



Reindeer herd resting at sunset, Finland

Photo: Marit Myrvoll

Finland

MARIT MYRVOLL *University of Tromsø*

Introduction

This chapter focuses on the situation of reindeer husbandry in Finland. As in Norway and in Sweden, reindeer pastures cover more than 1/3 of the total territory of Finland. Reindeer husbandry is mainly located to the northern and north-eastern part of the country. The official number of reindeer (*Rangifer tarandus tarandus*) in 2003 is about 200 000. In Finland, the modernisation of reindeer husbandry follows a pattern similar to the one we have observed in Norway and Sweden. From being a primary livelihood, often conducted in small, isolated kinship networks far from central areas, reindeer husbandry has now become integrated in the larger society. Every part of the industry is thoroughly regulated by public laws. Despite these changes, the families of the reindeer husbandry have tried to live in accordance with both their inherited traditions and new laws and regulations.

The current situation of reindeer husbandry is complex, but this chapter will mainly focus on the role of women and value-added production. Both aspects concern the family as an institution for production and re-production in reindeer husbandry. Neither can these two aspects be looked upon completely separate – they are closely connected and dependent on each other, and they are important when focusing on a family-based economy. And as some of the interviewed persons stressed, the recruitment to the reindeer husbandry of the future is highly dependent on these factors.

Reindeer husbandry as a Saami and Finnish tradition

In Finland, all citizens can own reindeer and practise reindeer herding (SRH report, p. 128). In fact, all citizens in the European Union (EU) who are permanent residents in the Finnish reindeer herding area are entitled to this right.

The reindeer husbandry area in Finland is divided into three regional areas; the northern, the central and the southern areas, also called (from north to south); “Saami reindeer herding area”, “Special reindeer herding area” and “Reindeer herding area”. The national borders between Finland and Norway and Finland and Russia, are closed by fencing. Also many of the borders between different co-operatives, especially in the north, are closed by fencing. Fences were built in the 1950’s between Finland and Norway.

The north, in the “Saami reindeer herding area”, is the location of Saami reindeer husbandry. The Saami reindeer husbandry is a practice with a close connection between livelihood, culture and indigenoussness. The areas available to the co-operatives in this region are larger than in the south. The topography is also different because less of the region is covered with forests. Thus, reindeer husbandry becomes more nomadic due to larger distances between different pasturelands. Also, the households in the north have larger herds than in the south and therefore the herding and rounding up of herds are more motorised here.

In the Saami reindeer herding area there are about 500 full-time reindeer herders (owners) and approximately the same number of part-time reindeer herders. The further south into the Finnish reindeer herding area one moves, the more Finnish persons are engaged in reindeer husbandry. In the south, we find the smallest herds. This is also the area where most of the reindeer owners live. Statistics from 2002 show that out of 5 485 reindeer owners in Finland, 3 124 (57 percent) live in the southernmost area. The co-operative of reindeer herders, which is the local level of the reindeer husbandry organisation, usually organises and manages the work intensive periods by organising collective workloads. However, local management differs between co-operatives. Apart from the northern area, it is common to feed most of the reindeer during the winter months (January to April).

The topographic differences between the north and the south are significant. We find fells and tundra in the north, while forests are dense in the eastern and southern parts. This generates different practices as well as different skills when conducting reindeer husbandry. However, what everybody seems to have in common is a deeply rooted and profound belonging to reindeer husbandry. Many of the families have had this as part of their livelihood for generations. Despite of the fact that they have adapted to the modern lifestyle with all its goods, they still do not want to leave reindeer husbandry. For many people this is not a

question of how many reindeer they own, but about the practise and lifestyle they have become acquainted to in generations. Reindeer husbandry is not only an income for the family, it is also a culture and a tradition – it is a way of life. Saami reindeer herders claim that reindeer husbandry is the material and spiritual basis for the Saami culture and the Saami language. Therefore, it is of crucial value to the Saami people of Finland. The challenges that reindeer husbandry faces in Finland are consistent across all regions; the average age of reindeer owners rises, recruitment decreases, and female participation decreases.

Collection of data

Data collection was mainly carried out as interviews. These were conducted in October 2003. Persons from all of the three different reindeer herding areas in Finland have been interviewed, a total of 8 families with 9 women and 6 men. Both the Association of Reindeer Herding Co-operatives (Paliskuntain yhdistys) and The Saami Reindeer Herders’ Association in Finland (Suoma Boazosamit) have kindly offered their assistance, as well as provided papers, documents and statistics (2002-numbers). Both genders have been represented in the interviews, and we have also interviewed 3 researchers and 2 public officials in this field. We have also used document studies as a form of data collection. The interviews and some of the document and statistics have been translated to English/Norwegian.

