



RURAL BEST 2009

### **Facts about the Swedish Rural Network:**

Is operating within the rural Development program 2007-2013 and will strengthen its implementation.

Gathers authorities and organizations involved in the development of the Swedish countryside.

Is a forum for exchange of information, experiences and methods between stakeholders, authorities and experts at local, national and international level.

Collects, analyzes and disseminates information about the situation on the countryside and the opportunities offered within the Rural Development Program

Is led by a steering group which allocates funds to activities within the network.

Is the Contact Point for Leader groups in Sweden.

All the texts in the booklet is written by Gunilla Sandberg.



*We are proud to present a part of all the dedication, the future hopes and the new ideas that are behind the next corner, if you only decide to take a look.*

Approximately 35 percent of Sweden's population live in rural areas and almost one quarter of the Swedish companies' total turnover comes from rural businesses. We are now also facing new challenges.

Issues related to climate, energy, water and biodiversity will become increasingly important in the future. Then the countryside, with its natural resources, will become even more in focus. It is important to see the rural potential, not only as an issue for those who live and work there, but as part of Sweden's future.

The Swedish Rural Development Program for 2007-2013 will promote growth, competitiveness, entrepreneurship and employment, environmental concern, and local commitment to rural development. The program supports rural development in a sustainable way - economically, ecologically and socially. There are many fine words to absorb. But what does the Rural Development Program mean, anyway? How will it affect the people and their surroundings? The Swedish Rural Network has the task of disseminating good practices that contributes to the achievement of the Rural Development Program objectives. In preparation for the 2009 Rural Gala the country's County Administrative Boards and LEADER Groups, have helped us to nominate the best examples of rural initiatives in their respective fields. This booklet presents the proposals that became the final nominees.

There are many good forces that together contributes to make the countryside thrive and flourish even more !

We are proud to present a part of all the dedication, the future hopes and the new ideas that are behind the next corner, if you only decide to take a look.

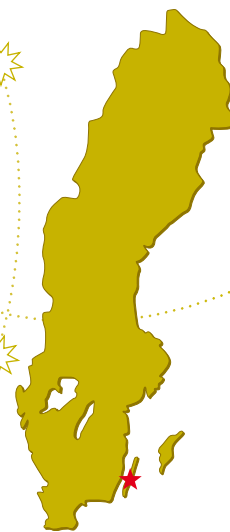
Peter Melin  
Chairman  
Rural Network Steering Group





Photo: Daniel Johansson

With the famous community spirit of Runsten in eastern Öland, the inhabitants have once again saved the school and shop from closure. Today, the commitment and desire for change that exist in the eleven villages that form the Runsten parish, has developed into a leader project. Through cooperation, new ideas and initiatives have contributed to the development of the area.



## Scrambled eggs engages the whole rural community

– The idea of the project Runstensandan is that we must be prepared, and instead of responding to threats work with opportunities, says the project manager Anna Sara Nilsson.

– We heard about the Leader and decided to form a group that would look at whether we could have any use for it, and how we might inspire others to initiate activities and projects in the community, she continues.

Said and done - Leader proved to be an opportunity to realize the thoughts and ideas that the group had. A summit arranged, which resulted in many ideas coming forward, including the proposal for the Easter festival, "The great scrambled eggs", a day full of events and activities which everybody in the area were engaged in. The festival, which attracted 7 000 visitors, was successful in several ways.

– We've got an energy rush in the district and we want the positive spirit to continue, says Anna Sara.

– Much of the work has been done with our own resources and the granted project funds have been used mainly for communica-

tions and marketing. Without money from the Leader, we had never had the impact that we now have, she continues.

Since the start in the summer of 2008, many ideas come up from several working groups in the community and many of the ideas are being realized in various projects. Runstensandan has also resulted in both associations and other groups helping each other and they are also working more across the generations borders than before. Municipalities around have their eyes on the commitment that now exists in the parish of Runsten and more residents have become aware that they actually have a say in the development of the local community. Perhaps it is also why the engagement has grown so strong in the Runsten parish.

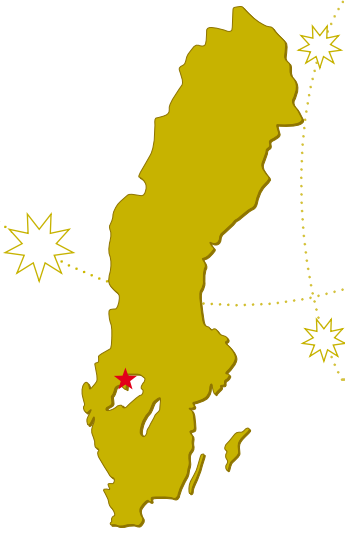
– The benefits of living and working in rural areas are probably that you can do a lot yourself, and have an impact on your own future. Just as we have done here, says AnnaSara.

*Want to know more? [www.runstenoland.se](http://www.runstenoland.se)*

**Project name:** Runstensandan | **Project owner:** Runstens Intresseförening | **Contact:** AnnaSara Nilsson

**Contact information:** 073-679 63 44 and annisn@hotmail.com, runstensandan@hotmail.com | **Project duration:** 2008-05-19 to 2009-08-31

**Funds from the Rural Development Program:** 37 868 SEK LAG:s public funding and 88 357 SEK in EU and governmental support



For a few days in August, rock n roll hits the small village of Segmon in Värmland. The only folk rock festival in Scandinavia is then being held. The festival has been a success and the local population contributes in many different ways to put Segmon on the map.

## See you in Segmon! The festival at the small place with the big heart

– The story of how Segmon succeeded in becoming the center of a Scandinavian folk rock music for a few days in August every year began with a typical Värmlandish crazy idea, says Lasse Högberg, with the special dialect of the area. He is one of the music festival's organizers. The idea was to let the almost-forgotten band stand and dancing hall (folkpark) with its Community Hall revived by a music festival. After several meetings, including the Segmon village group, an idea for a leader project was eventually formulated.

– We wanted to create a scene that brings folk rock together. It is the type of music we are passionate about, but the project has of course other dimensions that are important, not least the countryside of Segmon, says Lasse and his partner Karin Forsling. Lasse and Karin think the entire music and entertainment industry will grow and that it opens opportunities for other small business owners.

– Culture is a force for development, says Lasse, who has a past as a musician. The support and commitment to the festival has been great in the whole area. Many associations have been involved – all of them from sports clubs to "PRO", the National Association of

Retired and Elderly, – which has resulted in over one hundred non-profit employees during the festival. There has in Segmon, which is close to the town of Grums, for a long time been a pessimistic view of the future. The festival has shown that you can turn things around and that a small community in a rural area can be important to other people.

– In addition, we discovered that Segmon actually was centrally located," says Lasse. He was referring to the location along E18 and E45, and not very far from Oslo and Gothenburg.

Today there are tremendous opportunities to use digital technology to market themselves and reach visitors from other countries. Karin says proudly, and somewhat surprised that the first booking for the festival came from a boat on the North Sea! The project has made it possible to invest in facilities and create long lasting value, which makes it possible to organize the festival again without project financing within two years. See you in Segmon! is nowadays a slogan that has become a reality.

*Want to know more? [www.folkrock.nu](http://www.folkrock.nu) and [myspace.com / folkrocksegmon](http://myspace.com/folkrocksegmon)*

**Project name:** Musikfestival i Segmon Folk & Rock | **Project owner:** L'n'K Company and Folkets Hus i Segmon

**Contact:** Lasse Högberg and Karin Forsling | **Contact information:** L'n'K Company, Buda Gård 1, 660 40 Segmon, [grannykmusic@gmail.com](mailto:grannykmusic@gmail.com)

**Project duration:** 2008-03-04 to 2009-03-31 | **Funding from the Rural Development Program:** 89 400 SEK LAG:s public funding and 209 000 SEK in EU and governmental funding.





