



This project received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation program under Grant Agreement n° 727848

Author: Minna Mikkola,
 Publisher: University of Helsinki Ruralia Institute
 Contact: minna.mikkola@helsinki.fi
 Editor: University of Helsinki
 Link: www.helsinki.fi/en



About CERERE:

Through a balanced, multi-actor network of researchers and communities of practitioners, the project promotes innovation by producing and disseminating accessible end-user materials and training products for farmers, food manufacturers, consumers, researchers and policy makers.

LOCAL FARMER'S FAMILY HISTORY AS A RESOURCE FOR FUTURE SUSTAINABILITY

PROBLEM

There are farmers who often continue the same way of production, make only minor changes in their activities and tend to be relatively isolated decision makers and actors within their communities. This may result in limited social learning, slow responsiveness to changes, delayed developments and low incomes. Growers of landraces and conservation varieties may share these tendencies – they continue the same way without responsiveness to changing markets although they own very old and precious capital, their farm and the knowledge of cultivation of their old grains.

SOLUTION

When looking at farms with a (very) long family history, it seems that for many of these farms, their family history is one of entrepreneurship and sustainable relations with their community (and related) members, enabling social learning, search for new plants and production modes, and for better economies through connections in marketing. These farms offer the family's young ones a career as farmers with identity for sustainability and self-esteem. Farms with long family histories reflect what they seem to have developed - the DNA for sustainability. While not all farmers may have long family histories, they can learn from those who exemplify these features. Through various informal groups and associations, farmers can learn about successful (and unsuccessful) practices in cultivation as well as the benefits accumulated when entrepreneurial, ecological, economic and social balancing approaches are in operation across the years, decades and centuries.

Outcomes

Farmers are able to continue the family history, to keep the farm in operation, to get relatively good income and enjoy their commitment for sustainability. In this farmer's case, a deep knowledge of the plant helped to move into the low risk organic cultivation of buckwheat resulting in a high value crop, easy to market through a co-operative to a special collaborative miller with market access. These operations were supported by a strong market demand and well-functioning supply chain. This kind of farming also benefits the local community and the society at large through its sustainable products and the economic drive.



Buckwheat

Practical Recommendation

- Look into your own family history as a resource and identify how did the farm develop and change in collaborative relations with other farms, in terms of economy, ecology and social relations.
- Imitate successful farms and farmers. Get inspired about how success stories have been created, plants (or animals) discovered and mastered, crops changed, supply chains developed and community ties upgraded.
- Joining in associations and other groups supports learning about wider sustainable change and their specific collaborative solutions in more local details.

Evaluation and sharing of the results

Use the comment section on the CERERE website to share your experiences with other farmers, processors, retailers, advisors and scientists. If you have any questions concerning this Practice Abstract, please contact the author by e-mail.

Project partners:

The University of Reading (*United Kingdom*),
 The University of Florence (*Italy*),
 Rete Semi Rurali (*Italy*),
 Réseau Semences Paysannes (*France*),
 Institut National de la Recherche Agronomique (*France*),
 The University of Helsinki (*Finland*),
 The Irish Agriculture and Food Development Authority (*Ireland*),
 Red Andaluza de Semillas (*Spain*),
 Formicablu (*Italy*),
 Organic Research Centre (*United Kingdom*),
 SEGES P/S (*Denmark*),
 Institut Technique de l'Agriculture Biologique (*France*),
 The University of Debreceni (*Hungary*).

Further Information

The buckwheat producers' co-operative (<https://www.tattariosk.fi/>) and the buckwheat mill (<http://www.keskisenmylly.fi/>) are examples of entrepreneurship and balanced activities for sustainability, whereby interests of farmers, the miller and consumers' gluten-free nutrition and sustainability are met in new ways.

Theme: Internal organisation and networking

Keywords: farming family, family history, change, entrepreneurship, economy, ecology, organic, good community relations, cooperative, marketing, sustainability

Crop: Buckwheat

Country: Finland

Related CERERE case study: Finnish Organic Producers Alliance (FOPA)

Languages: English, Finnish

Year of release: 2019