



2022 TOP 100 GOOD PRACTICE STORY

Title of the Story: WHAT A FISHY STORY

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Country: ESTONIA

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Submission category: *(Please check one of the boxes that indicates the focus of your story)*

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- Governance, Reset & Recovery
- Nature & Scenery
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DESCRIBE YOUR GOOD PRACTICE STORY

Address each aspect of your good practice story in the different sections being specific including relevant quantitative and qualitative information.

Issues faced

Saaremaa is an island of Estonia in the Baltic Sea. We view and wish to introduce Saaremaa as a place in this increasingly hectic world where green forests make you green with envy; where the sea is sacred and the source of life and wellbeing. The locals carry a silent but unwavering pride. They hold their back straight and their head high, as if they had an invisible coif or a hat to wear at all times. That is how proud they are of their culture and heritage and And who could beat the island humour. The island where you protect the environment while taking care of yourself.

Saaremaa and its nearby islands have been a part of the UNESCO „Man and Biosphere“ area for about 30 years – meaning that the islanders live in harmony with nature and consider sustainability a part of their daily lives. However, a luxurious living environment in isolation does not give us an opportunity to escape the issue of sustainability, which is the greatest challenge in today's world, as the life and welfare of the islanders has always been dependant on the sea. It provides our daily food, keeps us in touch with the neighbouring islands and it brings visitors from far and wide. Therefore, we are really invested in the health and diversity of the Baltic Sea. A brief overview of the issues that the Baltic Sea is facing:

Excess phosphorus and nitrogen - the Baltic Sea is connected to the rest of the world only through the narrow Danish straits, which is why the water exchange in the Baltic Sea is slow. Excess phosphorus and nitrogen accumulate in the sea, which causes the growth of algae.

Pollution invisible to the eye - microplastics, drug residues and heavy metals are found in the Baltic Sea.

Noise - Even underwater, sound plays a very important role. The more noise in the water, the less the fish and marine mammals are able to communicate with each other and the more stressed they are. The Baltic Sea is one of the busiest bodies of water in terms of transport.

Foreign species and the well-being of fish and other marine organisms - the Baltic Sea is the world's youngest sea, and the fauna here has not yet managed to weave a strong network of relationships. Therefore, it is easy for new invasive entrants to find their free niche.

Our good practice story is about co-operation and passion of a community; about professional and recreational fishermen, who have taken upon themselves the mission to preserve our nature and diversity of life in the Baltic Sea – to look back on our traditions and to do things the way they used to be done. The key is to give back.

Methods, steps and tools applied

There are multiple of examples how small groups of people are behind big changes. The soul of this project is Taavo and Kristjan. Taavo has who is an entrepreneur, professional fisherman, fishing guide and owner of the Käbruotsa farmhouse has introduced us their philosophy and goals. We met in Käbruots, what we can say it is the hub of this project. It is located in the beautiful village of Ruhve near the sea in Saaremaa.

Fishing and sailing has always been a part of the islanders DNA, a part of our way of living. The reality used to be that every household had it's own small boat to ease the everyday life. Fishes were mostly





caught for their own consumption, also it was an important exchange for other goods. Times have changed - overconsumption is now the norm and the natural habitats of fish population are decreasing. In the search for a solution to these problems, Taavo and Kristjan have brought together like-minded people – professional and recreational fishermen, enthusiasts of the community. Together they founded an NGO „Saaremaa Kalavaru“ (Saaremaa Fish Reserve) they now work together with scientists and governmental organizations to fulfill their goals.

Their mission is to increase the fish stock in the Baltic Sea and educate the future generations on fish and fishing. Their motto is „if You want to get something, you have to give something“. There are 4 main goals for the NGO: Co-operation with the environmental and voluntary fish protection organizations for the protection of fish stocks; to restore and create spawn areas; promote sustainable and ethical fishing; to increase fish stocks through settlements. NGO’s activities to fulfill their goals:

Project „Restocking juvenile Pike“

Knowing that seawater quality has deteriorated, climate change has not had a good effect on spring spawners, spring high waters are no longer what they were 10-20+ years ago spawning areas have disappeared as a result of human activity, pike spawners have appeared to face spawning traps (the fish spawn, but the roe remains dry). They were convinced that boosting pike stocks would fulfill the purpose of having proper pike populations in the coming years. In co-operation with scientists and professionals, they caught 200 kg of pikes (which were all returned to the sea in good condition), gathered the roe by milking female pikes and gathered sperm from male fish. With the help of artificial insemination, 350 000 juvenile pikes were restocked to the sea. This goes hand in hand with the improvement and creation of spawn areas to make this process sustainable. On a national level, the 5-fish-per-day norm for recreational anglers that came into effect this year will certainly contribute to sustaining pike stocks. After long discussions with the officials of the Environmental Board and the Ministry of the Environment, scientists of the Estonian Maritime Institute of the University of Tartu started preparing a similar next project with eels.