Photo: Daniel Johansson

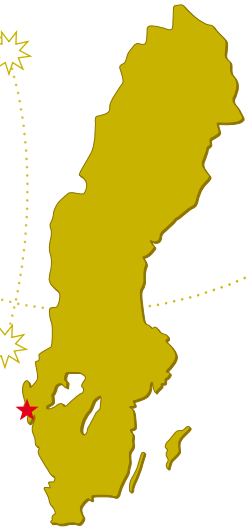
NOMINATED FOR THE LEADER OFF THE YEAR



Photo: Daniel Johansson



An extended tourist season means a lot of to the entrepreneurs and the local economy in Bohuslän. With a new leader cooperation about the West Coast's "Big Five", where shrimps, lobsters, mussels, oysters and salmon are included, they hope to establish the public holiday of Allhelgonahelgen as an opportunity for great dining experiences for everyone who likes the sea delicacies.



## Delicious seafood extends the tourist season in Bohuslän

– On the west coast different types of shellfish have special Academies of their own, but the mussels has for long been neglected, says Maria Kjellsson who works at Lysekil Tourist Office and is a main supporter of mussels.

– We were some people who wanted to change this and highlight the delicacy of mussels, she continues. Therefore the Mussel Academy were created, which is a non-profit organization in which producers, scientists and chefs are included. The Academy's work resulted, among other things, in a series of new products of mussels, but it also became the prelude to a fruitful collaboration with the other shellfish Academies. Thanks to money from The Rural Development Program people could meet and work together in a pilot study called the Shellfish trip.

– We all had an interest in highlighting a relatively untapped resource in the form of shellfish, and in extending the tourist season, says Maria.

– Shellfish is also best in autumn, and therefore we agreed to focus on the West Coast's "Big Five", where the salmon also is included. In rural areas there is a strong need to work together and now we have both the resources for cooperation and to promote ourselves,"she says cheerfully.

The collaboration has really taken off at good speed and a website is completed. Most of the work is now about how to develop various tourism packages for the autumn Holiday "Allhelgonahelgen" and how to market them during the summer to get tourists to return in the fall.

– It's fun when you can form an idea together with other people that everybody can gather around, and which contributes to the employment and a more alive area,"says Maria.

After a presentation of the project at the TUR-fair (the annual tourism fair) in Gothenburg last spring, tourist packages have been developed with offers of food, accommodation and activities for the weekend.

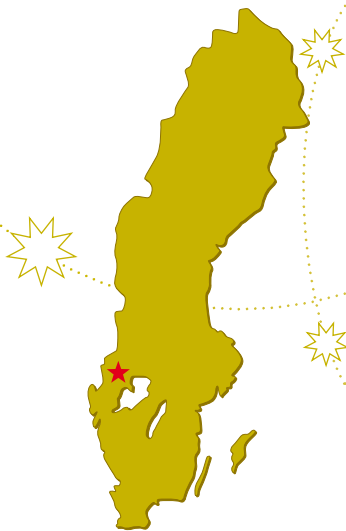
– Today the Allhelgonahelgen is not a big tourism weekend but I think it could be one in the long run. The foundation has been set, and therefore we can begin to charge the participating companies as early as next year. We have created a concept that hopefully will benefit to the local economy here in Bohuslän in the future, Maria says enthusiastically.

*Want to know more? [www.skaldjursresan.se](http://www.skaldjursresan.se)*

**Project name:** Skaldjursresan | **Project owner:** Lysekils Musselakademi | **Contact:** Maria Kjellsson

**Contact information:** 0706-40 04 48, c/o Lysekils Turistbyrå, Box 113, 453 23 Lysekil, maria.kjellsson@vardskapivast.se

**Project duration:** 2008-05-16 to 2009-02-28 | **Funding from the Rural Development Program:** 75 000 SEK of LAG:s public funding and 175 000 SEK in EU and governmental funding



That people meet in different contexts and talk to each other leads to development. It is known in Värmland Långserud. A newly built walking road connects the school with a residential care and has the function as a meeting place between the generations. The road has created opportunities for better collaboration between rural inhabitants, which have already given positive effects.

## The road to success and development is in Långserud

The Långserud development-team has been working with visions for the community for a long time. They have had both ups and downs in their activities. A few years ago a cooperatively driven residential care for the elderly was built and it has become something of a platform for development in the area.

– We who live here want our community to develop and survive,” says Siv Forsén, active in Långserud. Therefore, we work to improve the quality of life and the rural interaction,” she continues. Not far from the residential care is the village school located. Only an area of mud is separating the two buildings.

– We started thinking in terms of a connection,” says Siv. A road linking the school with the residential care, but not only physically but also as a meeting place across the generation borders. We also wanted to look for synergies by using resources of the two places better,” she continues. With help from the Rural Development Program, and engaging both the sportclub and the local farmers, the road became a reality. The project called Road of generations have strengthened the community and given its inhabitants hope for the future and demonstrated that you yourself can make a difference.

– Our motto has been to create meeting places for rural communities because we believe it leads to development, says Siv. Therefore, we also put a small gazebo in the middle of the road to further create room and opportunities for meetings,” she continues. So far, the road has been used frequently, not least in order to use the outdoor of both the school and the residential care.

– Along the walking road, both skiing competitions and quizzes have been arranged. The road, which also runs through a large garden, is used for walking and socializing by the people both living in and around the residential care, Smedgården. Its assembly hall has been better utilized, both by the school and other organizations and companies who have discovered this opportunity and now increased their reservations.

– The next step is that we’ll try to create a combined kitchen where we can cook both for the elderly and the schoolchildren,” says Siv enthusiastically. The road will then be the necessary distribution channel needed to deliver meals to the different buildings, she concludes.

**Project name:** Generationsvägen | **Project owner:** Smedgårdens ekonomisk förening | **Contact:** Siv Forsén

**Contact information:** 070-288 09 35 and siv.forsen@spray.se | **Project duration:** 2008-05-06 to 2009-03-31

**Funds from the Rural Development Program:** 75 767 SEK of LAG public funding and

176 651 SEK EU and governmental funding



Photo: Daniel Johansson

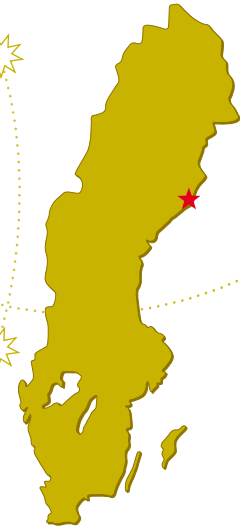


NOMINATED FOR THE RURAL ENTREPRENEUR OFF THE YEAR



Photo: Calle Bredberg

Although Erik and Kristina Johansson didn't have any experience in farming they decided to buy an old farm and develop different activities. Today, with the farm Hälje Gård outside of Umeå as a basic resource, they have created their very own concept.



## Hälje Farm has become its own brand

– This journey has been quite an experience. If you never have been a farmer I think you should test it, says Erik.

During the ten years that have passed the farm has evolved from a traditional dairy farm into a unique, experience-based activity for visitors. The animals living at the farm are the prerequisite for the many different activities that are currently conducted mainly within three areas: small-scale production and sale of food, biodiversity and events and adventure tours. The farm shop has everything from beef and sheep meat to locally produced sausages, unleavened bread, dairy products and sheepskins. On the farm there are opportunities to organize private parties and corporate events tailored according to the customers requirements. Everything is spiced with humour and adapted to suit families with children, the public and businesses from the surrounding rural areas as well as the towns and cities.

On the private birthday parties much can happen. The former Swedish champion in boxing, Erik Johansson, may for example show up and let the anniversary go a few rounds. Everything adapted to what the anniversary wants and can stand.

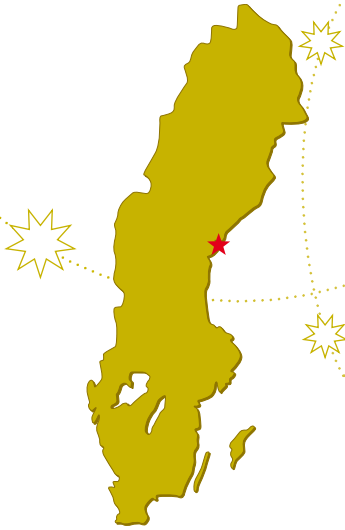
– Our idea is to offer unique experiences and a unique cuisine in a beautiful environment, summarizes Erik Johansson.