Organization and management of reindeer husbandry

In Finland, reindeer husbandry is regulated through the Reindeer Herding Law. The reindeer herding area is divided into 56 reindeer herding co-operatives or districts. All co-operatives have the use-right to a specific geographical area and specific pasturelands, as shown in map 4.2. In each area, the government has decided how many reindeer that can be kept during the winter. A co-operative is a body of reindeer owners who keep their reindeer in a common geographical area.

The organisation of the local co-operatives is established in the Reindeer Herding Law: The reindeer owners in each cooperative elect a board whose main task is to overlook the reindeer husbandry of the coop-



Reindeer crossing a road, Finland

Photo: Marit Myrvoll

erative: that all seasonal tasks of reindeer herding are carried out and that the reindeer are herded and kept within the borders of the cooperative.

The co-operatives are organised differently between districts and regions. The further south in the reindeer herding area, the more co-operative management one will find. The co-operatives are also responsible for larger infrastructural investments, such as corrals, fences, cabins and some slaughterhouses. In some cases they also invest in motorised vehicles.

All of the 56 herding co-operatives are members of a central body; the Association of Reindeer Herding Co-operatives (Paliskuntain yhdistys). The Association of Reindeer Herding Co-operatives manages and develops the reindeer husbandry, takes care of the interests of their members, and promotes the public image of reindeer husbandry. This is established in the Reindeer Herding Law, where it is stated that the association has the mandate to:

- (1) serve as a link between herding cooperatives
- (2) develop reindeer herding and reindeer husbandry
- (3) promote research into reindeer herding, trial operations in reindeer herding and reindeer processing

(4) carry out other tasks legislated or imposed upon it (Reindeer Herding Law 1990, §20)

In this way, The Association of Reindeer Herding Co-operatives becomes both an administrative body and an interest-organisation for all reindeer herding members. This also means that it gives the reindeer owners a voice at the same time as it implements governmental decisions. The Saami parliament has the right to appoint a Saami representative to the executive board of the association. The association is a branch of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, and it is funded by the government.

The Association of Reindeer Herding Cooperatives runs several projects whose aim is to promote and secure reindeer husbandry as a livelihood in Finland. It also runs an interactive web site at <http://www.paliskunnat.fi/> and publishes its own periodical magazine "Poromies".

The Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry sets a maximum number of reindeer both for the entire reindeer herding area and for each herding co-operative, a decision which is revised every decade. Currently, the

maximum number of reindeer set by the Ministry is 203 700. The maximum number of reindeer owned by a herding co-operative member, i.e. a reindeer owner, is also restricted. In the southern part of the reindeer husbandry region, the maximum number is 300 reindeer per owner while the corresponding number is 500 reindeer per owner in the northern reindeer herding area.

Despite differences in the natural and climatic conditions and regional differences in the way reindeer husbandry is conducted, governmental rules are consistent. Regulations and administration are similar in the entire area – except differences in the maximum number of reindeer allowed. A consequence of this is that the subsidy policy has different effects between regions.

There is also another association of reindeer owners in Finland, The Saami Reindeer Herders Association of Finland (Suoma Boazosámit). It was established in 1993 and its goals are to monitor, secure and promote the Saami reindeer herders' rights. Suoma Boazosámit, as well as Paliskuntain yhdistys, co-operate with The Saami Reindeer Herders' Association of Norway, The National Union of the Swedish Saami People in Sweden and The Association of World Reindeer Herders.

The concept of the family

For outsiders it might seem difficult to observe the differences between an average urban family and a family in the reindeer husbandry. Everybody talks the same language, have mobile telephones, dress in the same way and have modern cars.

Traditional values

It is often easier to observe changes than continuity – especially when depicting technological changes. Even if we live in a modern society, we are still dependent on utilizing natural resources in order to survive. We still need to protect ourselves from the harsh arctic climate by building houses, making warm clothes and use fuel and wood for heating – just like in the “pre-modern” times. Changes in the reindeer husbandry society have been profound, but we will find that the way people perceive life and reality have not changed very much.

