

Kielce, 25.09.2020

Summary of the benchmarking thematic discussion (Niemela's Sheep Farm)

Place: Zoom Platform

Date: Tuesday 15th of September 2020

Attending:

- Piia Niemeläinen - Niemelä's Sheep Farm (FI)
- Riikka Kumpulainen - JAMK University of Applied Sciences (FI)
- Kaja Peterson - SEI Tallinn (ES)
- Wojciech Sołtysiak – The Complex of Świętokrzyskie and Nida River Landscape Parks (PL)
- Magdalena Karpińska – Marshal Office of the Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship (PL)
- Sławomir Neugebauer - Marshal Office of the Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship (PL)

Finnish SME:

Niemelä's Sheep Farm is a family business in Laukaa, Central Finland. It was established in 2011, but its activity runs back to 1886 when Niemelä's farm operated as a dairy farm. Nowadays, their income comes from lamb meat production and from wool and leather that they sell in their own farm boutique. They have grown their business from 20 sheep to 100. Their lamb breed is a rare Finnish landrace of Kainuu Grey and it is under a national conservation program. Niemelä's farm production is organic and they are continuously moving toward more ecological, profitable and humane production. The main goals for the farm are saving the Kainuu Grey-race and working in harmony with nature.

SWOT analysis:

Problems/ Challenges:

(Finland, Poland and Estonia seem to share the problems and challenges in the field)

- How to make sheep farming profitable?
- How to encourage the consumers to use sheep products?
- How to reach wider markets (national, BSR, global) with sheep products?

Strengths:

- Lamb as a very healthy product, compared to other types of meat
- Possibility of connecting environmental protection and sheep keeping (sheep as natural grazers for protected areas)
- Possibility to obtain additional financial support (EU, national, etc.) to keep certain breeds

Weaknesses:

- Cost-efficiency of sheep keeping for the farmers (low selling opportunities)

- Breed choice vs. profitability (e.g. sheep-breeding is mostly based on conservative breeds; financial support for conservative breeds guarantees the profitability of the production - breeds of high productivity and dressing percentage are being gradually eliminated due to lack of financial support and low profitability)
- Low demand for sheep products (lamb is not very popular around the BSR, compared to other types of meat)
- Almost no bigger distribution channels (mostly individual selling)

Sollutions:

- Branding the sheep products: wool and meat (e.g. lamb & sheep cheese as healthy products)
- Usage of local products in the local restaurants (serving as an example for sheep products recipes). Presenting lamb products to the public during events that are held in restaurants (during cooking shows&courses - model from Estonia)
- Promoting lamb as a product typical for a given national festival (model from Finland)
- Support from local authorities, educational institutes and R&D, for example, in a project form (Polish LIFE+ project connecting environmental protection and sheep keeping in the Świętokrzyskie voivodeship)
- Educating farmers and consumers on sheep products' qualities during public culinary events and awareness raising, e.g. within an all-national social campaign
- Enhancing co-operation between sheep farmers, e.g. via promoting Biobord sheep group (to facilitate products' development and joint selling (by gathering individual products to become more competitive on the markets)