



SUSTAINABLE USE OF RENEWABLE NATURAL RESOURCES IN FINLAND

Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry



WELFARE FROM NATURE

Finland has an abundance of renewable natural resources. We cultivate land and produce food in the northernmost agricultural country in the world. The land, forests and waters yield various kinds of natural produce. Finnish nature is also important for outdoor activities and recreation.

The Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry steers the policy on sustainable use of natural resources in Finland with the aim to ensure the welfare of humans and the nature.



NORTHERN AGRICULTURE

Finland is a viable part of the EU's farming area. We want to produce good food in a good environment at the lowest possible cost. In the north, however, the growing season is very short, which is why the special needs of our country need to be taken into account in the EU policies and decision-making.

Family farms are the backbone of Finnish agriculture. The number of farms has decreased over the years to about 67,000. Today the farms are larger and more efficient than before to meet the challenges of the time.

The main production sectors are milk and other livestock production and cereal cultivation. The majority of farms derive additional income from forests. Of the cereal species, barley, oats, wheat and rye grow well in Finland. A number of special crops are also cultivated, while grass is cultivated on about a quarter of the arable area.

The diversity of the farms' activities should be further increased. There is a need to find other sources of livelihood, such as tourism, which may supplement arable farming and animal husbandry.

Bioenergy production should be increased to slow

down climate change. According to recent plans, lands which in the future may not be needed for food and feed production could be used for cultivating mainly reed canary grass and other energy crops for heat plants.

Length of the growing season and farming zones in Finland

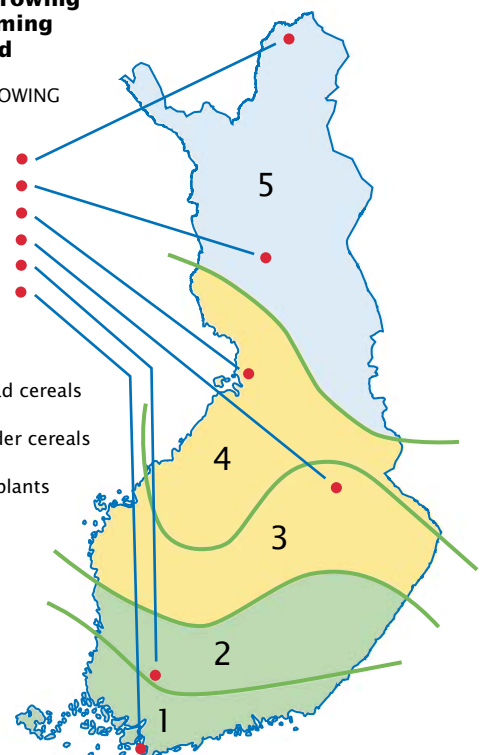
LENGTH OF THE GROWING SEASON

- 100–115 days
- 130 days
- 145 days
- 155 days
- 165 days
- 175 days

FARMING ZONES

- Zones 1 and 2: bread cereals (wheat and rye)
- Zones 3 and 4: fodder cereals (oats and barley)
- Zone 5: only grass plants

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FINNISH FOOD IS SAFE

Finnish food production chain works hard to produce safe and tasty foodstuffs. Quality chain extends from the farm all the way to the consumer's plate. Thanks to the transparent production chain, consumers have access to information on the origin and production stages of the food they buy.

Quality work has improved animal welfare, environmental protection and safety of feeds and food raw materials. The incidence of pests, weeds and diseases is lower than in most other countries, which means that we need to use smaller amounts of chemical substances to prevent them.

HIGH STANDARD OF ANIMAL WELFARE

Welfare standards of farm animals are very high in Finland. Animals have always been treated well and production facilities are modern. The incidence of infectious diseases is low. The medication of animals and medicinal residues in foods are monitored very closely.



MOST FINNS HAVE ROOTS IN THE COUNTRYSIDE

The population of Finland is small relative to the surface area of the country. Finland is the most rural country in Europe, which is why a viable countryside is particularly important for us.

Finns have an exceptionally close relationship with the nature and countryside, and this is where we turn for recreation as well. A growing number of Finns also want to reside permanently in the countryside.

Rural policy has been promoted as a joint effort of nine Finnish ministries for about twenty years. The Finnish example has encouraged several other countries to develop their rural policy.



THE MOST FORESTED COUNTRY OF THE EU

Finland has abundant forest resources. There are four hectares of forest per inhabitant. The ownership of private forests is divided between 400,000 families. Finnish forestry has been characterised as family forestry. The second largest forest owner is the State and the forest industry comes third with a share of less than 10 per cent.

Forests are an integral element of the welfare and everyday life of the Finns. About a quarter of our net export income is created in the forest sector, even if today it employs only about four per cent of the population.



