

Factsheet on food waste reduction and related eco-innovations in South Ostrobothnia, Finland

ERDF 2014-2020: 24.4 Mio EUR

The main objectives of ERDF are: 1) *The competitiveness of SMEs* (for example projects promoting low-carbon businesses), 2) *Producing and utilizing new information and knowledge*

It addresses the Regional Strategy of South Ostrobothnia's Investment Priorities: Objective 1.2.1: *Promoting efficient and sustainable food systems and new bio-economical solutions*

This document provides a brief overview of how the challenges and opportunities faced by South Ostrobothnia on food waste and eco-innovations are addressed by the ERDF (or another fund).

1. Situation and key challenges

South Ostrobothnia covers an area of 14 000 km² of which 94,1 % is rural (defined as settlements of less than 10 000 people, open countryside and some sparsely populated/remote areas).

The total population is 0.2 million – of which 29.4 % live in cities.

The area of South Ostrobothnia faces many challenges regarding the environment, resource efficiency and food waste:

As all other areas in Europe, South Ostrobothnia is facing the challenge of reducing greenhouse gas emissions. At the same time the target of reducing emissions and achieving more sustainable society offers a possibility to find new innovations and increase the competitiveness of the area and its enterprises.

According to a recent study in Finland, an average consumer in Finland throws away 23 kg of food every year. In food services and restaurants the amount of food waste covers about one fifth (1/5) of all food handled and prepared. Based on calculations, 75-140 kg of edible food is wasted annually also in the Finnish food industry, which is a major business field in South Ostrobothnia.

As producing and consuming food forms more than one fifth of the climate impacts of all consuming, it is clear that reducing greenhouse gas emissions of the region requires actions taken to cut the unacceptable amount of food waste in every part of the food chain.

2. How the Region of South Ostrobothnia will address these challenges towards 2020

According to the Regional Strategy of South Ostrobothnia the county has engaged in developing the area as a Food Region with a remarkable potential in Bio-Economy. That is a strategical choice which leads to the target of being a forerunner in technical and ecological development of the food system.

The aims concerning the food system aligned in the Regional Strategy of South Ostrobothnia:

- Strengthening the national and international food systems innovation cluster of South Ostrobothnia
- Promoting sustainable food systems and new bio-economical solutions
- New product and service innovations in the food system
 - o Efficient and sustainable processes
 - o Smart usage of materials and resource streams
 - o Utilizing the side streams in the food industry with the help of new technology
- Promoting the arise of knowledge and innovation environments related to food systems
- Promoting the competitiveness and profitability of food industry
- Increasing awareness of the impacts of consuming manners and choices among the consumers

Funding sources: ERDF (24,4 Mio EUR), Rural Development Programme (project and enterprise funds 57.2 M EUR, Leader groups 23.8 Mio EUR), ESF (12.7 Mio EUR)

Total 118.1 Mio EUR

3. What kind of eco-innovations may offer opportunities to help South Ostrobothnia to address these challenges?

Remarkable domains of eco-innovations that could offer opportunities for South Ostrobothnia to reduce food waste and achieve more sustainable food systems:

- Recognizing, measuring and monitoring food waste in different levels of the food system (facts and knowledge about food waste is needed to recognize the problem and the different effects of it)
- Side streams and their utilization in the food industry
- Product innovations that create food products and packages that help reducing food waste by the end users (already some examples found in dairy production)
- Change of the consuming manners of individual consumers
- Products and services that help individual consumers to reduce food waste
- Services and practices that help retail companies and restaurants to reduce food waste (for example the ResQ-club application has already gained foothold in the area and is growing week by week)
- Education about food waste and its impacts related to environment and economy

Key stakeholders: Research and education organisations, Regional waste agency, food industry companies, restaurants and food services, etc.