Historical fisherman’s knowledge to masses

As said before, Käbruotsa is the hub for this project. One of the main goals of the tourist farm, is to promote sustainable fishing among their guests. For the last 30 years, Taavo has advocated the "catch and release" method of fishing. They let all the large adult fish (capable of breeding) back in the water, because the future of the fish stocks depends on them. Releasing the fish correctly takes a lot of knowledge and right techniques, so that the fish can get back into the water as quickly as possible and without excessive entanglement. Taavo also teaches this to his customers because you catch only as much as you need.

Indirect contribution from tourists

Even if you are not a keen fisherman, you are contributing to fulfill their idea when you are a client of Käbruotsa. In the summer of 2020, a decision was made that the vacation farm allocates 3% of its annual turnover to activities that contribute to maintaining and increasing Saaremaa's fish stocks.





Key success factors

Local community with their leaders and mindset of „if You want to get something, you have to give something“ are the main success factors behind this story. The communication and co-operation between all parties involved - the community, professional and hobby fishermen, public sector on a governmental level and researchers (Tartu University) - has been remarkable under the Leadership of NGO „Saaremaa Kalavaru“ (Saaremaa Fish Reserve). The NGO received addition for LEADER project funds also donations from approximately 70 people and companies total sum from them was 9000 euros.

Lessons learned

The restocking of juvenile fish has been successful, although we must face that we do not yet know the final result. In these kind of projects you need patience because it is that future generation will benefit from today's action. Therefore the storytelling and marketing part is crucial we must give on the momentum and passion to keep on heritage of our grandparents. Take what you need but not more and always give back.

Results, achievements and recognitions

Results: Collecting the wild pike specimen from the sea for artificial insemination was successful and 350 000 pike larvae were resettled to the Baltic Sea. It has been a great inspiration to do the same with eels in coming years.

Thousands of people, including youngsters have learned and practiced sustainable fishing therefore appreciate the heritage and nature little bit more.

Hundreds of people have contributed indirectly by staying in Käbruota.

It has sparked the attention of local DMO who has decided to dedicate the next years campaign „Life surrounded by the sea“.

Achievements: Cooperation in between different interest groups whose goals and methods to reach them usually do not align. Although the results will be seen in five years when the researchers can make conclusions based on the chemically marked larvae they had their experience of success that will give them the strength and power to carry to implement their motto „if You want to get something, you have to give something“.

Best recognition: All those interest groups would like to co-operate and give their share in the future projects and today we can already talk about next project which is the restocking of juvenile eel.

Additional references

National media (all provides links are in estonian)

News in Estonian National Broadcasting. About pike restocking project:

<https://www.err.ee/1608187351/saarlased-aitavad-kaasa-haugivarude-sailimisele>

Interview about sustainable fishing:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6GP14c6oinQ>





Estonian Fishing magazine. About pike restocking project:

<https://www.digikalastaja.ee/2021/11/10/saaremaa-vetesse-asustati-350-000-haugimaimu/>

Õhtuleht newspaper. How to develop sustainable fishing:

<https://loodus.oh tuleht.ee/1006907/taavo-kuusiku-edendab-saares-jatkusuutlikku-kalapuuki>

Local media of Saaremaa

Saarte Hääl newspaper. Fishing pike:

<https://saartehaal.postimees.ee/6968871/reportaaz-haugita-jaada-on-saaremaal-raske>

Saarte Hääl newspaper. Restrictions on pike fishing:

<https://saartehaal.postimees.ee/7217783/saarlaste-lobitoo-kandis-vilja-paevas-voib-puuda-kuni-viis-haugi>

Saarte Hääl newspaper. The first impressions of pike project:

<https://saartehaal.postimees.ee/7021743/kalamehed-tahavad-hakata-haugivaru-suurendama>

Saarte Hääl newspaper. 350 000 juvenile pike restocked to Saaremaa:

<https://saartehaal.postimees.ee/7252138/350-000-noort-haugi-laksid-iseseisva-elu-peale>

Saarte Hääl newspaper. Collecting roe from pike:

<https://saartehaal.postimees.ee/7231395/haugilups-tugevdab-kalade-sugu>

Saarte Hääl newspaper. Idea of restocking the eels:

<https://saartehaal.postimees.ee/7329390/saaremaa-vetesse-kolib-peagi-elama-150-000-angerjamaimu>