In January this year the construction of the new venture with a restaurant, shop and conference facilities was finished, thanks to the support from the Rural Development Program.

Today, the farm production stands for about half of the sales, and activities and events for nearly one quarter. With the new extension hopefully the turnover from this branch of the business will be doubled within a few years. The farm has more animals than the land can support. Therefore, grazing animals are rented out to other landowners, something that contributes to biodiversity in the neighbourhood. Sheep are hired by the Umeå municipality which becomes a tourist attraction, especially in the spring, when they are let out at the pastures to graze!

The owners' ability of new thinking has helped to make Hälje Gård well-known. The name of the farm has become a concept, its very own trademark.

*Want to know more? [www.haljegard.nu](http://www.haljegard.nu)*



After a couple of years in Stockholm, Lars Höglund, decided to move home to Stigsjö in Ångermanland and become self-employed. Today he is one of the biggest beekeepers in Sweden. Thanks to the Rural Development Program Lars was able to move from backyard farming to professional beekeeping with an output of thirty tonnes of honey per year.

## From part time hobby in the city to full-fledged business in the countryside

– The Rural Development Program has been crucial for my efforts to become a professional beekeeper, says Lars. My greatest achievement so far has been to gain the County Administrative Board's confidence in what I want to achieve. Without the grants for investments it would not have been possible to become a beekeeper, he continues.

In 20 years, Lars had beekeeping as a hobby, but after some years in Stockholm he got the idea of moving back to Stigsjö again.

– I had seen the possibilities of beekeeping and had some thoughts of how I wanted to develop the business, says Lars.

It meant a lot of calculations and planning to find a profitable way to build the business. But in the summer of 2007 he left Stockholm for Stigsjö. Today there are over 700 beehives in the company, an amount which is possible to manage only thanks to the technical equipment and by taking advantage of the northern Swedish flora.

– There is also a lot of planning behind it all, says Lars. The logistics and transports must become as efficient as possible to get the business to work. You have to cut down the number of visits to

the hives and include as much attendance as possible in every visit, he says.

There is no doubt about Lars' engagement. He talks enthusiastically about the advantages of beekeeping. The hives are distributed over a land area of 30 000 hectares and the farmers close by may now expect significantly higher yields due to much better pollination. Such extensive activities as Lars now develops, will of course have positive impacts in the rural area of Stigsjö in several ways. Extra staff will be needed because the beekeeping in particular has a very intense workload during the summer months. Lars acknowledges that he will not only use seasonally employed workers.

– In a business you need to make purchases which will support other local entrepreneurs, he says. It will be necessary to contract craftsmen and construction workers. So my business will have a positive effect on the local economy, he notes.

*Want to know more? [www.mittbi.se](http://www.mittbi.se)*

**Name of the company:** MittBi | **Contact:** Lars Höglund

**Contact information:** [lars.hoglund@mittbi.se](mailto:lars.hoglund@mittbi.se), 076-8471086, Stigsjö, Landtjärn 124, 87192 Härnösand | **Project duration:** 2006-03-21 till 2009-12-30

**Funds from the Rural Development Program:** Investment 1 221 356 SEK and start up aid SEK 200 000



NOMINATED FOR THE RURAL ENTREPRENEUR OFF THE YEAR



Photo: Daniel Johansson

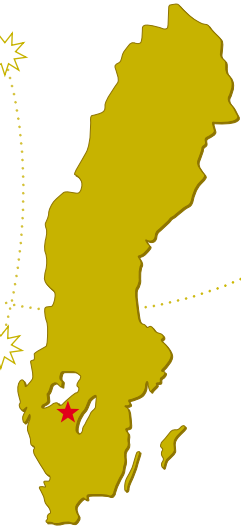
NOMINATED FOR THE RURAL ENTREPRENEUR OFF THE YEAR



Photo: Daniel Johansson



Each spring thousands of people visit the lake Hornborgarsjön to take part of the nature scenery, especially the thousands of cranes dancing before flying north. For some years now a visit to Löfwings Ateljé & konstcafé (The Löwing Art Café) is on the wish list for many of the visitors. Göran and Linda Löfwing have in harmony with the surrounding nature built up a business in which art and food is in focus.



## In the countryside you can get a holistic experience

Already at the age of twelve Göran had his first art exhibition. The money he earned on his art, he invested in a small guest house or just a small hut. The guest house was used both as a studio and as a showroom. Many years later, Göran and his wife Linda have built up an extensive business related to arts and dining experiences. This autumn is the inauguration of the newly built premises, which in addition to studio and exhibition hall also includes the restaurant, café, shop and conference facilities with a total area of 1 000 square meters. The expansion has been partly funded by the Rural Development Program.

– We would not dare to invest like this without support from the Rural Development Program, says Göran. Now we have a really good and nice facility which we are very proud of, he says.

There are many who want to visit Löfwings Ateljé & konstcafé. Before the expansion, the facility could not accommodate all who wanted to come. Now it is possible to increase the number of visits up to 100 000 per year. One of the reasons for its success lies in the fact they are situated in a rural area.

– Here we work with the entirety. We offer our guests to experience art in a beautiful natural environment and we also serve good food, making the trip to something holistic. You can not build this combination anywhere else, says Göran. The nature of Sweden and the rural areas has a huge potential for tourism. Once the Europeans understand the assets of our unique nature, tourism will be the thing.

Göran and Linda at the Löfwings Ateljé & konstcafé will continue to work with tourism.

– I feel we have made the right decision. But it is important that other activities around the neighbourhood develop and investments continue in the area. It contributes to the whole area and makes the experience even more complete for the visitors, concludes Göran Löfwing.

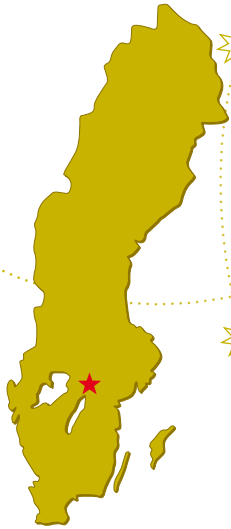
*Want to know more? [www.lofwings.se](http://www.lofwings.se)*

**Name of the company:** Löfwings Ateljé & konstcafé | **Contact:** Göran and Linda Löfwing

**Contact information:** Hornborga Persberg, 521 98 Broddetorp, 0500-491403, [info@lofwings.se](mailto:info@lofwings.se) | **Project duration:** 2008-09-26 to 2010-12-31

**Funds from the Rural Development Program:** 492 000 SEK for the promotion of tourism





Förgrömmade unge! (“You naughty little blighter”) This well-known expression has been yelled many times over the family Gilles courtyard in Lerbäck outside Örebro. For several years now, children’s theater is played here during the summertime.

It has beautiful surroundings with scenery of cattle fields and agricultural landscape. Theater together with great food and this nature, creates an experience that many have longed for.

## The theater in the countryside, an experience you will never forget

Jenny and Johan Gille have a history in the world of theater and worked for several years at the tourist attraction Astrid Lindgren’s World. But after several years of commuting to Vimmerby every summer, the family decided that they would rather invest in a theater back home at the farm in Lerbäck.

– We started with high ambitions from the beginning, says John, so we played Rasmus på Luffen in the summer of 2004. A total of 5 000 people saw the show. Then we realized that there was a need for this kind of entertainment and we had a market, he continues.

Since then both Emil i Lönneberga and Robin Hood has been played in the summertime and in the wintertime some detective mystery has been played at the small local hotel in the village in Lerbäck. The business grew and demanded more space.

– We had reached a point where we could not receive as many people as we wanted, says Johan. Then we decided to rebuild an extension at the farm’s granary into a theater with facilities to also serve food, he continues.

With the help of funds from the Rural Development Program the installation was completed in October last year.

– The money has meant a lot to us. We couldn’t have implemented this without the support, says Johan. The investment has been substantial and it was easier to go to the bank after we received the funds granted by the County Administration Board. This means that we don’t have to think about whether we could continue with our activities or not and instead focus on the future, he says.

