

The Area

Jämtland is a region in the North of Sweden near the Norwegian border. It is the third largest region in the country, measuring 54.197 square kilometres, but also one of the most sparsely populated in the European Union, with only 128.586 inhabitants. Only one major city, Östersund, can be considered as densely inhabited, as one third of the region's population lives there. The emigration of young people and women has been a problem for some forty years. Today, Jämtland is one of the three regions in Sweden with the highest average of old people.

Of the total area only 1% is used for agriculture, 1% is built-up area, 9% is covered by water, 49% by forest, 16% swamp and 25% mountains and other unused land. The length of the vegetative period in the region is only

170 days compared to 270 days in Southern Sweden.

Average farm sizes in Jämtland are small (averaging 21 hectares). They are also dispersed, often with several kilometres between the farms in the Northern and Western corners of the region. This has led to difficulties in maintaining infrastructure and basic services, since the farms are not clustered together in villages that can support small business and shops.

Despite all its difficulties, Jämtland is considered a special place, thanks to its strong regional identity and the closely interacting communities that are working together to ensure their future economic and social development.



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Map of Northern Sweden



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The cooking pot logo

Background

Eldrimner, in the Swedish region of Jämtland, is a local model for integrated rural development based on environmental sustainability, strong community involvement and the active participation of women. Eldrimner is in fact a rural resource centre for the transfer of applied and practical knowledge in the small-scale production and refinement of foods like cheese, pork, berries and vegetables. There are also courses on marketing, economics and food hygiene legislation. The centre acts as a facilitator within the region for all those interested in small-scale food processing, helping to start-up new enterprises and supporting existing businesses alike. It does not have a fixed membership, anyone can use the centre. Eldrimner builds on the local economic, environmental and handicraft traditions. The administrative centre of Eldrimner is located in the village of Rösta, where it co-operates with the local agricultural college.

The Eldrimner project is under the joint responsibility of the Jämtland regional administration (*Länsstyrelsen*) and the

Jämtland County Council (*Jämtlands Läns Landsting*). A board consisting of seven representatives of local producers, two representatives of the regional administration and the structural funds-officer, as well as the project manager, manage the project.

In the region, approximately 2 200 farms provide food for 5% of the population, 3% more than the national average. Including all small-scale refinement and indirect employment, 10% of the population in Jämtland make their living from agriculture. Forestry plays another important role in Jämtland's economy, occupying 3% of the active population. The combination of forestry and farming activities is characteristic for most of the region's farmers. The most distinctive feature of life and work in the region's rural settlements is the combination of different economic activities to make a living. The region has also a small community of Sami people, who traditionally live on reindeer farming in the mountains straddling Norway, Sweden and

An Old Story for a New Beginning

Once upon a time, it all started with a cooking pot. In traditional Nordic mythology, 'Eldrimner' was a miraculous cauldron, in which the even more miraculous pig 'Särimner' would be cooked. Särimner had a special quality. It resurrected every time it had been eaten, thus providing never-ending food for the Nordic Gods and people.

"When we thought about a name for our project, someone came up with the old tale" remembers Bodil Conell, Eldrimner's project manager in Rösta. Traditions are strong among the people in Jämtland and this time they became an inspiration for a new beginning in the area.

The strong local community tradition and the involvement of the people in creating new ideas and projects existed long before the EU's policy for rural development. *"The spirit was there, when we started in 2001"*, explains Bodil Conell. *"The idea to provide special knowledge about how to blend local tradition with new ideas from other regions was a success and well received right from the beginning"*.

