

SME IN THE BIOECONOMY

SUMMARY

Small and medium sized food enterprises (SME's) in the Nordic countries produce products of high quality from local raw materials. The aim of the project was to inspire and encourage knowledge exchange between Nordic SME's for product development and marketing of local food. In November an "Open Icelandic Championship in Artisan Food" was held in Reykjavík for the first time. Artisan food producers from all the Nordic countries came and participated in the competition, a seminar, study tour, courses and Iceland's biggest food market. Competitions like these help the SME's to market themselves as well as create a platform for networking and knowledge exchange.

OBJECTIVES

The main aim of the project "SME in the Bioeconomy" was to inspire and encourage knowledge exchange between small

and medium size food enterprises (SME's) in the Nordic countries for product development and marketing of local food.

ACTIVITIES

For the first time an Icelandic championship for artisan food producer's was held in Reykjavík in November 2014. The competition welcomed SME's from all the Nordic countries to take part. The event was a continuation of the work that started a year earlier in Sweden's national "Championship for Artisan Food" (SM i Mathantverk). The competition has been held by Eldrimner (Sweden's National Center for Artisan Food Producers) for the past 18 years. In 2013 "SM i Mathantverk" was for the first time open for all Nordic artisan food producers which was very successful and gave the producers great inspiration and knowledge exchange. This event was in cooperation with the New Nordic Food II program.

This year all the Nordic countries participated in the "Open Icelandic Championship in Artisan Food", competing with 110 products in 8 different categories. Chefs from the "Icelandic Chefs Association" and experts from Matís and Eldrimner were among the judges. 19 products were awarded.

Parallel to the championship a seminar was held where speakers from all the Nordic countries gave valuable insights on how to support and promote local food. Other events connected to the championship was a study tour where Icelandic local food producers were visited and short courses on e.g. bread, cheese and jam making where held at Matis (Icelandic Food and Biotech R&D). The courses were organized by specialists from Eldrimner. To better market the Icelandic championship all the 110 products from all the Nordic countries were exhibited at the biggest food market in Iceland and some of the products were also for sale at the market. *Link: <http://www.matis.is/nordicartisan-food>*

In connection with "SM i Mathantverk 2014" in Växjö, Sweden, a meeting was held focusing on creating Nordic rules for a "Nordic Championship in Artisan Food". As Eldrimner has 18 years of experience in holding a national championship for SME's the Swedish rules were used as a base. The outcome of this important work was the slightly modified rules from Eldrimner, which were used at the competition in Iceland. The categories in the Icelandic competition was simplified as some of the products are not being produced. In the future each country can decide how many categories to include in each championship. The rules say that a product has to be at least 50% local or



from the same country. Climate conditions are different in the Nordic countries which determines what foods can be grown, e.g. the Arctic countries cannot grow wheat for local bread production. This has to be taken into account when harmonizing the official common rules. Much is to be gained for SME's with common Nordic rules, such as higher quality standards of the products, access to Nordic markets, stronger networking, increased knowledge and inspiration.

An additional event was created in the beginning of June as a group of SME's from Norway, Finland and Sweden came to Iceland for a three day study tour funded by Interreg. The aim of the study tour was to gain new knowledge and inspiration from different Icelandic SME producers, as well as creating valuable network.

RESULTS

The results of the SME project;

- First version of the Nordic rules for a "Nordic Championship in Artisan Food" has been made.
- SME's from all the Nordic countries came to the "Open Icelandic Championship in Artisan Food" and participated in the competition, seminar, study tour and courses.
- New networks were created through both the championship and the Interreg project.
- Increased marketing opportunities for the SME's.
- Through the Icelandic competition and the Interreg project there was an exchange of knowledge between SME's and project participants went home with new knowledge and inspiration for future product development.



- New Nordic Food and the "Open Icelandic championship" got good media coverage in the Nordic countries.

Communication / dissemination of results
Material from the Icelandic championship and other interesting material regarding SME's from all the Nordic countries were disseminated through New Nordic Food channels like the homepage, blog and Facebook.

PARTNERS

Iceland:

Matís (Gunn Órunn Einarisdóttir)

Denmark:

Madkulturen (Malis Ravn), Syddansk Fødevareklynge (Kai Winter), AgroTech (Dorthe Lynnerup), Taste of Denmark/ Culinary-Heritage of Bornholm (Thorkil Boisen)

Finland:

University of Turku (Heidi Valtari) and University of Applied Sciences Novia (Ann-Louise Erlund).

Norway:

Mære (Rita Backer Natvig), Nofima (Stine Alm Hersleth) and Bioforsk (Hilde Halland)

Sweden:

Eldrimner (Birgitta Sundin/Bodil Cornell) and Smaka på Skåne (Jannie S. Vestergaard)

Faroe Islands:

Útoyggjafelagið (Olga Biskoptø) and iNOVA (Janus Vang)

Greenland:

Inuili (Kim Lyberth), Anne Sofie Hardenberg and Inunnguaq Hegelund

Åland:

Landsbyggdcentrum (Lena Brenner)

DISCUSSION

High quality products made from local raw material are increasingly in demand. This is a great opportunity for SME's to create a strong and thriving business. But there is however several challenges that need to be addressed. The lack of strong marketing has been identified as being the key factors in hampering the growth of SME's.



The seminar held parallel to the Icelandic championship was designed to give the participants information on how different marketing strategies have been implemented in the Nordic countries. A championship for artisan food is a marketing tool in itself. It will create an interest and coverage in media which is very valuable.

One of the outcomes of this project was that a platform for a “Nordic Championship in Artisan Food” was established and first steps taken in creating harmonized rules. Much is to gain by holding a Nordic championship for SME’s, such as strengthening the image of local food production, higher quality standards of the products, access to Nordic markets, stronger networking, increased knowledge and inspiration. An interesting angle for better marketing in the future could be to

take further “The Designers and Farmers project” (<http://www.designersandfarmers.com/en/>) which was a multi-disciplinary innovative project where designers, farmers and food scientists were given a platform to work together to develop unique food products.

SME’s in the Nordic countries have very different support systems. They are therefore not equally prepared to take on the challenges of producing high quality local food products. This project has addressed this need for more knowledge and education for SME’s. For example courses were held in connection with the Icelandic competition to educate and inspire the participants. Specialists from Eldrimner held the courses. The support system that Eldrimner has created is a very good example on how to support and build up local food production.

In the future it could be very interesting to look at other support systems from other countries, e.g. UK, Ireland and Canada. This provide guidelines for authorities on how to support SME’s in the most effective manner.