“Dare to invest” is their appeal to anyone thinking of starting a business in rural areas.

– We would never have succeeded if we were not in this beautiful environment, says Johan firmly. It gives a different atmosphere and experience to visit the theater and in combination with good food, the experience gets to a higher dimension, he concludes.

*Want to know more? [www.lerbacksteater.se](http://www.lerbacksteater.se)*

**Name of the company:** Lerbäck’s Teater AB | **Contact:** Johan and Jenny Gille

**Contact information:** Lerbäck’s Gästgivaregård 315, 694 96 Åsbro, 0583-40402 | **Project duration:** 2007-11-30 to 2008-11-01

**Funds from the Rural Development Program:** 400 000 SEK for business development in the microenterprises

NOMINATED FOR THE RURAL ENTREPRENEUR OFF THE YEAR



Photo: Daniel Johansson

NOMINATED FOR THE RURAL PROJECT OFF THE YEAR

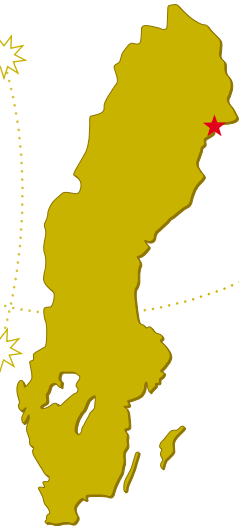


Photo: Eva Carlsson



Farmers are increasingly developing a range of new activities in order to survive as entrepreneurs in rural areas. The project Grön Framtidsgård helped individual farmers to realize their ideas.

A successful concept has already resulted in some 50 new business activities primarily in the areas of energy, tourism and construction.



## With individual counselling more farmers dare to invest in new activities

– There was a positive spirit here in Norrbotten and Västerbotten among farmers, says Harrieth Andersson, project manager at the Farmers Union, LRF Västerbotten. We wanted to make something of it and strengthen the driving force in rural areas, she continues.

– LRF could not do it without money from the Rural Development Program, says Harrieth. The fact that the municipalities have been co-financiers of the project has also been a strength, she says. Traditional farmers have for a long time been invisible as a business category for the municipalities. They have almost had no contact with the municipality before, but when more and more farmers are investing in complementary activities it is important that they participate in the new business networks and here the municipality is a major part, she continues.

The project mainly focuses on three development areas: i.e. tourism, energy and construction. They were selected from a survey among LRF's members which pointed out the business areas interesting to develop for the future.

– Me and my colleagues have the best job you can think of, says

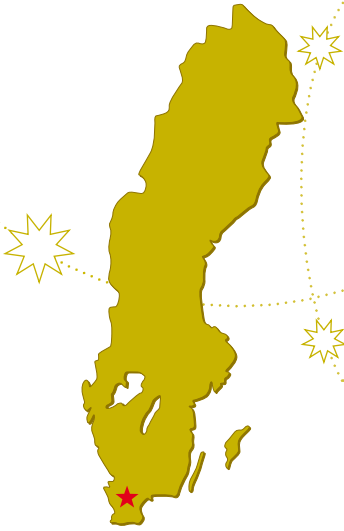
Harrieth. We work individually visiting every farmer with ideas for development and diversification. The needs identified for their business guides the activities and initiatives, she continues.

Harrieth thinks Norrbotten and Västerbotten has plenty of the type of resources which are in demand now and for the future and an important task is to ensure that all actors gets a piece of the pie.

– Sometimes you can see our work as something of a revolutionary idea, says Harrieth. Things are most of the time drawn towards the centre, but in our work we support those who go against the tide instead, she continues. Everyone who works with land and forest is of course tied to where they live and want to stay.

The future looks quite bright and the quest of what the countryside has to offer is increasing even more than before. Project Grön Framtidsgård reflects this trend with some fifty new businesses in rural areas.

*Want to know more? [www.lrf.se/Regioner/Vasterbotten/Gron-Framtidsgard/](http://www.lrf.se/Regioner/Vasterbotten/Gron-Framtidsgard/)*



Research shows that human beings feel better in contact with the nature and wilderness. To take advantage of the rural benefits (access to nature) while reducing human suffering was a corner stone in the project Green Rehabilitation. The results of the project show that rural life is good for your health and that more people should be allowed to stay more often in habitats with animals and plants.

## Living in the countryside is good for your health

Rural areas have great potential to develop different types of activities and the type of environment found there can never be recreated in the city. In Skåne, the Farmers Union, LRF, with two rural entrepreneurs and the Regional authority of Skåne, through Skurups medical center, focused on a different form of activity than ordinary medical care, green rehabilitation, which is included in the concept of Social Farming.

– Actually it's not surprising that we feel good in a rural environment, says Ewa-Marie Rellman, business coach at LRF. For busy people, it is good to slow down and find natural environments where the pace is different, she continues.

The project is due to the activity conducted for several years at the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences in Alnarp. LRF in southern Sweden found the activities and results from Alnarp interesting to develop further and a partnership with the Regional authority of Skåne and the Primary Health Care was initiated. The project was realized with the help of funds from the Rural Development Program.

– The cooperation has really worked well and green rehabilitation can be seen as a complement to the established health care, says Ewa-

Marie. There are many advantages, of which of course reducing human suffering is the most important thing, she continues.

In the project a selected group of patients, as a complement to the regular care, has been offered possibilities to spend twelve hours a week with nature and animals on farms which are connected to the project.

– The idea was that the project would lay the foundation to a concept for similar efforts elsewhere, says Ewa-Marie. But while the project has been going on the rehabilitation guarantee (the rehabilitation financed by the public social security) has changed. More validated research in this area is needed for patients to be offered this form of green rehabilitation, says Ewa-Marie.

LRF is now trying to initiate further research in this area to increase the possibilities to develop this kind of activity as a business for the rural entrepreneurs.

– It is an important activity. We have been able to see that all our participants in the project have made progress, says Ewa-Marie proudly.

**Project name:** Green Rehabilitation | **Project owner:** LRF Skåne | **Contact:** Ewa-Marie Rellman

**Contact information:** [ewa.marie.rellman@lrf.se](mailto:ewa.marie.rellman@lrf.se) | **Project duration:** 2007-08-29 to 2010-12-31

**Funds from the Rural Development Program:** 712 600 SEK for diversification into non-agricultural activities

NOMINATED FOR THE RURAL PROJECT OFF THE YEAR



Photo: Daniel Johansson

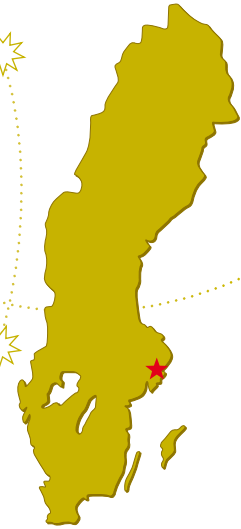


NOMINATED FOR THE RURAL PROJECT OFF THE YEAR



Photo: Daniel Johansson

To survive as an entrepreneur in the archipelago's of Sweden the tourism industry is essential despite the short season. But just a few years ago it was not possible to book any activities through the web. The project Öppen Skärgård - året om (Open archipelago – all year around) is now working to make the archipelago more accessible and viable for both residents and visitors.



## The archipelago will be accessible to visitors all year around

– We want to make the archipelago more accessible to everyone, says Bisse Alm, project manager. The people in the archipelago have always been forced to be entrepreneurial. That is a recourse and driving force we want to use, she continues.

Öppen Skärgård - året om has worked effectively in several years to open the archipelago for visitors. In just a year and a half, the number of entrepreneurs who are members in the project has increased from 30 to 215. The fundings from the Rural Development Program have been crucial for the activity. This fundings have allowed us to arrange a lot of courses and training programs for entrepreneurs and packaging of various tourism and activity offers for visitors. Today, the project has several employees and a website is now up and running as well as a call center. Everything is designed to make it easier for visitors who want to visit the archipelago.