Forests are managed well and used efficiently, with due attention to environmental protection. Good forest management rests on modern forest legislation and forest certification, which covers 95 per cent of Finnish forests.

The main elements of Finnish forest policy are written into the National Forest Programme. The Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry is responsible for drafting and implementing the programme, but it is prepared in cooperation with various interest groups and NGOs. The programme sets the objectives for the management and use of forests in accordance with the ecological, economic and social dimensions of sustainability.

Finland has assumed an active role in international forest policy. We fully comply with the principle of sustainable development in our efforts to promote the management and use of the world's forests.



TAKING ADVANTAGE OF NATURE'S GIFTS

Finnish nature yields various kinds of products, such as fish, game and wild berries and mushrooms. The Finns enjoy an extensive right of access called everyman's right, which allows us to hike in the nature and gather wild berries and mushrooms regardless of who owns the land.

Hunters may join hunting clubs, which take care of game management, calculate game populations and arrange hunting in their own territory. Thousands of lakes, numerous rivers and the long sea coast offer excellent opportunities for recreational fishing.

Many animal species which used to be threatened have recovered thanks to the serious efforts taken by various stakeholders. Hunters have also participated in this work on a voluntary basis. The living conditions for

large predators are ensured without compromising the safety and livelihood of the people.

Reindeer husbandry is practised in northern Finland. It is an excellent example of how the arctic nature can be utilised for food production. Most of the reindeer roam freely in the wild and are rounded up for slaughter in the autumn.

There are about 3,000 professional fishermen in Finland, whose catch from the sea and inland waters totals about 97 million kilos. Fish farming produces valuable food fish for the consumers, mainly rainbow trout and whitefish, as well as stocking fry needed in the management of fish populations.



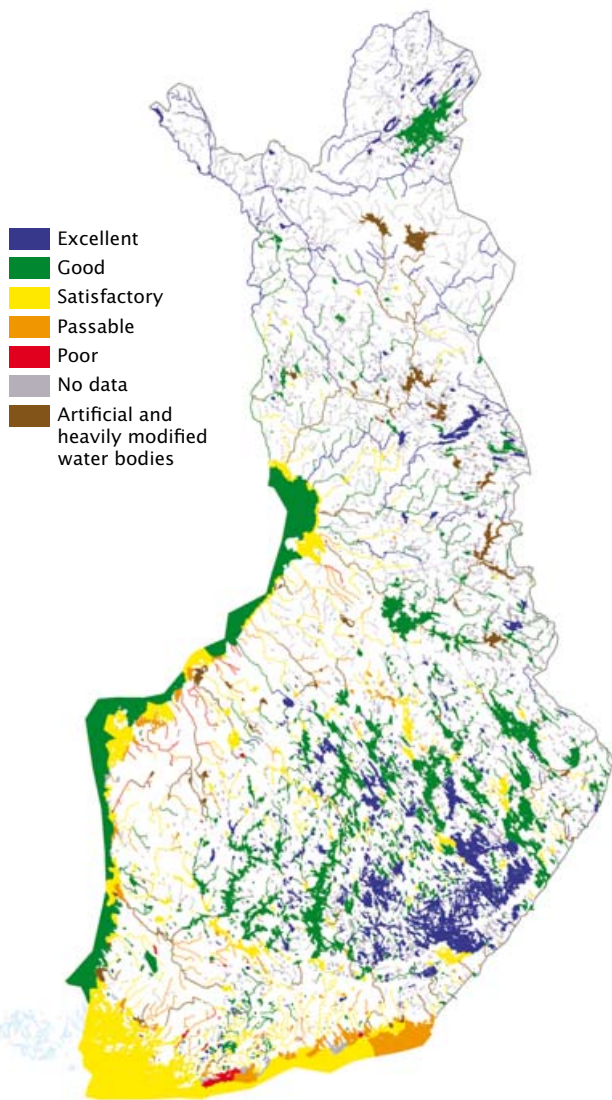
CLEAN WATER IN ABUNDANCE

There are thousands of lakes and rivers in Finland. The Finns fully appreciate the value of water. Safety and respect for natural values are taken into account in the utilisation of the abundant water resources. Serious efforts are made to take care of groundwater and surface waters. Non-point source pollution is reduced through the agri-environmental programme and other actions.

All Finns have access to pure drinking water at reasonable cost. We can drink water directly from the tap. In the management and use of waters we must also prepare for exceptional circumstances such as floods and prolonged drought.



Ecological status of surface waters in Finland in 2000–2007



INFORMATION ON LAND

The Ministry is also responsible for land surveying, which produces information on real estate, buildings, the road network and land. Today, this data is available as digital geographic information and as maps. The public Land Information System of Finland contains all real estates and the rights and restrictions concerning these.