The reindeer husbandry and the people tied to the industry live in annual cycles where the reindeer is

at the centre; calving, earmarking, slaughtering, rut-season and so forth. People who are not involved in reindeer husbandry on a daily basis use their holidays to help during work intensive periods such as rounding-ups and slaughtering. Children try to get some time off their school in order to participate in these activities. For the people in the reindeer husbandry, traditional knowledge concerning animals, natural conditions, climate and predators, has been passed on since time immemorial from older to younger generations. The close relationship with nature is still alive, and must be kept vital as long as reindeer husbandry is practised. Living in this relationship with animals and nature, people have learned to master life and adapt to insecurity. As said one informant: *Who knows what kind of winter that will come?*

The household and social relations

Despite all the changes due to modernisation, the basic social organisation of reindeer husbandry has not changed much. The family – or the household – is the smallest production unit in reindeer husbandry today, and the families usually live in small local communities with their kin close by. In this fashion, kinship relations are still vital in the herding communities, even if the extended family no longer stays under the same roof.

The *siida*, which is the ancient form of social organisation in the Saami society, is still important. People in the *siida* are usually related and they work together. In this way, Saami culture and language are maintained, creating solidarity among people.

In the Finnish-speaking part of the reindeer husbandry, the *tokkakunta* (flock-group or village), has the same function as the Saami *siida*. Usually, there are several *siidas* or flock-groups in one local reindeer herding co-operative. Each of these has tight social relations and co-operate because they herd reindeer together. In the winter, the reindeer owners in the south keep reindeer in corrals, in the forests or close to the house for daily feeding, while in the north the reindeer owners organise the tending of the herd in shifts.

The individual and the collective

The concept of individuality is important when trying to understand modern society. The reindeer



Reindeer meat, Finland.

Photo: Marit Myrvoll

law and regulations is a reflection of this individuality, as they hold the shareholder (owner) as the legal unit in reindeer husbandry. In the reindeer husbandry community, it is not the individual but the family (or household) which is the core unit of production, even if the reindeer are owned individually. A reindeer owner cannot manage without co-operating with others. And “others” has always been, and still is, family members, members of the extended family and the local reindeer husbandry community. A division of labour exists among the family members, but it is the sum of all tasks that constitutes reindeer husbandry.

Monetary income

The social and cultural flexibility of the industry have been the strength of reindeer husbandry when external societal factors have affected the industry, for instance new regulations. It is difficult for the families only to live from meat production because reindeer husbandry is unpredictable; it depends on climate and natural conditions, and in some years herders lose many animals. The market can also be unpredictable. For example, in some periods meat prices have decreased to such an extent that the industry does not gener-

ate any surplus. The costs of producing reindeer meat have increased dramatically the last decades. As in any modern and highly mechanised industry, a considerable portion of the surplus is invested in production tools, such as motorised vehicles, and on maintenance, such as repairs of corrals, fences and cabins.

All of these factors have made reindeer husbandry dependent on monetary incomes. This has caused women to seek regularly paid jobs outside the industry. These jobs may take a variety of forms; part-time and full-time. Monetary income for the family can also come from forestry or the harvest of winter fodder for animals. In the south, many reindeer households own forestlands. When incomes from husbandry are low, some people, as a last resort, cut down their own forest in order to generate cash incomes. Reindeer owners in the Saami reindeer herding area even pointed out that some people in the reindeer husbandry generate annual incomes below the EU-decided poverty limit (EUR 5 800).

National school system

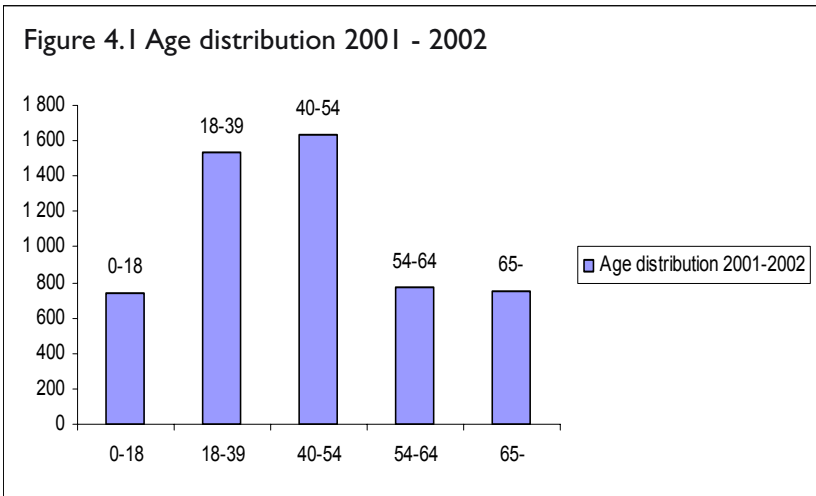
Compulsory primary education is another external factor that has influenced the social structure of the reindeer husbandry families and communities. All children must start school at the age of seven and stay in elementary school until the year they turn sixteen. This pertains to all children. The school system has the philosophy that all children should be able to live at home with their parents while they attend school. This has made it possible for the children of

reindeer husbandry families to be raised in a reindeer husbandry environment – even if they live more than an hour drive from the school. However, the school occupies most of the days, and for the children it is difficult to participate during work intensive periods in the reindeer husbandry. In some areas, the school system is flexible and the school managers understand the importance of giving the children the opportunity to be present in practical reindeer herding.

