



Sustainable hunting tourism

- business opportunity in the Northern Europe

First meeting of the Finnish reference group

September 11th 2008 10:00 – 14:00

Present:

1. The Finnish Association for Nature Conservation: Riku Lumiaro
2. Hunter's Central Organization: Marko Svensberg
3. Hunter's Central Organization, region Lapland: Teuvo Eskola
4. The Union of Finnish Hunters: Ere Grenfors
5. The Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry: Janne Pitkänen
6. Finnish Game and Fisheries Research Institute: Päivi Eskelinen
7. The Finnish Forest Research Institute: Ashley Selby
8. The Finnish Forest Research Institute: Jukka Aarnio
9. Forest and Park Service: Jukka Bisi
10. The Central Union of Agricultural Producers and Forest Owners: Vesa Malila
11. Finnish Tourist Board: Minna Myyrinmaa
12. The Finnish Nature-based Entrepreneurship Association: Juha Rutanen
13. Haapavesi Vocational School: Markus Muuttola
14. University of Helsinki, Ruralia-institute: Sami Kurki
15. University of Helsinki, Ruralia-institute: Anne Matilainen
16. University of Helsinki, Ruralia-institute: Susanna Keskinarkaus



1. An introduction to the event

Chairman Sami Kurki welcomed everyone to the event and shortly explained the reference group objectives. The reference group serves as a discussion forum to ensure that all stakeholders' opinions are taken into account when planning project tasks. A wide representation and regular meetings contribute to the effectiveness of communication. The reference group will meet twice a year to discuss themes relating to hunting tourism and the sub-projects. The working method will mainly be a dialogue based on preliminary questions and specialist presentations. The final aim is to create criteria for sustainable hunting tourism.

The reference group members introduced themselves and their organizations.

2. Sustainable hunting tourism – business opportunity in the Northern Europe (NPPHunt) –backgroup of the project and a project introduction

Anne Matilainen presented the project's background, partners, objectives and working method.

3. Hunting pressure in Northern Finland (The free hunting right area)

Susanna Keskinarkaus showed some preliminary calculations on the estimated amount of hunters according to population forecasts in Northern Finland. The predictions were combined based on the assumption that the proportion of hunters in each 5-year age group would remain the same.

The hunting activity in Lapland is remarkably higher than in the average population. 6 % of Finns hunt but in some towns in Lapland up to 30 % of the population are hunters. The figures are even higher when focusing on the active population.

Due to demographic changes, the amount of local hunters is bound to decrease. The amount of hunters could fall about 20% by 2030 according to the current hunting activity. Also the age-structure will change and the average age of hunters will increase considerably. There are significant differences between areas.

4. Hunting tourism entrepreneur's challenges

Markus Muuttola showed some information regarding the current status of hunting tourism in Finland. He also introduced potential game species and some



frame conditions. All agreed that developing the sector must be based on sustainable models. The amount of hunting as such can't increase indefinitely as hunting in the North is based on the natural population. Hunting tourism in the North can't be mass tourism but tourism based on the Northern hunting culture.

The members wished for hunting entrepreneurs to contribute to game management like local hunters do.

5. Possibilities and challenges for hunting tourism, the reference group views based on the questions

The reference group members were sent two questions to consider before the first meeting. The intention of the questions was to create a lively discussion to ensure that everyone's views would be considered. The questions were:

1. What does sustainable hunting tourism include in your opinion?
2. What are the things to consider in developing sustainable hunting tourism in Finland?

Janne Pitkänen from The Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry reminded that social sustainability includes not only the local, but also the European Union wide view. The EU is paying more and more attention to Animal Welfare –issues. Restrictions may also come from the commercial legislation such as the proposed ban on selling grey seal products. When hunting becomes commercial, EU may have an interest in constricting for example hunting methods through commercial directives. An increased interest in hunting methods may cause pressure to regulate hunting methods and therefore affect how local hunting is carried out. EU is also interested in practices that allow environmental NGO:s (the thirds sector) to monitor animal welfare. Ethical hunting is understood differently in different cultures and open communication can contribute to a common understanding on ethical hunting methods. Hunting actors should actively inform of our traditions to enable people to understand its value. A killing fee –based pricing model will not be sustainable in Finland due to its focus on catching prey. Marketing should focus on comprehensive experiences.