But to welcome more visitors to the archipelago is of course a work based on humility to the nature's vulnerability. The values in the archipelago must at the same time be preserved. It is an experience and knowledge gained in the project. Those experiences are

now being spread to other regions with their own archipelago, such as Västmanland and Norrbotten.

– I believe that through this project a foundation for survival in the archipelago was created, says Bisse.

There is such a potential, not least among foreign visitors, she continues. After this year's Volvo Ocean Race, I was asked by a captain's how we in Sweden managed to hide the most beautiful archipelago he had ever seen during 30 years of sailing around the world, she says enthusiastically.

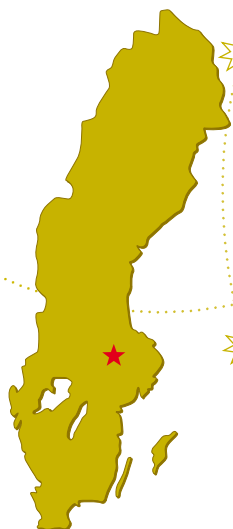
A living archipelago is an archipelago that is not only alive during the summertime and therefor this project's primary goal was to increase the number of businesses that are open year round. The efforts have already paid off. Bisse says that many companies have extended their season and the number of facilities that were open during their special EELD-events in October last year increased from two to fourteen. They were also fully booked, which of course is especially gratifying.

*Want to know more? [www.visitskargarden.se](http://www.visitskargarden.se) and [www.oppenskargard.se](http://www.oppenskargard.se)*

**Project name:** Open archipelago – all year around | **Project owner:** Öppen Skärgård Ekonomisk förening | **Contact:** Bisse Alm

**Contact information:** 070-750 10 10, [bisse@visitskargarden.se](mailto:bisse@visitskargarden.se) | **Project duration:** 2008-01-02 to 2009-01-08

**Funds from the Rural Development Program:** 750 000 SEK for the promotion of tourism



Svartådalens ekonomiska förening has for a long time been active in a number of projects and initiatives to develop their rural area. Now they want to increase the availability and use of locally produced food. It has resulted in a number of new manufacturers in different product areas and they have begun to deliver both to the local store and to restaurants in the neighbourhood.

## Locally produced is popular in Svartå dalen

– To invest in local food production is very popular right now, it is a good timing for those ideas, says the project manager Lisa Hallin. Sala Municipality has reintroduced local preparation kitchens in rural areas, and our local shop, which now has a locally manufactured products, is booming while previously it was closed, she continues.

Efforts to increase access to and use of locally produced food in Svartå dalen are done through a project funded by the Rural Development Program. Project funding has made it possible to invest in this field and will hopefully lead to more jobs at the end.

– The project's objective is to develop new and existing activities that contribute to a general positive development of the countryside in the long run, says Lisa. It is important that the entire food production chain and food consumption form a sustainable system, she continues.

To obtain more local producers in the area, the project launched new activities and organized courses in, for example gardening. A more long-term focus is the cooperation with the Secondary upper School for Management of Natural Resources so the students can

see the possibilities of local food production and perhaps invest in it after school.

An important prerequisite to obtain more producers is to have a good infrastructure, both in the establishing phase as well as for marketing. Therefore the project has, among other things, held seminars for local meat, small scale slaughter houses and collaborated with others around issues related to food processing.

– To facilitate the marketing of products, we have formed a producers network which makes it easier for shops and restaurants to find them and get in touch, says Lisa.

There are many benefits of locally produced food - ecological as well as economical. For example, the transports are reduced if the marketing is local.

– I believe that for rural survival, the local economy must be the engine of progress, says Lisa. It also generates revenue for the municipality in form of taxes if more manufacturers establish their businesses and sell their products in the neighbourhood, she notes.

*Want to know more? [www.svartadalen.nu](http://www.svartadalen.nu)*

**Project name:** Local Food in Svartå dalen, LoMiS | **Project owner:** Svartådalens Bygdeutveckling Ek. För. | **Contact:** Lisa Hallin

**Contact information:** Lisa@svartadalen.nu, 070-298 51 59, Salbohedsvägen 1, 730 70 Västerfärnebo | **Project duration:** 2007-05-10 to 2010-12-31

**Funds from the Rural Development Program:** 1 161 400 SEK for the promotion of tourism





Photo: Daniel Johansson

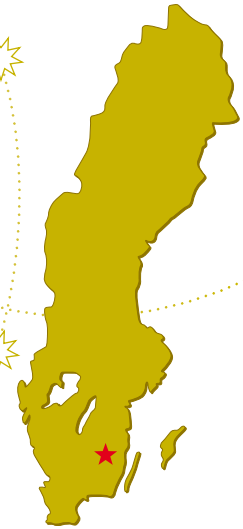


NOMINATED FOR THE ENVIRONMENTAL EFFORT OFF THE YEAR



Photo: Stefan Andersson

The rural landscape and image is changing. Today, the old hay meadows have become overgrown and stone walls and wooden fences, enclosing the fields, have fallen. In Småland, Gunnar Bylow have for several years been working to restore parts of the old cultural landscape. A work that resulted in several kilometres newly built fence in the areas around Alstermo.



## Fences reset the cultural landscape of Småland

– When I was younger I thought it was really boring to help my father to build fences, remembers Gunnar.

But that was then. He is now retired and he has a keen interest in landscape and our heritage.

– At the museum there are a lot of things left from the past, says Gunnar. But the old landscape with hay meadows and fences can not be kept and shown indoors. And therefore I think it is very important to try to recreate what we can before it's too late, he continues.

Gunnar's great commitment and expertise in the field has resulted in several kilometres of wooden fence, which is partly financed by the Rural Development Program. Fences are built after a model that have been common in the neighbourhood called "ättahotgårds gård". The wood that is used has to be 70-year-old slow growing spruce with stakes of juniper and with very much of the core wood for the strength. This type of wood is not always so easy to find nowadays.

– The support for land management and environmental protec-

tion from the Rural Development Program is needed. It helps to preserve the cultural landscape, says Gunnar. Without that kind of support, these settings will not persist in the future. I think it is important to preserve the historical cultural landscape for the next generations. But it requires someone to pay for the management of the landscape. It was a necessity before to get fodder for the animals resulting in a cultural landscape. It has changed now and without the animals someone else has to do the job, says Gunnar.

Gunnar himself has contributed a lot to restore the landscape and also encouraged others to similar efforts. He has made more than nineteen kilometres of fence during the years and a few hectares of grassland, which regained its former flora with the help of Gunnar's scythe.

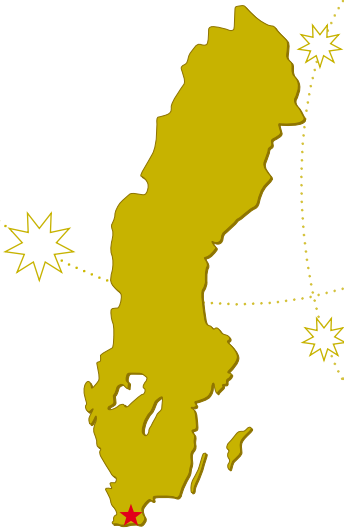
– When we started scything the meadow a few years ago there were about twenty specimens of the orchid Sankte Pers Nycklar, says Gunnar. But after a few years of scything there are now several thousand of them, so surely you can do a lot with very little money, he concludes satisfied.

**Project name:** Reconstruction of wooden fences | **Project owner:** Gunnar Bylow | **Contact:** Gunnar Bylow

**Contact information:** Botillabo Norragården 4, 360 75 Alstermo, 073-0713591 | **Project duration:** 2008-02-27 to 2009-01-27

**Funds from the Rural Development Program:** 174 690 for environmental inventories





The only organic chicken production in Sweden is located in Skåne. For over ten years Birgitta and her husband Claes have run the company Bosarpsyckling. Many people are curious about the company and the interest in organic food is steadily increasing.

Last year the company received 34 study groups who wanted to learn more about organic chicken production.