Reindeer herding communities are often located to rural areas. As said one mother: *“When local schools are nonexistent or closed, the children may have 2 to 2 ½ hours of transportation to school every day. Of course, this can be very strenuous for the children. This situation also influences the parents’ choice of home location and jobs. Who knows, over time perhaps all of the families will live in the community centre”.*

Recruitment and participation – knowledge and skills

It is a big challenge for the reindeer husbandry to represent itself as an attractive form of livelihood for the younger generation. Because reindeer husbandry is embedded in many traditional and distinct cultural values, recruitment depends on long-term socialisation into the industry. One must be present where reindeer herding is carried out in order to learn and internalise the necessary knowledge and skills. Everyone expresses the importance of including the children in the labour process – even only on a social level without any economic obligations. All informants also expressed



that they were worried about the fact that there are fewer women involved during work intensive periods, emphasising that without women present at the corals there would be no small children present either. We observe that recruitment depends on the children being able to participate in the industry and that the participation of young children depends on the participation of their mother. This is a difficult situation, because the cash incomes of the families depend on the women keeping a job outside the husbandry. This also means that the family has less time together, in addition to less time to transfer important knowledge, skills and traditions to the younger generation.

Some argue that the best solution occurs when children can start to “work” together with their parents at an early age, for example when they have finished compulsory school at the age of 16. Very few can afford this because current policies do not favour this type of choice. The investment costs of establishing a reindeer husbandry business are high. The starting subsidies are closely attached to the system of retirement pension. This means that the limitations on the number of reindeer in a reindeer-herding cooperative make it difficult for a young person to start without pushing someone else out of the co-operative. As said one informant: *“A person who is 18 years, and who wants to start as a reindeer husbander, cannot expect his parents, who are in their late 30’s or early 40’s, to retire”*. In some cases, the grandfather or granduncle retires to make space for the younger generation. However, the main consequence is that the husbandry has a large number of old owners because young people must find another job, as shown in figure 4.1.

Women’s participation

Women’s role

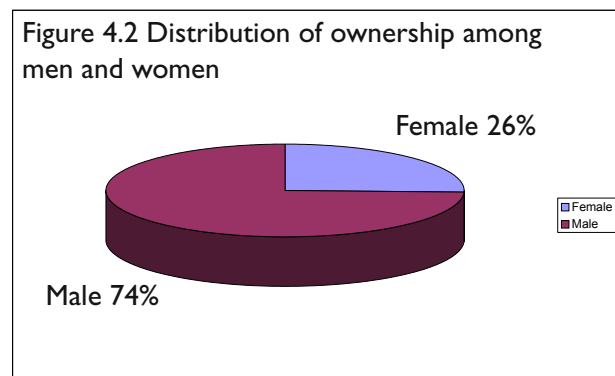
The women of reindeer husbandry do not represent one homogeneous group. Age, civil status, number of children, level of education and how they earn their daily living are all important factors that influence the role and participation of women in the industry. Also external factors affect the role of women, for instance governmental regulations and how the reindeer husbandry is conducted in order to conform to regulations. Factors like this are crucial when defining the role of women in the industry. However, the dreams, hopes and strategies of women in reindeer husbandry are also different, just as among women in general.

Nevertheless, all of the women interviewed for this report have at least one thing in common; they all considered reindeer husbandry as a way of living. They are very clear in their opinion that they do not want to leave or give up reindeer husbandry. Older women do not know any other form of life than the one found in reindeer husbandry. Younger women are more acquainted to jobs outside reindeer husbandry.

All of the women, regardless of whether they had taken an active part in daily reindeer herding and other related tasks, were competent at conducting reindeer husbandry: The annual cycles of reindeer herding, what to do and where to go, the needs of the reindeer and the human response and solutions. One woman told that she had felt forced to leave reindeer husbandry because she could not raise the capital demanded.

