

A report presenting best practise

“New skills for food related SME’s within a regional food frame.”

Date: 15 February 2019

Natural resource schools as competence centers

How can we create an open environment where different organizations can collaborate and develop new ideas? Where can students be enlightened about new research results and contribute to new methods and technologies in their future profession?

The department of Natural Resources in Region Västra Götaland aims to become a model for sustainable rural development, sustainable food supply and sustainable interaction between urban and rural areas. The organization is responsible for three natural resource schools that are made up of full-scale farms or forestry properties and used as both educational centers and centers for rural development.

The facilities enable hands-on teaching and creates unique experimental environments on neutral ground. At the schools, department staff, students and external organizations can collaborate to test and demonstrate new methods and technologies in a real-life environment. External organizations can use the facilities to test new ideas either with or without practical help (i.e. harvesting, animal care or handling machines) from the school staff. The facilities are for example used as learning labs to test new protein crops, smarter livestock farming, and the journey made my food from field to fork.



The schools also provide unique possibilities to combine education and development projects to develop the education and to strengthen the development projects. Project results can be incorporated into the curricula (e.g. new harvest methods or business solutions) and the students can be involved in the project activities. The students can for example help with the practical work, perform lighter research and help spread the results. Within REFRAME the students have for example:

- Designed short food chains for a produce of their choice
- Been involved in the processing of produce used in an internal trade between the school and a hospital in the region
- Listened to lectures on sustainable food choices by experts in the area
- Sold their produce in REKO-rings

In addition, the schools host educational and inspirational events for the students, local businesses and public. They create a petri-dish for new collaborations and a closer contact between student and current actors in respective profession are created.

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A large network of research institutes, educational institutes and branches of trade have developed around the facilities to ensure a high quality of the work. Some examples are like Agroväst (a development company for sustainable farming), Locally produced in West (a resource centre for small-scale food producers), RISE (Research Institutes of Sweden), SLU (the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences) and Chalmers Institute of Technology.

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