RESEARCH ON NATURAL RESOURCES

High-quality research contributes to the sustainable use of natural resources. Finland was the first country in the world to start a forest inventory, which yields current data on the availability of wood and growth of forests. Innovative agricultural and food research develops even better and more ecological production methods and products.



MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY

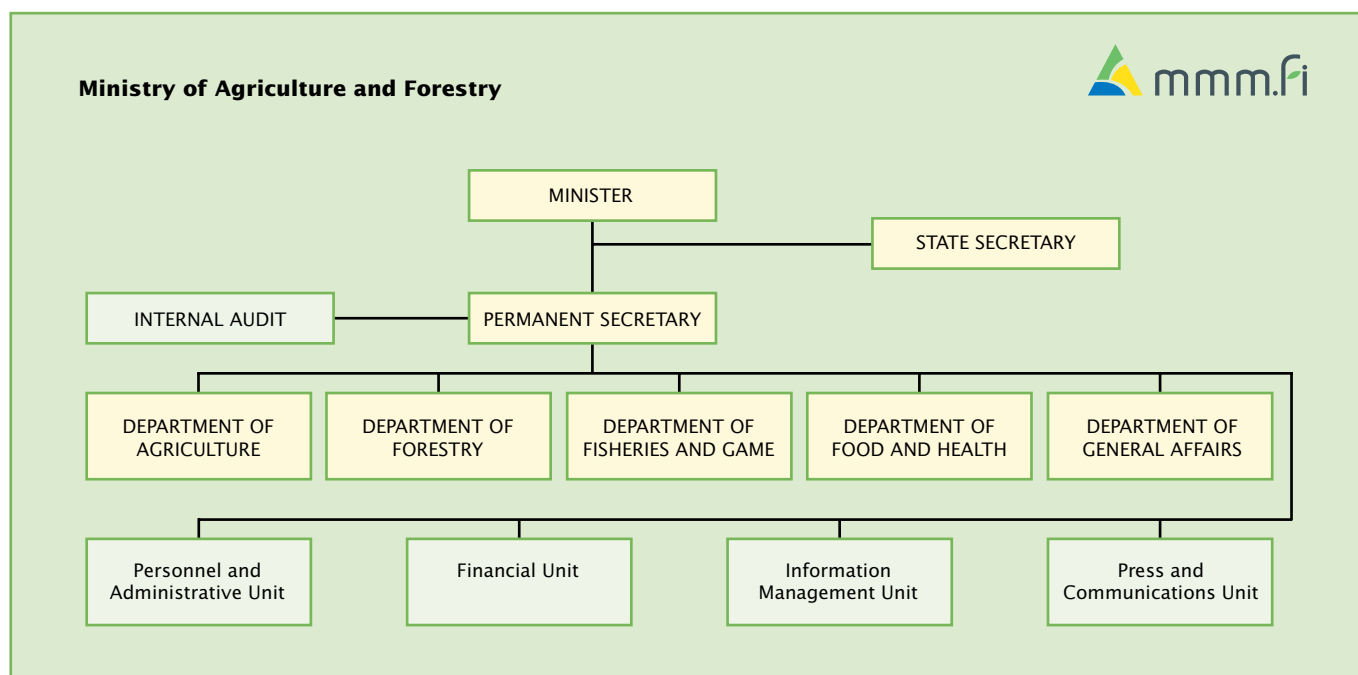
The Department of Food and Health deals with the quality and safety of foodstuffs, animal and plant health, animal welfare, and production inputs of agriculture. The Finnish Food Safety Authority Evira carries out the implementation tasks for the entire food production chain.

The Department of Fisheries and Game is responsible for the policies concerning game and hunting, fisheries and reindeer husbandry. The Department is assisted by the Finnish Game and Fisheries Research Institute, 11 Regional Fisheries Units, Hunters' Central Organisation and Game Management Districts.

The Department of General Affairs is concerned with land surveying, waters and sustainable use of natural resources. Altogether 13 Regional Environment Centres ensure the sustainable use of water resources in their own territories.

The Department of Agriculture is responsible for the agricultural and rural policy. The Agency for Rural Affairs implements the EU and national support schemes and makes the payments. It also functions as the Finnish paying agency. Implementation tasks are carried out by 15 Employment and Economic Development Centres and municipalities.

The Department of Forestry prepares Finnish forest policy, which is implemented by 13 Regional Forestry Centres.





Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry
PO Box 30, FI-00023 GOVERNMENT
Helsinki, Finland
Tel: +358 9 16001 Fax: +358 9 160 54202