Female ownership

As in Norway and in Sweden, in Finland the number of male owners outnumbers female owners. As illustrated in figure 4.2, women constitute about 25 percent of all owners, or 1 389 out of 5 441 owners (statistics from 2002). Out of these, about 90 percent of the female owners have herds with less than 80 reindeer. According to the SRH-report, only one female owner has more than 400 reindeer. One explanation for the high percentage of small-size herds could be the tradition of giving earmarks to one’s children, and an earmark is of no use without a reindeer’s ear. Many young children, daughters and sons, therefore have a few reindeer each. This tradition is considered important because it is a way of securing a tight connection between the animals and the future generations as early as possible.



Female labour

All of the women interviewed, who were under the age of retirement, had their own income, either in reindeer husbandry or in another job. Most of the women had a job outside reindeer husbandry in the nearby local community or a job they carried out at home. Jobs in the local community varied, depending on the interests of the women and the level of their education. Several of the women who worked from home, for example with research, kept in touch with their employer by use of e-mail and Internet. Also, some of the women who work from home produce handicrafts or create art. Women working at the family home felt that this arrangement gave them more flexibility than if they had to work at another place in the local community, for example, they could more easily adapt their working hours to caring tasks. In addition, it became easier to participate in the labour intensive periods of reindeer herding and husbandry. Since reindeer husbandry has their first priority, women often want jobs that do not intervene with the husbandry.

Women who work on a daily basis in the local community often have an education that makes them attractive for the local job market. Some of the women were already working in the local community before they became a part of a reindeer husbandry household. They said that even if they had the time and opportunity to work in reindeer husbandry, the industry had developed in such a way that there was no work for them to do, except during intensive periods. The heavy use of motorised vehicles and the use of communication technology have made reindeer herding more job-efficient.

None of the women tended the herd daily. Everybody only had part-time work in the industry. If the traditional division of labour collapsed because of accidents or illness, the women had to supply labour in the form of harvesting and feeding winter fodder to the reindeer. Women also have an important role in taking care of and training the reindeer herding dogs. As said one informant: *A clever tending dog is invaluable!*

The traditional division of labour in reindeer husbandry consists of the husband taking care of the reindeer while the wife takes care of the home, children and sometimes also old relatives. The task of women consists of socialising the children into reindeer husbandry. Their main concern was that a job outside the home could present an obstacle for the passing on of cultural and traditional knowledge of reindeer hus-

bandry to the children. When children are young, the father cannot bring them along when tending the herd because if a situation arised, he had to leave the child, which is a risk he did not want to take To secure future recruitment to reindeer husbandry, it is essential to socialise children into husbandry from a young age. Many informants emphasised that without an affinity to the husbandry, the children will leave the industry.

Value-added production

The concept of value-added production can be divided into different parts. The main difference is: 1) Production that can be directly linked to reindeer husbandry, such as processing the reindeer meat and production of by-products such as antlers, pelts and intestinal linings, and 2), activities and production connected to for instance tourism and marketing.

Production directly connected to reindeer husbandry

Traditionally, most of the by-products from the slaughtered reindeer were used in everyday life. This has changed during the last decades towards a core focus on meat production. Most of the reindeer owners sell live animals to processing companies, transporting live animals directly from the corrals to the slaughterhouse. In many places, this has been the best way to sell meat, granted that the price is good. This form of processing is less work for the owner, and in some places in the southern area this has led to a cessation of the private market. As said one informant: *In some places, not even the local people like neighbours and local residents have been able to buy meat from the reindeer owner.*

Many informants argued that sale of live animals reduce the production of by-products like pelts, antlers and intestinal linings. In this way, the owners lose the possibility of an extra income. Over the last years, the reindeer owners have experienced reduced incomes from meat production, and the necessity for other incomes has become crucial. This situation has reinforced a debate on changes in the production process concerning ways to increase incomes from reindeer husbandry alone or from enterprises connected to the industry.



Cranberries, Finland.

Photo: Marit Myrvoll

Meat processing

Selling “live meat” (reindeer in trucks), many says, is equivalent to giving away most of the profit. Everyone knows that merely cutting the meat before selling it doubles the profit. As long as there is no endorsed facility for this activity, the reindeer owner is not able to sell the meat in the open market. Many feel that the hygiene regulations represent a strong and insurmountable obstacle for starting a small-scale enterprise. Investment costs make it difficult as well, especially all the investments required in order to meet the hygiene standards. For many the solution consists of selling as much meat as possible on the private market. In places where the tradition of selling meat to local residents has ceased to exist, the reindeer owners do not seem to have difficulties in re-establishing a private market.

