

PRESS RELEASE: FRIDGE Study Visit in South Ostrobothnia

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What an incredible study visit it was! On the 23rd and 24th March, we found ourselves in Finland, for two amazing action-filled days in South Ostrobothnia.

Our project partners from Finland did everything to make this meeting an unforgettable experience. After a long break, we were finally able to meet face to face and see how Good Practices are applied in practice.

We visited local restaurants and a distillery and listened to many great presentations from entrepreneurs who receive help and support through various programmes available in the region as well as food business developers who give their support for the SMEs.

On Wednesday 23rd, the participants were introduced to South Ostrobothnia (SO) as the Food Province of Finland. In the seminar, we focused on the Good Practices identified in the FRIDGE project and selected local activities that support the local SMEs. We also learned how the region and country of Finland support their food business to accelerate its growth and internationalisation, how researchers from institutions like the University of Helsinki and Seinäjoki University of Applied Sciences (SeAMK) focus their studies on the development of business and manufacturing foundations to achieve these goals and how SeAMK's students are taught in practice what it means to work in the food industry.

We also received a tour around SeAMK technology and food laboratories, which paved a way for new solutions and products for the industry e.g., we saw how SeAMK's scientists developed a beer of waste bread to help lower the amount of food waste in the region. We had a chance to eat lunch in Prikka Living Lab Kitchen, run by university students, where new recipes are developed to help increase the utilisation of local ingredients.

The day ended with a site visit and a dinner at Kyrö Distillery, a local rye gin and whiskey distillery, globally acknowledged for its products and awarded titles of "best in the world" at prestigious alcohol fairs. An excellent example of an innovative Food SME who through successful marketing and high-quality products has paved its way to international markets. The Distillery, with its tourism centre and a restaurant, is located in Isokyrö.



Second day full of learning

Day two of our visit focused on presenting more good practices from SO: how food products can be developed in a pop-up factory, how local food dates are bringing buyers and sellers together and how university students are encouraged to develop new sustainable food business ideas.

We heard presentations given by local food business entrepreneurs whose innovative products are gaining nationwide recognition. We could listen to how a store-in-store concept helped a local sushi company gain a foothold in the whole country, or how a dream of owning a farm turned into a business producing goat milk ice cream for humans and dogs. After every presentation, there was an avalanche of questions from our project partners.

Our day came to an end after an amazing dinner at Juurella restaurant – a place known as the best restaurant in the region, which prepares its dishes almost exclusively with local ingredients. Saying that our dinner was delicious is like saying nothing, it was simply outstanding.

For these two days in Seinäjoki even weather was on our side with a clear sky and sun additionally boosting our moods and allowing our guests to see SO from its best side.

As said by the Lead Project Partner, Balázs Kiss, Tolna County Development Agency: *"South Ostrobothnia and in general, Finland is a leading country in achieving success through cooperation. As an overarching notion, we have observed during these very busy two days, bringing together local actors of the quadruple helix sometimes literally under one roof in the FRAMI building certainly contributes to a supportive atmosphere we have experienced the fruits of, and we can bring home as the main takeaway of the Study Visit"*



You can find all presentations shown during these two days under the links below:

- [Introduction to the Food Province of Finland](#) by Terhi Välisalo, Rural Women's Advisory Organisation (RWAO)
- [Food Innovation Networks: Food Team & Food Forum](#) by Elina Koivisto, Into Seinäjoki
- [Accelerating Growth and Internationalisation of Food SMEs](#) by Kåre Björkstrand, Viexpo Ltd
- [The label of the Food Province of Finland](#) by Kirsi Varila, RWAO
- [Research: Food, innovation and entrepreneurship in SO](#) by Silvia Gaiani, UH - Ruralia Institute
- [Frami Food Lab: Education and testing platform for food processing technologies](#) by Karri Kallio, SeAMK

- [Changing international business. Food From Finland Programme](#) by Esa Wrang, Business Finland.
- [Pop-up factory to boost new food product ideas](#) by Kaisa Penttilä, Foodwest
- [Food Business Challenge](#) by Soila Huhtaluhta, SeAMK
- [Local Food Fair. Bringing together producers and sellers](#) by Elina Huhta, SeAMK
- Ice cream made of goat milk and for dogs by Shirin Namiq, Voihan vuohi
- [High-quality Suhsu-Bowl meals for grocery stores](#) by Juhani Rahko, Juku Sushi Market
- [Fermentation: Black Garlic sauce](#) by Vuokko Yli-Kesäniemi. Pure Garden

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