## Organic chicken might be a new export commodity for Sweden

– It's a bit special to be an entrepreneur in rural areas, says Bridget. We are perhaps a little nicer and let people get closer to us than entrepreneurs do in town. We are maybe more open-minded in the countryside, which is charming but on the other hand you are always accessible and never totally of duty.

Today the products of Bosarpsyckling are sold primarily through the food chain COOP and to restaurants even if the local store in Blentarp have it as well. The interest in organic production is big. After an article in the customer magazine Mersmak,, there where many consumers who contacted the company.

– We have a different product and the chicken has a different quality. It is much larger and has longer fibres, which gives it a different chewing resistance, says Bridget.

In Sweden, the chicken industry have for a long time been dominated by one major player. It makes it harder for smaller and more niche-oriented companies to get around.

– I think we must return to more of tiny and small scale companies, says Bridget. More diversity in the industry would actually bene-

fit all producers, she says firmly. I regret that we did not initially get our own slaughter house and package facility. It would make us more independent than we are today, she continues.

They have used the money from the Rural Development Program to expand their production and the company. They have built six new production houses and a baby barn for the smallest chicken. Birgitta thinks that the status must be increased throughout the industry and consumers need to get more information about the production.

There are many things that make it very complicated to be an organic chicken producer in Sweden, but there are also many opportunities for those who wish to invest.

– Sweden has all the qualification to be a major exporter of organic quality chicken, says Bridget. We have plenty of space, clean air and water and also salmonella-free products, she says. Denmark does not have any of these conditions, but nevertheless they are ahead of us and more advanced in organic food production, she says indignantly.

*Want to know more? [www.bosarpsyckling.se](http://www.bosarpsyckling.se)*

**Name of the company** Bosarpsyckling | **Contact:** Birgitta and Claes Alwén

**Contact information:** Bosarp Gärd, 270 35 Blentarp, +46 416-244 00 | **Project duration:** 2008-09-19 to 2009-12-31

**Funds from the Rural Development Program:** SEK 300 000 for farm modernization

NOMINATED FOR THE ENVIRONMENTAL EFFORT OF THE YEAR



Photo: Lina Eriksson



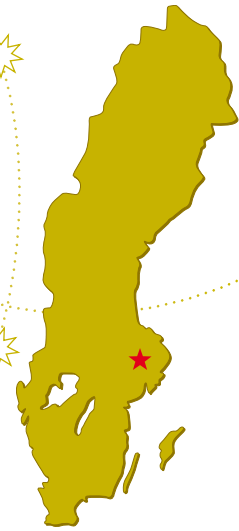
NOMINATED FOR THE ENVIRONMENTAL EFFORT OFF THE YEAR



Photo: Karl-Erik Danielsson



Tommy Öhman has been working with organic food production since 1996 and may well be regarded as something of a veteran in the industry. Now, thirteen years later, Tommy is included along with some forty other KRAV-certified meat producers in the cooperative society Upplandsbonden who now work together to find new channels to sell their products.



## Organic meat gives the farmers in Uppland hope for the future

Tommy was one of the forces behind the development of the cooperative enterprise Upplandsbonden. A few years ago, they applied for support from the Rural Development Program to develop their business and get resources for marketing.

– The money has been crucial for us, says Tommy. It is thanks to them we are up and running.

Today the association consists of about forty farmers who mainly produce ecologically and KRAV-certified meat of lamb, pork and beef. From the beginning the idea was that producers with other types of products would be included in the association.

– But there are few vegetable growers here so we concentrated in meat production instead, says Tommy. Our investment is a prerequisite for farmers to continue with their production around here.

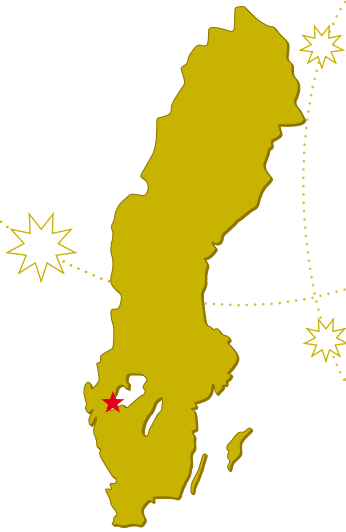
He says proudly that the price the enterprise can pay to its members is today ten crowns higher per kilo meat than the ordinary slaughter houses do. To achieve this it is crucial to find new sales channels, which in turn allows the producers to continue their activities.

– Good partners is important and to find long term solutions, says Tommy. Upplandsbonden has found several good partners. We can inspire each other and develop the enterprise further. The important thing is that anyone can join and also make money. It is also important that it's fun, of course, he says.

The association has been working successfully and since the start four years ago the turnover has increased from 600 000 to around five million SEK.

Tommy's driving force is, as for many committed people, to be involved and make a difference.

– You contribute to a different society. The culture and the human relations are a bit different in the countryside than in the town, says Tommy. I want to be involved and contribute to a society that is not so dependent on external sources. It is in that kind of society people and culture can grow. I am happy to be a part of and make a difference in the small context, he concludes.



By thinking in new ways Brålanda is on its way to achieve efficiency in the biogas process. In the near future there will be an annual production of fuel for 250 cars, 30 trucks and 30 buses from the eighteen farms cooperating in the project. The pride of the district can not be mistaken.

## Brålanda biogas venture is the pride of the community

The background to why biogas now is so popular and interesting is of course the unused energy in the manure, which many are interested in. But you need large volumes of manure to make it profitable.

Therefore, the manure is often transported from farms to large biogas plants, until now, you may add. The project Biogas Brålanda produces biogas directly at each farm to avoid unnecessary transports.

– We thought the other way around, says Peter Eriksson, project leader for Biogas Brålanda. If we make the process more efficient and transport only the gas we are avoiding costly and environmentally demanding shipments of manure, he continues. This is an innovation and a brand new system, which means that many different skills and competences have to be involved in the project.

– The project is a great collaboration, says Karin Stenlund, project coordinator at Innovatum Technology Park. Among those involved in the project you find of course Biogas cooperative society in which the farmers are members but also the Vänersborg and Mellerud municipalities, companies delivering the biogas plants to the farms, the

farmers Union LRF, Trollhättan Energy and Lantmännen. There are both large and small partners, which also is needed to succeed in this. The technology already exists but nobody has put it together like this before, she says.

Karin believes that the support from the Rural Development Program was vital to launch such an extensive project. A very important part of the project focused on how the farmers could be involved throughout the whole production process.

– That way the rural entrepreneurs will make money all the way in the business chain. That is how rural development is created, says Karin.

The interest in the project has been great and this fall the first gas delivery will be made.

– It will increase the interest further, says Karin. The whiskey industry in Scotland follows our project. We are also thinking of how to manage this and how to be able to receive visitors interested in the technology, she concludes.

*Want to know more? [www.innovatum.se](http://www.innovatum.se)*

NOMINATED FOR THE ENVIRONMENTAL EFFORT OF THE YEAR



Photo: Sven Magnusson



NOMINATED FOR THE INTEGRATION EFFORT OFF THE YEAR



Photo: Maria Bremefors

Already during her studies to be a gardener Maria Bremefors thought of how foreign-born (or “New-Swedes”) could learn more about Swedish food products and how to grow them. With funding from the Rural Development Program, her thoughts a few years later became reality in the project Integration and cultivation, where both the participants and other local inhabitants got a taste for more of the locally grown products.



## Locally grown and integration wets the appetite

– When Vuxenskolan and VIF, vänskap och integrationsföreningen i Ljusdal, contacted me and asked if I wanted to participate in their project, I was of course happy, Maria remembers.

The project Integration and cultivation has many dimensions but primarily it is most about creating a dialogue between the local inhabitants and the refugees and immigrants who live in the municipality.

– I wanted to transfer the knowledge and interest in the soil and cultivation of the participants to the Swedish conditions, but besides that, it was important to help them make their own contacts in the business field of cultivation and food production. We therefore involved external lecturers in the teaching and we made field trips to the local growers, says Maria.