When the income from selling live reindeer to processors is not sufficient for sustaining the family, a regular salary from a paid job is needed. The size of winter pastures will not be able to support more reindeer than usual, and thus slaughtering less animals is not an option. There is no future in waiting for better times and higher meat prices, informants said. Reindeer owners with more than the allowed number of winter reindeer will face severe economic penalties from the authorities.

The cooperative slaughterhouse

Cooperatives with their own slaughterhouses can use more parts of the animal than just meat, for instance blood, liver, heart and marrowbones. The pelts and the antlers are by-products that can be used in the production of handicrafts. Most co-operatives use their own slaughters. These are often persons who own reindeer themselves or have relations to the reindeer husbandry. When rounding up at a local slaughterhouse, it is also easier to bring the children to the corral. This is considered important for the future recruitment to the industry. However, it must be emphasised that nobody except authorised personnel is allowed inside a slaughterhouse due to strict hygienic standards. Adults claim that when they watch children at round-ups they can tell who of the children that will stay in the reindeer husbandry. Both children and adults maintain and make new social relations at such events. Another effect of events like round-ups and slaughtering at a local slaughterhouse is the maintenance of social and trade relations with local residents.

Tourism

Tourism is a relatively new activity in reindeer husbandry. We mostly find reindeer tourism in proximity

Rudolph
Everyone knows about the reindeer that pull Santa Claus on his sledge – and Rudolph is the most famous of them all. All children put their trust in Rudolph's strength, not to mention his red nose, and his ability to pull Santa's sleigh around the world and deliver all the Christmas presents on time.

In tourist marketing terms, there is a close – and very successful – connection between Santa Claus and Rudolph, combined with snowy winters and real live reindeer in northern Finland. Reindeer herders, especially those close to winter tourist resorts, have started up enterprises offering tourists a sledge-tour with live reindeer. The tourists also get to visit a reindeer homestead and find out all about life as a reindeer herder. One reindeer herder summed it up: for those who come here, especially the children, a reindeer is the physical incarnation of Rudolph who helps Santa Claus. Thus, all reindeers have become Rudolph. So in order to have a Merry Christmas, we are all dependent on a healthy Rudolph.

to tourist resorts, especially winter tourism. Compared to Norway and Sweden, the tourist industry in Finland is more focused on using the reindeer and Saami culture when promoting tourism. There are also many large winter tourist resorts in the northern part of the country. For people on holiday who look for experiences far from their every-day life situation, a sledge-tour with live reindeer or a trip to a corral may be a memorable experience.

The Association of Reindeer Herding Co-operatives runs a project that assists reindeer owners who want to establish a tourist enterprise. The investment costs can be low, and some said that all a reindeer owner needs is a tamed reindeer and a sledge. Most of the preparations are related to taming the bulls. Many reindeer owners are positive to tourism, but some object that tourism takes the focus off the reindeer herding. At some point, the reindeer owner may be forced to choose between the reindeer and the tourist business. People with tourist enterprises experience several risks, for instance may terrorism prevent the tourists from travelling. If the tourism decreases, both the reindeer owners offering tourist services and the owners who sell meat to the tourist resorts will lose

incomes. The risks of being part of a global trade were frightening to many.

Changes for a better future?

In all areas that are close to a tourist resort, small enterprises that focus on tourism are started. Also the number of meat-processing enterprises grows. Such family enterprises can aspire to sell to the private market – for instance smoked, cut and dried meat. Behind these small enterprises we usually find one or two families or relatives. The difference one can see between the north and the south is that in the south there is more focus on tourism, while in the north there is more focus on the production of handicrafts.

The common opinion is that reindeer husbandry needs women – the industry is founded on the family as the production unit. Especially for value-added production there is a need for a family-based or household-based activity. An individual with such a high number of reindeer that he or she receives subsidies does not have enough time to both tend the reindeer and run an enterprise. If such a family decides to start an enterprise for meat processing, it seems that the women will have a major role at this. The same applies for the production of handicrafts. In tourist services, the husband is active in the reindeer corral and other outdoor activities, but if food service is part of the package, then it is the women who are active.

Legislation and policies

As said in the beginning of this chapter, there are many laws and regulations which pertain to reindeer husbandry, of these the Reindeer Herding Law from 1990 is the most important. The authorities use economic means such as subsidies or loans to both develop and regulate the reindeer husbandry. The most important one for a reindeer husbandry household is the subsidy that requires a winter herd.

