

## **The Finnish fur farmer impaled in social change**

Abstract from the doctor dissertation, social sciences

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The 1960s the period of regional development policy was about creating new jobs. One expanding trade was fur farming; farmers were encouraged by promises of a higher living standard. In the 1980s there were 500 fur farmers in Eastern Finland. By fishing, purchasing offal, and mixing grain, they kept the foxes, raccoon dogs, and minks alive and well. The chief client was the fur auction by the Finnish fur sales company Turkistuottajat Oy Ltd.

Farming benefited from the liberation of foreign trade. In the early 1990s, Finland was hit by an economic crisis that restructured foreign trade. When farmers encountered poor demand and lowered public subsidies, about 90 per cent of them collapsed. Later, new fur auction customers from the Far East and Russia encouraged again farmers to develop their trade. In 2008 there were 17 fulltime fur farms in Eastern Finland.

The animal rights movement branded farmers as trampers of animal rights. One way of action was sabotage resulting in unsolved cases of vandalism.

The social practices and meanings of fur farm are written out as an ethnography. It leans on a definition of the production system of the fur trade. The data used are statistics, archives and interviewed people who include farmers, family members, and public authorities. All data was divided into two generations of fur farmers. The first one had practised their trade during the optimistic era of regional development policies, whereas the second one had suffered from financial straits and stigmatization.