

HÄMEENKYRÖ AGRICULTURE ARENA, FINLAND



Hämeenkyrö Agriculture Arena invited local agriculture actors, municipality representatives and local decision-makers to discuss and create a vision for Hämeenkyrö sustainable agriculture 2035. The process of three workshops was organised in March 2024 in cooperation with Hämeenkyrö municipality – a rural municipality of 10 300 inhabitants located 30 min. drive from the City of Tampere.

WHO WAS INVOLVED?

Over 30 local actors including agricultural entrepreneurs, companies, as well as representatives of municipality, local politicians, educational institutions, trade and civil society participated in the arena workshops.

IDENTIFIED CHALLENGES

The process focused on the following challenges identified by local actors: 1) Increasing prices, lowering profitability and endurance of farmers, 2) promotion of local and domestic food, 3) how to get young people more interested in agriculture and related job and innovation opportunities? 4) Negative attitudes: more positive communication about the value and sustainable opportunities of agriculture is needed.

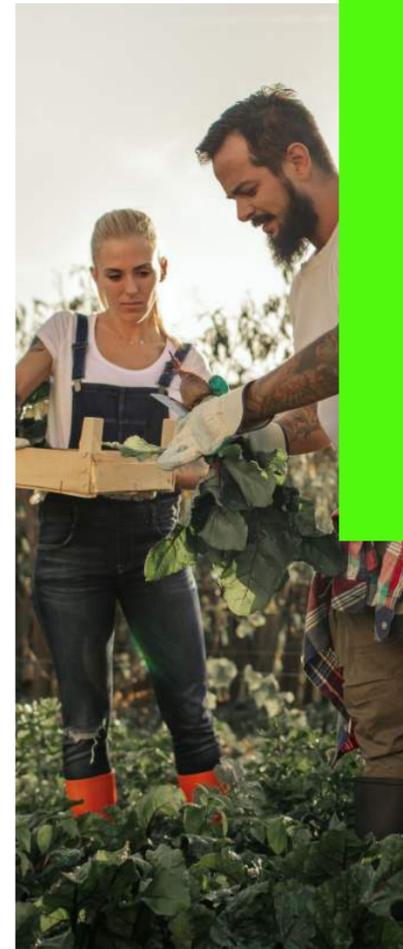
ABOUT THE PROCESS

The workshops started with a lunch where the participants had a chance to exchange thoughts and deepen their knowledge of each other. Two of the workshops had 2-3 external speakers that provided a valuable overview on different factors that influence Finnish agriculture at the moment, and what are the possible pathways towards sustainable practices like organic and regenerative farming. For example, the increase in the general cost level and production input prices causes profitability challenges for rural entrepreneurs. Organic and regenerative farming was discussed as solutions to get rid of growing fertilizer costs. A major challenge is that consumers do not buy or even recognise enough domestic/local products.

Based on improved common understanding, a joint vision "sustainable agriculture in Hämeenkyrö 2035" was created. The vision includes five themes:

- 1) A well-being countryside focusing on the well-being of people and animals
- 2) Versatile, profitable and sustainable rural entrepreneurship
- 3) A strong appreciation of agriculture
- 4) The agroecological symbiosis of Hämeenkyrö
- 5) Flourishing local and organic food culture.

In the second workshop, the participants created pathways to the vision and selected the most crucial changes that are needed on a way to the vision. In the third workshop, the participants voted for the most important transition steps and created in small groups action plans with detailed actions and responsibilities. A fourth meeting was organised in May 2024 to discuss the results and immediate actions.



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RESULTS & IMPACT

The participants co-created an action plan including following points:

1. Promoting local food and the agriculture through positive communication and events
2. Making people living in the city aware of the Hämeenkyrö "green pearl" through positive agriculture-focused communication in social media, and through events where rural and urban people meet
3. Integrating agriculture in school education: e.g. children visiting farms and practicing farming at school.
4. Forming a local innovation and sustainability group of rural entrepreneurs, education and municipality representatives to boost innovations, sustainable business opportunities, collaboration and events.
5. Make Agriculture Arena as an annual 1-day event to follow up the actions and enable interaction and exchange between local actors and the municipality.
6. Reforming procurement policy to better recognise local food starting with a market survey (what is produced in Hämeenkyrö, how much and where)

The results are utilised in the local climate plan and local strategy.

"Discussions with other food producers and entrepreneurs about the future provided added value."

"It was a great opportunity to meet and discuss the challenges and opportunities of agriculture with different people and experts that brought various perspectives."

CONTACT

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