

FoodDiversity PreStudy launches at Sambruket

New Baltic Sea Region partnership explores benefits of integrating biodiversity into small-scale food production to enhance food security

By Marcella Samuels

The [FoodDiversity Pre-Study Project](#) had an energetic start at its kickoff meeting held August 19th-21st on the beautiful grounds of [Sambruket i Sösdalabygden](#) (previously named Södra Rörums Sambruk) in the small village of Norra Mellby, located 3 km outside Sösdala, Sweden. The three-day event included participants from five Baltic Sea Region countries, including

representatives from organisations in Estonia, Russia, Poland, Belarus and Sweden. The international gathering of participants discussed their vision for the 12-month pre-study, intended to explore the benefits of integrating biodiversity into the design of small-scale food production. The aim of the project is to highlight and benefit agro-ecological systems and approaches where food production and biodiversity are integrated in the design. This Swedish Institute funded

pre-study will enable the international team of practitioners and researchers to explore biodiversity in food production from several perspectives in each region, ranging from the diversity of seed preservation, saplings and soils, to the role of cultural diversity for those producing food both for themselves and for the market. While the main output of the pre-study will be a proposal for a larger, multi-year, regional Food Diversity project, the group also took the opportunity to brainstorm about how immediate resources and efforts put forward in the pre-study could become a foundation, particularly in the Baltic



Sea Region, for providing some immediate, valuable resources that could be tapped into by practitioners, researchers, and even policymakers within the wider agroecology, permaculture and organic agricultural community. Sambruket proved to be the perfect venue by nourishing participants with meals prepared using locally-produced and organic ingredients, and by providing a bright, airy space to stimulate the spirit of collaboration and co-creation among participants. Thanks

to a mix of one-on-one conversations, collaborative group discussions, inclusive seminars held indoors, and mobile study visits outdoors, the group was able to stay engaged throughout the participatory workshop. Short seminars featured participants such as

Sambruket chairperson Oscar Kjellberg who gave the team an overview of what Sambruket is all about. FoodDiversity Project Co-Founder Emilia Rekestad, together with Editor of "Odlaren" magazine Karin Jansson, walked the team through why it is important to integrate biodiversity and food production. Lund University Human Ecology Division Researcher Marcella Samuels introduced the team to biodiversity in relationship to agroecology and permaculture. FoodDiversity Project Coordinator Annevi Sjöberg gave a presentation on ways to apply biodiversity in both public spaces and in home gardens. The group had the opportunity to make a study visit to see the newly purchased Sambruket property at Ankhult Farm, which will soon host a One-Year in Transition team as part of the growing transition initiative led by the Sambruket team. In addition, Johan Widing hosted the team at his organic farm at Bokeslundsgården by providing an extensive tour of his family-built operation. The final day wrapped up with productive brainstorming sessions which helped participants co-create and align priorities on both desired educational materials and other key outputs identified as critical for the pre-study.

In addition to strengthening the competence within the Baltic partnership for applying biodiversity in small-scale agricultural operations, the FoodDiversity pre-study is expected to lead to another long-term project proposal either under the EU Horizon 2020 program or through a similar European-based regional body. The next meeting will be held in autumn 2015, and will be hosted by the Network of Estonian Eco-Communities (NEEC), the FoodDiversity project partner organization in Estonia.