



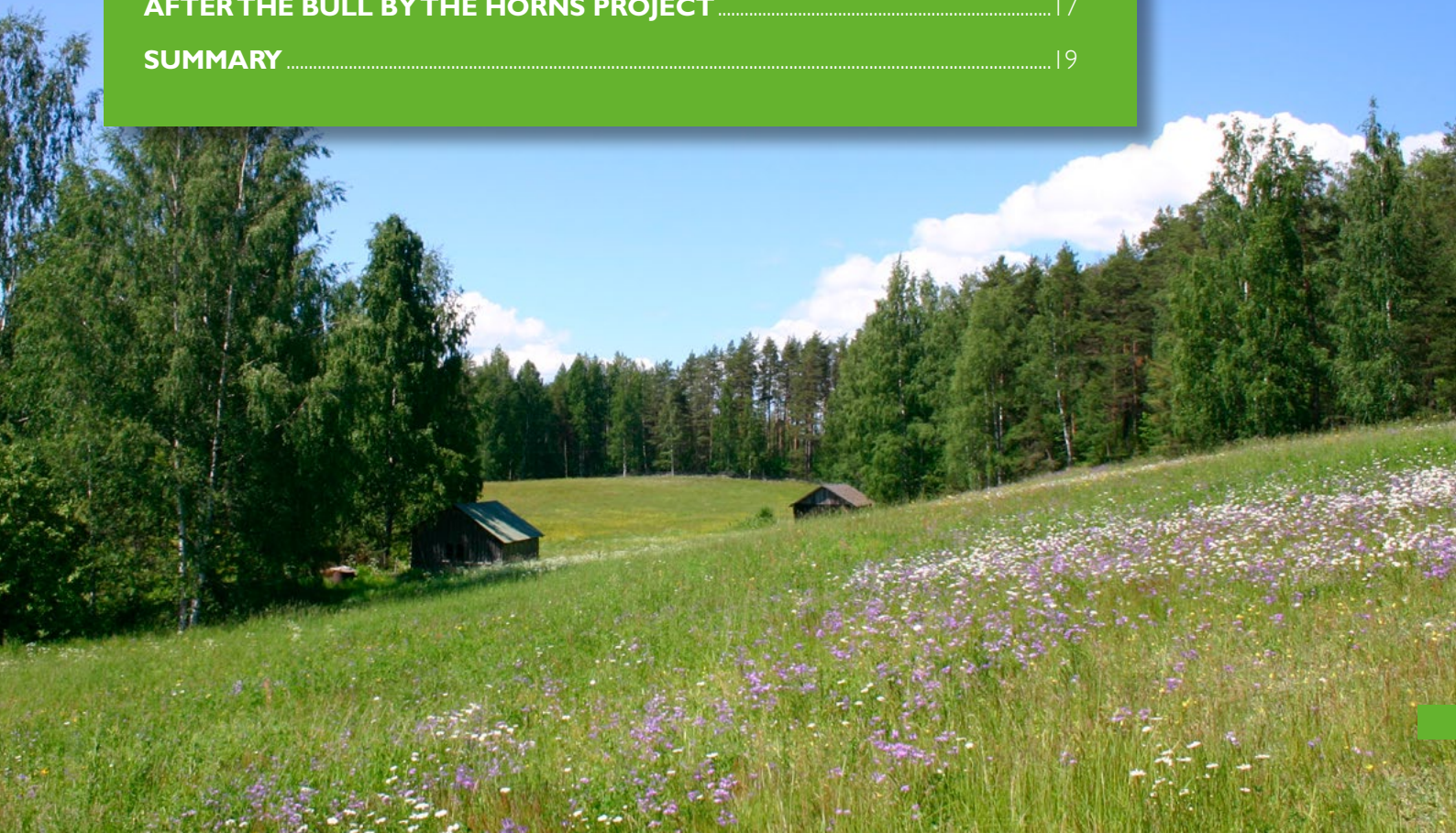
The Finnish Candidate  
for the Landscape Award  
of the Council of Europe

**2015**

BULL BY  
THE HORNS  
**Grazing in nature  
and landscape  
management**

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# INTRODUCTION

In the Finnish rural landscape, fields, forests and water bodies form a framework that conceals a staggering amount of minute variation. The diversity of various ecotones as well as small meadows and pastures is surprising. Among the most valuable of these habitats are traditional rural biotopes: natural pastures and meadows, such as dry meadows, old slash-and-burn areas, wooded pastures and grazed woodlands, which are shaped and maintained by traditional agriculture. There are no two identical traditional rural biotopes; they each have their own special characteristics. They are home to a myriad rare species and boast a rich diversity of flora and fauna despite their relatively small size. A significant amount of national cultural heritage, both material and immaterial, is also linked to the traditional rural landscapes.