To receive the annual production subsidy from the Finnish government, a reindeer husbandry household must have at least 80 reindeer. This subsidy is part of the Northern aid and originates from the Finnish national budget and from the EU northern aid funding, as discussed in the SRH-report. The required number of reindeer has steadily increased yearly, from 25 winter reindeer in 1994 to 80 reindeer in 2004. Only reindeer owners who earn less than 26 000 Euro

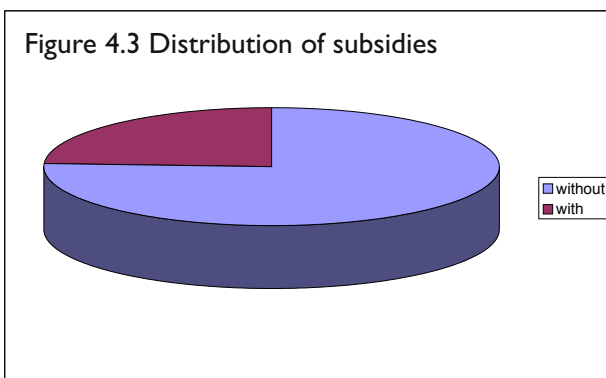


"Santa Park" tourist resort, Rovaniemi, Finland

Photo: Marit Myrvoll

(outside agriculture), are between the age of 18 and 65 and who live in households that have a herd of at least 80 animals, are entitled to receive the basic subsidy. The increase in required herd size has led to a dramatic decrease in households that are entitled to subsidies. In 1995, there were 2 031 households receiving subsidies. Seven years later, in 2002, this number had decreased to 1 060, out of a total number of 4 370 households owning reindeer, as shown in figure 4.3. This amounts to a decrease of almost 50 percent. In other words, half of the households entitled to subsidies in 1995 are erased from the list. If only we look at the women, in 2002 there were 129 out of a total of 1 389 female reindeer owners who were entitled to subsidies. This group constitutes 10 percent of all female owners. The rest do not fulfil the requirement for subsidies unless they live in a household with another or several reindeer owners.

Figure 4.3 Distribution of subsidies



This subsidy policy indicates that the state wants reindeer owners/households with large herds. The state also regulates the maximum number of reindeer pr. co-operative. The consequence is that if a reindeer owner wants to increase his or her herd, it will be at the expense of another reindeer owner. Over time, the state policy is likely to lead to fewer owners who have larger herds. Reindeer owners are aware of the fact that the subsidy given pr. reindeer in the reindeer industry is small compared to the subsidy that a sheep farmer receives in the EU Northern Aid subsidy system. In 2003, the reindeer owner receives 27 euro pr. winter reindeer, while the sheep farmer receives 166,50 euro pr. sheep, in addition to 29 euro pr. ewe.

Another important subsidy is investment subsidies. This subsidy is intended to finance the basic infrastructure of reindeer husbandry. If the individual reindeer herders cannot meet the requirement of 80 reindeer pr. owner, the co-operative can apply for the investment subsidy. The co-operatives also receive loans and economic support to build for example fences and slaughterhouses. Young persons, who want to start in the reindeer husbandry, must make substantial investments (reindeer, technical equipment, house and other assets). They can apply for both a "start loan" and a "start subsidy". This subsidy functions best when it is co-ordinated with someone who applies for retirement pension in the same co-operative.



Ounasjoki in October sun, Finland.
Photo: Marit Myrvoll

The European Union

When Finland entered the European Union in 1995, the entire subsidy system was changed and Finnish legislation has now become adapted to the subsidy system in the European Union. The system grants subsidies pr. winter animal and not pr. kilogram produced meat, something that forces the reindeer owners to maintain a certain amount of animals in order to be entitled to financial support. Another way of achieving EU subsidies is to harvest fields for winter fodder (agricultural subsidy) and reindeer households that do not have enough reindeer in order to receive subsidies can attain financial support by this activity.

Many informants argued that subsidies should be based on production, and not for keeping a winter herd with more than 80 animals. By granting subsidies according to production, all active reindeer owners can receive some economic support. There was wide dissatisfaction with this arrangement among the reindeer owners because they experience it as difficult to abide by an EU-protocol that is designed for the situation in conventional agriculture. The informants expressed the need for a separate protocol adapted to reindeer husbandry due to the fact that reindeer husbandry is a totally different primary industry.