This format resulted in that several of the participants after the end of the project were hired by local producers as seasonal workers, which of course is encouraging. Another important part of the project has been the practical part where the participants themselves had to plan, construct and operate a garden that was made available by the municipality. In the fall, when it was time to harvest, an attempt to

get a local market in Ljusdal had just begun. Maria immediately saw the opportunity to further strengthen the dialogue and meeting with local people and decided that the products that had been cultivated in the project would be sold at the market. It all went better than expected, and both Maria and the participants were amazed by the interest in locally grown products.

– To see old native Ljusdal inhabitants queue at the marketplace to buy potatoes by the participants in the project felt great in many ways, says Maria.

The countryside is a good arena for the integration, even if ignorance about new cultures is more pronounced. Maria believes that meetings between people are easier faster and more intimate in a rural setting, which has contributed much to the success of the project.

– We have moved forward with our ideas and experiences and tied the food businesses and trade together in a follow-up project.

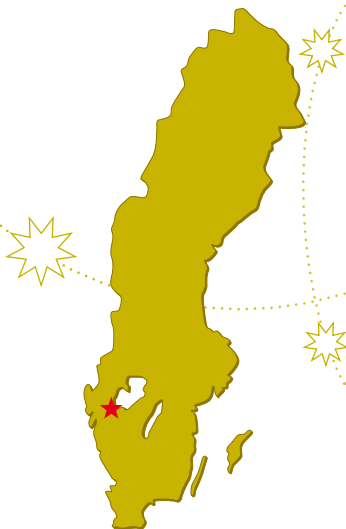
But now, the focus will be on the cultivation and entrepreneurship so mentoring will therefore have a more prominent role, reveals Maria.

*Want to know more? [www.bremefors.se](http://www.bremefors.se)*

**Project name:** Integration and cultivation | **Project owner:** Studieförbundet Vuxenskolan | **Contact:** Maria Bremefors

**Contact information:** [maria@bremefors.se](mailto:maria@bremefors.se) och 070-66 390 70 | **Project duration:** 2008-01-31 to 2008-11-16

**Funds from the Rural Development Program:** 79 743 SEK for skills, knowledge and information dissemination



The countryside and the green industries have to become better at harnessing the skills and entrepreneurship that foreign people have to offer. It is the basic idea of project Green integration in rural areas, which aims to create an arena for collaboration to achieve the vision of a sustainable society from an ecological and economical and above all a social perspective.

## Green integration creates sustainable rural communities

– Without Sanna, it would be impossible. She is one of the success factors, says Marianne Barrljung, Project Manager at The Rural Economy and Agricultural Society West.(HUSH)

Sanna Radhi, who originally comes from Iraq, is an agronomist and works for several years along with Marianne in the project Green integration in rural areas. Marianne's own interest for the integration depends on how closely she could follow her daughter's experiences as immigrant (in Australia) and the difficulties she has encountered in her new homeland.

– But I see of course the power there is if we succeed to integrate the immigrants, says Marianne. It saw it already eight years ago and then began to think about how we could work more with these issues in rural areas, she says.

It was though not the right time to discuss these issues and the interest was low, but thanks to the Rural Development Program, Marianne is now able to transform her thoughts into action.

– My main task in this project is to form arenas for cooperation between the private, voluntary and public sectors in the society, the-

reby creating opportunities for the immigrant population to discover the countryside and the green business sector, says Marianne.

A network was built up to achieve this. This includes hundreds of key persons who in various ways work to raise the issue of integration. The work has also focused on educating 36 “immigrant guides” and cooperate with forty entrepreneurs in order to offer practical training .

– The project can be used as a wake-up call, says Marianne. It has in a way multiplied or been copied and inspired others to similar activities and initiatives in the region.

For the rural areas there are many benefits in a better integration, particularly through access to new knowledge and skills. But ultimately it is mainly about people's welfare and participation in a democratic society.

– You get a better life if you are in a context in which you thrive and flourish and where the resources of each individual can be used, Marianne concludes.

*Vill du veta mer? [www.hush.se/öpn](http://www.hush.se/öpn)*

**Project name:** Green integration in rural areas | **Project owner:** Hushållningssällskapet Väst | **Contact:** Marianne Barrljung

**Contact information:** marianne.barrljung@hush.se och 0521-7255 45 | **Project duration:** 2007-03-21 to 2009-09-30

**Funds from the Rural Development Program:** 1 322 260 SEK for the renewal and development of villages



NOMINATED FOR THE INTEGRATION EFFORT OFF THE YEAR



Photo: Christina Milén Jacobsson

NOMINATED FOR THE GENDER EQUALITY EFFORT OFF THE YEAR



Photo: Inger Ljung, Oskar Ljung



A sick leave was the turning point for teacher Inger Ljung. Then she decided to try something completely different. Today she runs a successful company called Bo & Kajak in Öregrund.

The company is growing and after just three years in business she is like a duck to water.



## The blackboard was exchanged for kayak rentals and an archipelago life

The thought of a business with cottages and kayaks for rent almost came by accident for Inger. A guest house was built on the family farm, which became the first part of the business concept - to offer room for rent in the archipelago. Inger then quickly bought a few kayaks for rental to offer their guests some sort of activity. Today, the company has about 25 kayaks and is capable of offer for rent or convey about hundred tourist beds. An important part of the company's starting process is the support or mentorship Inger has got from a former tourism entrepreneur and teacher.

– Eventually I also bought both more kayaks and bikes from him, says Inger. The mentoring he has given me meant a lot.

Another thing that Inger points out as important for dare to take the step to denounce a permanent employment as a teacher and pursue the idea of running her own company has been the tourism meetings arranged by Osthamar municipality. In those meetings she has gathered inspiration, courage and a network of contacts in the tourism business. Being situated in a rural area has also been a prerequisite for her success and courage to take the step to be an entrepreneur.

– Now I could start in a small scale in the garage and kitchen which meant that it wasn't that expensive and risky, says Inger. As a former teacher I am already relatively well known in the community, which of course makes it easier to establish contacts with the municipality.

There are a lot of activities in the company of Bo & Kajak. This spring the storage facilities were expanded to give space for all the kayaks and a gazebo was built. Now it is possible to socialize in that pavilion before and after the kayak tours. A part of the investment was financed with funding from the Rural Development Program.

– The support has enabled me to invest more and in that way make the company profitable quicker, says Inger. But the important thing is not the money but the knowledge that somebody believes in me and my business, says Inger, not without pride in her voice.

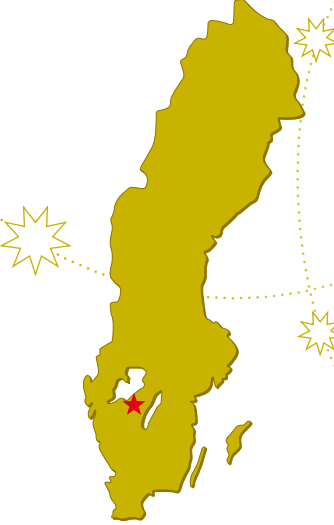
*Want to know more? [www.bokajak.se](http://www.bokajak.se)*

**Name of the company:** Bo & Kajak | **Contact:** Inger Ljung

**Contact information:** Lugnetvägen 1, 742 43 Öregrund, bokajak@oregrund.nu | **Project duration:** 2007-01-30 to 2009-03-31

**Funds from the Rural Development Program:** 99 762 SEK for the promotion of tourism as well as for measures of education and information





In rural areas there are a lot of reasons to increase the number of women in the business fabric. It will generate sustainable businesses which increases the opportunities to create a livelihood living in the countryside. The project Grogrund has enabled women to pursue new business ideas and entrepreneurship.

## Mentoring gives women enough courage to start their own company in the countryside

– We knew there was some interest among female entrepreneurs to participate, but the demand was much bigger than we thought, says Berit Nordlander, who is involved in the project Grogrund. Berit says that County Administration Board (Länsstyrelsen) of Västra Götaland has the objective of creating a good business climate and focusing on women's ability to continue living in the countryside. A few years ago we arranged idea seminar for women entrepreneurs, which also was the beginning of the project.