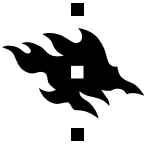
Riku Lumiaro from The Finnish Association for Nature Conservation asked to note that he can not speak for the organization as they do not have a common view on



hunting tourism. Lumiario highlighted that due to urbanization, attitudes toward hunting are bound to change. Some people oppose hunting because they oppose killing animals and these attitudes are increasing. Products must be designed in a manner that allows the majority of people to accept them. Hunting tourism can contribute to a lively countryside if it is managed in a sustainable and ethical manner respecting the Finnish hunting culture. A vibrant country side is in the best interest of the society. The starting point for development must be the local hunting culture. Rural entrepreneurs are equipped to create quality products ensuring that the income stays in the region. The products should be comprehensive products including meals, stories, sauna and the cultural background. Bag should not be the key argument in marketing. Other things to pay attention to are ecological sustainability, the guide's skills and knowledge of languages.

Vesa Malila from The Central Union of Agricultural Producers and Forest Owners saw clear potential in hunting tourism. The most important thing to remember are the landowners' rights because hunting rights are legally tied to landowning. Central Union of Agricultural Producers and Forest Owners wished to promote hunting tourism that facilitates the current activities of hunting clubs. Hunting clubs often received the right to hunt on a private owner's land without monetary compensation and there is no need to interfere with a system that works well. Hunting tourism on the other hand must respect the landowner's rights also in distributing economic gain. Business activities regarding hunting change the current system and require an update of contracts. Possible changes to forest taxation will negatively affect the landowners' willingness to give out hunting rights. If owning land becomes more expensive for them, they will also want to receive compensation from those using it. Hunting activity must remain on a sustainable level regardless of tourism. Hunting tourism can't become mass tourism. Urbanization of forest owners will affect their views on hunting. Hunting tourism would best be handled by rural tourism entrepreneurs focusing on high quality products. There are about 2000 rural tourism entrepreneurs in Finland with 10 % having activities all through the year.

Teuvo Eskola from the Lapland region of the Hunter's Central Organization highlighted the meaning of the local hunting culture. This is especially crucial in the North where the local residents have the right to freely hunt on state-owned land in their home town. This right is extremely important to locals and all signals of possibly interfering with this right will negatively affect the social sustainability of hunting tourism. Hunting tourism must also not diminish the amount of game.



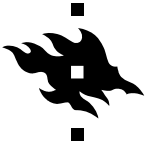
The frame conditions for developing hunting tourism are ecological sustainability and the Finnish hunting culture. Trophy-hunting does not fit into the Finnish hunting culture. Attention must also be paid to the distribution of gain. The landowner and the local hunting clubs must also gain from hunting tourism for the activities to have a chance to develop in a socially sustainable manner. All development activities need to proceed in a patient manner considering also other than economic values. The locals hunting rights must not be affected in any way.

Päivi Eskelinen from the Finnish Game and Fisheries Research Institute said that all hunting must be based on up-to-date and correct information of game populations. At the moment the model for gathering this information is based on voluntary counting. Due to demographic changes among hunters, this will change in the future. Entrepreneurs could possibly help in getting this information. Distributing the benefits from hunting tourism must be fair and other land users must also be acknowledged.

Jukka Aarnio and Ashley Selby from The Finnist Forest Research Institute said that hunting and tourism associated with it varies considerably across regions. Land rents affect hunting activity. The average age of hunting club members is rising affecting their enthusiasm to organize joint events. The meaning of forests as a source of wood is shifting towards other values becoming of more importance. Urbanization of forest owners also affects their role in hunting clubs and controlling the moose population.

Marko Svensberg from the Hunter's Central Organization stated that their organization supports the traditional northern hunting culture. The Hunter's Central Organization financially supports hunting clubs and therefore the landowner may benefit more from giving hunting rights for the right to join hunting club activities than they would from collecting monetary rent. Game populations and the tolerance for damages caused by game are lower in Finland than for example in Sweden. The African hunting tourism model will not fit in the Finnish hunting culture. The northern hunting culture has begun to gain positive attention abroad, for example in the C.I.C.

Jukka Bisi also supported the local hunting models. There could be a need for good case examples of positive operations models between hunting actors. Landowners may also see activity of their land as positive issue and not just seek



financial gain from it. Hunting on state-owned land and private land is managed very differently and presenting these differences might be useful.

Ere Grenfors from the Union of Finnish Hunters noted that approximately 2500 hunting clubs are members in their organization but the membership activity is lowest in the North. Landowners are the key stakeholder in developing hunting tourism. Local hunters fear that the land rents will go up due to hunting tourism.

Minna Myyrinmaa from the Finnish Tourist Board said that the focus should be on the fair distribution of benefits, comprehensive products and accurate pricing. Hunting tourism products could also be linked to other tourism products. All activities must pay attention to quality, safety and professionalism.

6. Reference group activities in the future

The reference group will convene again in Spring 2009. The next sessions will focus on specific sub-themes. Preliminary questions will be sent for future meetings as well to help focus on what is sustainable northern hunting tourism from the Finnish point of view. Latest research results will be brought to the reference group and possibly hunting tourism specialists to present their views on the issue.