cooling capacity is paramount.

Key lessons

- › **Relevance to FARNET themes:** adding value to fisheries products, culture and society, youth, women in fisheries.
- › **Results:** The FLAG has effectively managed to link two different projects, a training project for young, start-up fishermen and a private company investment project which, with €2 397 of public money, mobilised a private investment of €5 593.

As a result, a young woman was provided with the skills and confidence to become a professional fisher and take over the management of her father's business, avoiding the disappearance of local fishing company. She is now working full-time: fishing in a 6 metre open boat and, with the support of her sister and husband, processing and marketing her catch. Indeed, tapping into a trend towards local and healthy food, the sales of their spiced and canned Baltic Herring delicacies, smoked salmon and fish steaks are selling particularly well. Moreover, the ice machine investment has helped Tanja market her products in a wider area in South Finland as she can keep the fish fresh for full days in the sales locations. This has increased the company turnover by some 50% since father's time.

- › **Transferability:** The "funnel" concept of linking capacity building and networking with company-specific investments is highly transferable to other fisheries areas and policy fields. Making the business profitable has proved an effective way of attracting youngsters to continue fishing, while targeted training can provide the skills for young people to hit the road running.
- › **Final Comment:** Tanja's success is an example of how young people can be encouraged to enter traditional fishing activities and build them into sustainable economic activities for the future.

Total cost and EFF contribution

Company investment project

total cost: €7 990

- › EFF Axis 4: €1 030.71
- › National co-financing: €1 366.29
- › Private: €5 593 own contribution

Training course for 6 young fishers

total cost: €49 000

- › EFF Axis 4: €18 963
- › National co-financing: €25 137
- › Private (Regional Fishing Union, "Nylands Fiskarförbund" & individual fishermen): €4 900

Project information

Title: Attracting young people to professional fishing

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Project promoter

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▶ [Video of Tanja's father demonstrating pike-perch fishing in the winter](#)

FLAG details

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