Natural biodiversity cannot always be conserved without management. The mutual variation and diverse richness of traditional rural biotopes is based on their continuous use and management by means of grazing, harvesting and clearing. Due to intensified agriculture, the small-scale variation and diversity linked to traditional livestock farming is disappearing rapidly from the Finnish rural landscape. Traditional rural biotopes have been reforested, cleared as fields and left unmanaged. Field edges have been straightened and abandoned lands repurposed for productive use. Less than 1% of the amount of traditional rural biotopes at the beginning of the 20th century remains. At the same time, the species habiting these areas have been becoming increasingly threatened.

The impoverishment of agricultural nature and the stagnation of the rural landscape are the two most essential, and interlinked, problems facing rural areas. Grazing can provide a means to tackle both challenges. Grazing is a good way to maintain the diversity of rural nature and cultural landscapes, and diversify the operations of livestock farms. The grazing animals also enliven the rural landscape. Those managing the remaining traditional rural biotopes are doing valuable work. In addition to the beautiful landscape, they are maintaining biodiversity and the ecosystem services that form the foundation of sustainable agriculture.

The purpose of the Bull by the Horns project was to promote grazing in the management of nature and natural landscape, and the work was a cooperative effort by the Centres for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment (ELY Centres) and ProAgria services in the project area. The Bull by the Horns project organised landscape management for areas particularly valuable in terms of their nature and landscape. The project forged cooperation networks where the landowners of valuable sites made grazing agreements with livestock owners. This resulted in management arrangements being established for 220 hectares of threatened traditional rural biotopes, and the rare species contained therein. At the same time, efforts were made to prevent the harmful overgrowth of landscapes, and local people were encouraged to maintain their local landscapes. Funding for the management efforts was received through special support under the agri-environmental aid arrangement. The aim of the project, which succeeded rather well, was to find grazers for the most valuable traditional rural biotopes in the area encompassing several regions.

The project focused on farms, traditional rural biotopes, nature reserves, Natura 2000 sites, local landscapes of villages and valuable landscape areas. The project cooperated closely with regions; disseminated know-how acquired in previous projects and developed practices for providing advice regarding special support under the agri-environmental aid scheme. Livestock farmers, associations and rural communities are the principal beneficiaries of the project, but the benefits are also reaped by everyone living in or visiting the project area. The Bull by the Horns project met an observed need: rural areas require advice, instructions and practical assistance in the management of their nature and landscape.