– We have been responsive to women's needs and built up the project activities according to those needs, she continues. This means, among other things, that a major part of the activities has been focused in mentoring. The entrepreneurs meet with their mentors, both individually and in groups, according to what kind of business sector they are working in. It has enabled participants to get to know other entrepreneurs and given contacts in their own sector. That is perhaps just what a lonely rural entrepreneur may need more than others.

– Today we have several group-meetings going on in parallel, says Berit. It is with entrepreneurs with many different types of activities, ranging from small-scale food processing, health and wellness and rural

tourism to horse activities, crafts, cafés and bakeries, she explains. We know that the meetings have generated business contacts and created some sort of a fellowship among the participants which many of them have used in the creation and development of their own businesses, she continues. The Rural Development Program has besides project Grogrund also co-financed several of the efforts and investments the female entrepreneurs have made. Many of these efforts have been possible thanks to the project Grogrund.

– About 70-entrepreneurs have through the project, started, developed and invested in their businesses, says Berit enthusiastically. About 15 entrepreneurs have invested even more and have applied for various forms of support from The County Administration Board. She also reveals that more efforts are to be expected.

– As a woman and an entrepreneur you do not kick-start a business with large investments. We know that many more will apply for different kinds of subsidies and support for their entrepreneurship. One example is an entrepreneur who will start the production of ice-cream from sea buckthorn, says Berit and sounds like she is longing for that ice-cream. *Want to know more? [www.grogrund.nu](http://www.grogrund.nu)*

**Project name:** Grogrund | **Project owner:** Länsstyrelsen i Västra Götaland, Landsbygdsenheten | **Contact:** Berit Nordlander

**Contact information:** [berit.nordlander@lansstyrelsen.se](mailto:berit.nordlander@lansstyrelsen.se) and 0501-60 58 32, 070-267 32 44 | **Project duration:** 2007-12-18 to 2009-11-30

**Funds from the Rural Development Program:** 2 249 500 SEK for business development in the micro, the measures of education and information

NOMINATED FOR THE GENDER EQUALITY EFFORT OFF THE YEAR



Photo: Berit Nordlander



NOMINATED FOR THE YOUTH EFFORT OFF THE YEAR



Photo: Ivan Söderkvist



What started with a deep love for animals and a deep fascination about how complex and exciting cheese making is, now occupies every hour of his time awake, as a rural entrepreneur in rural areas. Martin Söderkvist has, despite his young age, already long experience in goat farming and cheese making.



## The love of goats and cheese became the way to entrepreneurship

As early as nine years old Martin was responsible for a few goats home at his parents' farm. It was love at first sight and a love that only grew stronger over the years.

– I'm really fond of goats, Martin admits. They are incredibly social and friendly animals. They are also quite smart, he continues enthusiastically.

The goats grew and got kids. In the same time Martin came in contact with an older farmer with experiences of herding goats on a "fäbod" (similar to "mountain dairy" or "shieling" or "trancehummance") who taught him how to milk the goats. It was then Martin's real interest took off. This resulted, a few years later, in a cheese making course.

– When I started to understand how to produce cheese, I realized it's a great science. It was really cool. I almost got obsessed. I decided that I had to work with this in the future, Martin remembers.

The future was already planned and Martin started to look for and gather knowledge, contacts and experience over the years. So-

meting he strongly recommends others to do when they're about to start up their own business.

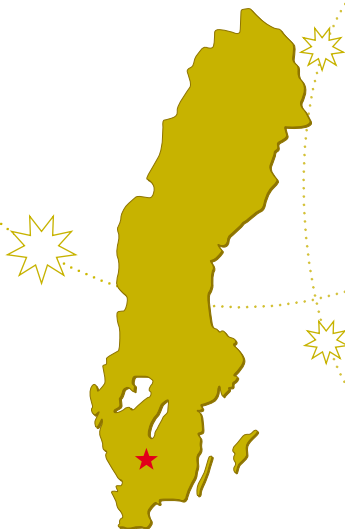
– I've been around at a lot of goat farms in the north of Sweden and experienced other farms from the inside by practicing a few days. It has been important for me to hear the views and opinions from others, he says.

The support from the Rural Development Program was well needed, and directly after high school Martin started with goat cheese making more professional. Today his farm consists of eighty dairy goats. Martin manages all by himself.

– It had not been possible for me to build this business without the support I have received from The County Administration Board, Martin says gratefully. I am able to plan my days and decide myself what to do and the business has been growing,"he says.

But Martin does not want to reveal any more of his plans.

– The company follows the plan that I have made up and I got some more stuff going on, he concludes a bit mysterious.



After a few years as a contractor and carpenter, Johan Larsson decided to invest in his own sawmill. Today, he has customers from the area nearby and starting a sawmill feels like the right decision for the young entrepreneur. Hopefully in a few years his business will be profitable so it gives a full time income.

## The small sawmill with the big plans

– I realised that maybe you do not need eighteen years of professional experience to start your own business, says Johan, who left high school four years ago. For a couple of years he worked as both a contractor and carpenter, but soon he began thinking of starting an own business.

– A friend of mine had bought a small sawmill that inspired me and as a carpenter, it is always good to have access to your own construction wood, Johan says.

Said and done. In April, a year ago, he registered his own company and a sawmill equipment was ordered. John tells knowledgeable about the advantages of his type of sawmill.

– Since it is a band saw I can handle logs up to eighty centimetres in diameter, opposed to a blade saw who only manages the half, he explains. But the biggest advantage is that the saw can handle harder types of wood such as oak, he explains further.

To be even more competitive, John bought a plane to the com-

pany, which means that customers now can get their wood dimensioned. The benefit of being an entrepreneur in a rural area is that the work often becomes more varied and comprehensive.

– If I for example had worked as a carpenter in a bigger town, the work would be more monotone, believes Johan. In a rural area you almost know everyone. It gives a different contact and fellowship, he continues.

The contribution from the Rural Development Program has been valuable for the young entrepreneur and without it would have been difficult to make a similar investment. Today the sawmill stands for about a third of John's income, but the plan is to develop the company further.

– I focus on getting my business running properly, said Johan. I think I am absolutely right in this. The sawmill is situated so the customers easily can get there by tractor with a cart. If you want to invest you should do it, time is running fast, he notes.

**Name of the company:** Ugglebo Trä | **Contact:** Johan Larsson

**Contact information:** 0730-28 35 75 and ugglebotra@home.se | **Project duration:** 2007-04-20 to 2008-11-30

**Funds from the Rural Development Program:** 148 620 SEK for business development in the microenterprises

NOMINATED FOR THE YOUTH EFFORT OFF THE YEAR



Photo: Johan Larsson



## The ram of wool has weight and tradition – but a playful expression in his eye

Peter has a seven-year long art education and has been working as an artist for over thirty years. He works in many art forms, and nothing seems unfamiliar to him.

– I am not caught in one niche and I do what comes to my mind and what I think is fun, he says.

Recently, Peter has subsequently worked both as a set designer and a musician. But the task of designing the Rural Gala-award was obviously something he wanted to do.

– have worked with cast iron and medals before so it was not brand new for me, he says.

The award that Peter designed is a cast iron statue in the form of a ram.

– It was the horns of the ram that caught me, Peter says. They spin beautifully and bring braids, runes and Viking art to mind. It has a feeling of ancient Nordic mythology to it, which fits well considering the importance agriculture has had in our history and the long tradition of craftsmanship with iron, he continues.

Peter is particularly pleased the award was made in cast iron. It really gives another kind of weight to the award than other materials, he says. He decided to make the head only eight millimetres thick and in profile so it would not be too heavy.

– It is important that the design is simple and clean and do not contain too many details. It is easier for people to embrace the simple things, explains Peter. The simple is often also the genius. To create a slight twist and get more life into the ram, I went to the toy store and bought game balls in glass. I used the balls for the ram's eyes. It can be interpreted in different ways, says Peter a bit ingenious. But it is a fun-price anyway, he adds.



*The winners of the Rural Awards will be honoured with a wool-ram of cast iron.*

*Price conveys weight and tradition but it is also playful with a game ball in a glass!  
It is the Swedish artist and multi active Peter Gad who designed the prize.*