Wild Reindeer in Finland

JUKKA BISI, *University of Helsinki*

MATTI SÄRKELÄ, *The Association of Reindeer Herding Cooperatives (Paliskuntain yhdistys)*

BIRGITTE ULVEVADET, *University of Tromsø*

Introduction

Historically, Finland was inhabited by wild forest reindeer (*Rangifer tarandus fennicus*), but the reindeer were hunted to extinction about 100 years ago. This was a paradox, because these wild reindeer were the reason Finland became inhabited in the first place after the last ice age. Until their extirpation, reindeer was one of the most important resources for the people living in northern Finland. As a consequence of the disappearance of wild herds, domesticated reindeer were imported from Norway in the 15-1600's in order to establish a reindeer husbandry instead. The wild forest reindeer are more difficult to domesticate and therefore function only as wild reindeer.

The Return of the wild forest reindeer

During the 1950's and 1960's, the wild forest reindeer started to migrate back again to Kainuu in Finland from Karelia in Russia, crossing the Finnish/Russian border. In the 1980's, nature conservationists, especially the World Wildlife Fund, wanted the wild forest reindeer to return to Ostrobothnia as well. Consequently, they actively fostered their return. This project was a co-operation between The Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, The Finnish Forest and Park Service, The Central Hunting Organisation, The World Wildlife Fund and The Game and Fisheries Research Institute. Although generally people are satisfied with the return of wild reindeer, conflicts have arisen and co-existing with the wild reindeer is becoming a challenge.

Current situation

There are about 2500 wild forest reindeer (*Rangifer t. f.*) in Finland. The herds have been monitored in late winter by helicopter surveys, the last performed in 2003. Regional differences in population trends have been observed during the last 20 years. Wild forest reindeer exist in two geographic regions, two herds in the east-central part of the country (Kainuu) and one in central Finland (Ostrobothnia). The eastern herd originated from Russian Karelia, and the population number is about 1500 individuals. The herd in Ostrobothnia was introduced from Kainuu in the early 1980's, and the population number is today about 1000 individuals. The growth rate has been highest in Ostrobothnia.

Problems

With the growth and spreading of the wild reindeer, problems of co-existence have emerged. In the late 1980's, farmers, the World Wildlife Fund, and the Lentua Village Association built the first fence in Lentuan village in order to prevent the wild reindeer from eating crops growing in the farmers' fields. Since then,

the issue of wild reindeer grazing on the farmers' fields has increasingly become a problem.

The domesticated reindeer owners are also not too happy about the wild reindeer. Mixed reindeer are more difficult to handle because they are more shy than the domesticated stock. A fence was built to the southern borderline of the Finnish reindeer husbandry area in 1993-1996 to prevent inter-breeding between the wild and the domesticated reindeer. It was later observed, however, that the fence is not long enough. The wild reindeer are starting to spread to the north-west.

With the increasing dispersion of the wild reindeer, traffic accidents have increased. The Kainuu area, for instance, experienced 50 traffic accidents involving wild reindeer in a 3 month period between January and April 2003.

Management control

Management of wild forest reindeer is the responsibility of The Finnish Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry. Until recent years, the wild forest reindeer were normally not hunted. The local game management organizations started to give hunting permits in 1996 for the Kainuu population and in 1998 for the Ostrobothnia population. The European Union reacted to the reindeer hunting in Ostrobothnia because the wild forest reindeer (*Rangifer tarandus fennicus*) are a rare species today. The local game management organisation explained that they wanted to keep the breed pure, and keep damages to fields on a low level, as well as traffic accidents and grazing pressure on lichen pastures. This was an acceptable reason to the EU, and the question has not come up again.

The harvest in Kainuu was 43 wild reindeer in 2001/02 and 42 in 2002/03. In Ostrobothnia, 51 wild reindeer were hunted in 2001/02 and 57 animals in 2002/03. Table 4.1 and 4.2 presents the data on the number of hunting licenses applied for compared to the number of licenses issued for Kainuu and Ostrobothnia.

Table 4.1: Harvested wild forest reindeer in Kainuun

Year	1998/99	1999/00	2000/01	2001/02	2002/03	2003/04
Licenses Applied	33	0	21	166	145	40
Licenses Issued	14	0	16	45	54	0
Wild reindeer Harvested	13	0	14	43	42	

Table 4.2 Harvested wild forest reindeer in Ostrobothnia

Year	1998/99	1999/00	2000/01	2001/02	2002/03	2003/04
Licenses Applied	14	33	80	134	168	303
Licenses Issued	6	15	38	53	66	83
Wild reindeer Harvested	6	13	37	51	57	

Map 4.2 Areas of reindeer husbandry in Finland



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