Today, Eldrimner offers courses for small-scale food refinement such as cheese making, pork butchering, and the processing of berries and vegetables. The courses also include marketing, economics and legislation on food-production. Besides the courses, Eldrimner provides help with learning the procedures involved in starting and managing small enterprises. It has



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The Eldrimner project team: Birgitta Sundin, Martin Johansson, Bodil Conell (left to right)

also collated an inventory of techniques for the small-scale refinement of rural products. In several locations, people have the opportunity to try out production processes and learn about how to sell their products on the market. In the Rösta dairy, which is managed by the agricultural college, courses in cheese making are held. The dairy has a small shop in which the local products are sold. Close to the dairy, a new facility for pork butchering is being constructed. Here, producers will be able to attend courses and try out their own ideas. Finally, a mobile production-unit with modern equipment for all kinds of dairy, pork, berries and vegetables refinement is for rent on a weekly basis at a low price. The unit can be transported to the producer's own farm, or it can be used at Eldrimner's facilities in Rösta.

An annual fair, called Särimner in honour of the miraculous pig, is held to promote the products. This is a popular opportunity for the local producers and wider public to meet and to communicate the values behind the project. The fair includes exhibitions, quality assessments, seminars and discussions concerning the future of locally produced small-scale food-businesses.

For the future, Eldrimner has ambitious plans: *"We want to become independent from government and EU funding"*, explains Bodil Conell. *"Farmers in Jämtland have traditionally relied on a mix of economic activities: agriculture, forestry and small-scale production. The revival of traditional production combined with new skills and strategies will be the key for a successful future"*. Eldrimner, the old cooking pot, could again do the trick and keep the community alive and vibrant.

Objectives

The main objectives of the project:

- to provide a meeting place for small-scale food-producers
- to facilitate the start of new businesses and to support existing producers
- to mediate applied and practical knowledge between small-scale producers within the region as well as know-

wledge adapted from other regions (national as well as international)

- to support small-scale production which takes its stand in the local community and the local ecological conditions
- to support food production which is ecologically grown and sustainably produced

© Eldrimner Project
Basic courses provide practical knowledge for a small-scale refinement of Jämtlands agricultural products!



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A course in cheese making in the Rösta dairy with French cheesemaker Michel Lepage

Achievements

One of the main achievements of the project has been to demonstrate how sustainable rural development can come to life through

- co-operation
- networking
- capacity building
- and the mobilisation of local people

Co-operation with French and German small-scale food-producers has also been achieved. Excursions to these countries have been made and experts from France and Germany have been teaching some of the courses organised by Eldrimner. This provides both a local and international dimension to the lessons that can be learnt at Eldrimner.

Giving such a practical example is already an achievement of the project. It shows right from the start and in all phases, what are the preconditions for an effective, long-running rural development project. It proves that such initiatives cannot be successful in the long term if they are only based on EU-regulations or policy programmes. There are some important preconditions: strong local traditions, learning from experience, and the active involvement of the local population. Eldrimner shows how policy programmes and measures need to be deeply rooted in rural community life to become effective.

Funding

Eldrimner receives 6.075.000 SEK (674.399 Euro) for the project, 60% of the budget is EU-financed and 40% is financed through national means. Public funding for the project comes through the European Union's Structural Funds. Given the difficult climatic conditions of the region, which limit, for example, the agricultural growing season to a mere one hundred and seventy days, Jämtland benefits from higher rates of EU funding, this also as regards Rural Development money from the Common Agricultural Policy, through the Swedish Environment and Rural Development Programme (*Miljö- och Landsbygdsprogram*).

Environment

The region has the advantage of an unspoiled environment and an abundance of natural resources. Fifty-three per cent of the overall agricultural production in Jämtland is now under to organic production. The producers involved in the Eldrimner project are all using ecological methods of production and most of them are approved by KRAV, the Swedish certificate for organically grown products.

Eldrimner illustrates in a practical way how local sustainable development can be initiated by local people and by connecting social, economic and ecological aspects in the local development process.

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The Eldrimner project center in Röstas was a success straight from the beginning in 2001

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Röstas, Jämtland - Sweden Eldrimner: A Pig, a Cooking Pot and the Chance For a New Beginning

Rural Development and Environment: Initiatives that Make a Difference