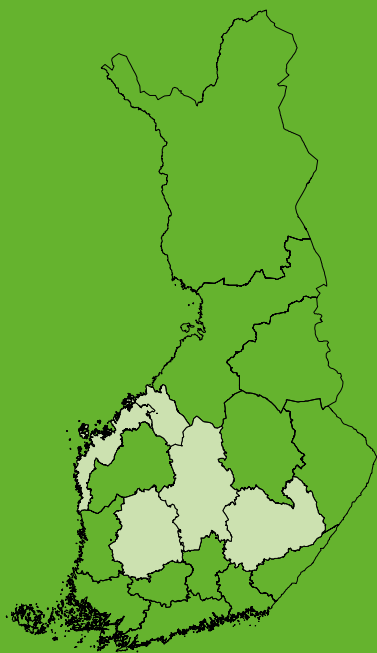




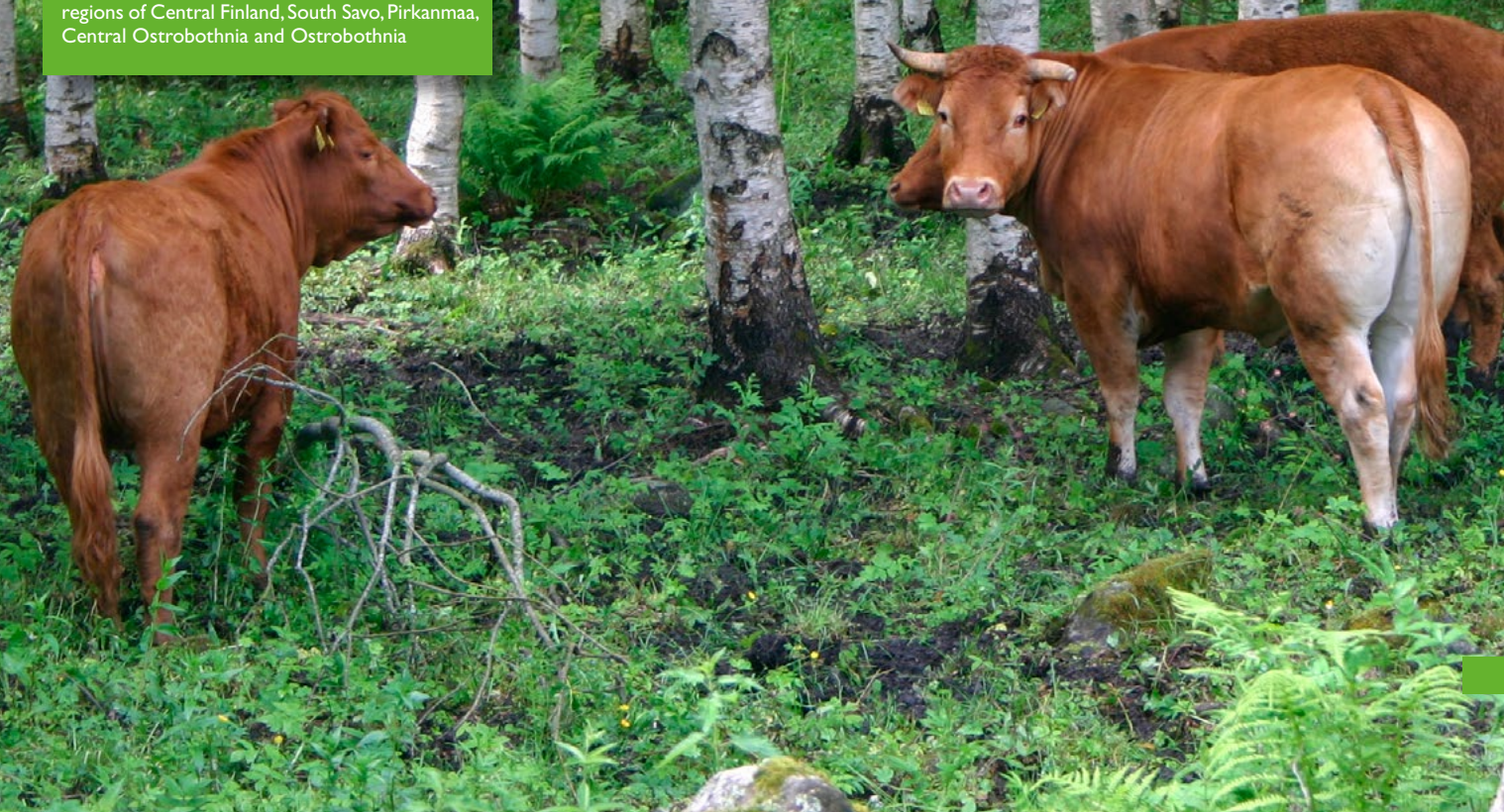
## ACTIVE PARTIES

The project was administered by the ELY Centre of Central Finland (the environment and natural resources area of responsibility). The cooperation included the ELY Centre of South Savo (the environment and natural resources area of responsibility), Rural Women's Advisory Organisation of ProAgria South-Savo, Rural Women's Advisory Organisation of ProAgria Pirkanmaa, the ELY Centre of South Ostrobothnia (the environment and natural resources area of responsibility) and ProAgria Österbottens Svenska Lantbrukssällskap. The environment and natural resources area of responsibility of the ELY Centre of Pirkanmaa took part in the project as an outsourcing service. The project also involved collaboration with PerinneELO, the national expert group for the management of traditional rural biotopes, the University of Jyväskylä and the environment services of Metsähallitus. Local agricultural entrepreneurs and associations participated in the project, along with a wide variety of other collaborators. The project employed 22 people, full-time or part-time, and the total budget was €666,900. The project was funded by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development. The efforts would not have been successful without smooth cooperation and the professional expertise of all those involved.

The old slash-and-burn field of Iso-Ahola, which carries significant national value, commands a beautiful view spanning all the way to Lake Alajärvi. In the early 2000s, the field was not used for grazing, but many plants that used to inhabit the area have returned with the reintroduction of grazing animals.  
Photo: Kaisa Raatikainen.



The Bull by the Horns project covered the regions of Central Finland, South Savo, Pirkanmaa, Central Ostrobothnia and Ostrobothnia



## BULL BY THE HORNS 2009–2012

The Bull by the Horns project sought to increase the use of grazing livestock in the management of biodiversity by indicating areas that would benefit from use as pastures, increasing the efficiency of the use of various forms of support and diverting additional funding to practical management efforts. The project was in operation from 1 June 2009 to 30 September 2012 and covered the regions of Central Finland, South Savo, Pirkanmaa, Central Ostrobothnia and Ostrobothnia. The core operating model of the project was to spark cooperation between local communities, support them in their efforts to manage their local landscapes and diversify the operations of livestock farms. Over the course of the project, several cooperation networks were developed, within which landowners and livestock owners began management efforts through a grazing agreement. The project aimed to promote networking not only between landowners and the parties handling landscape management in the planning areas, but also between various operators involved in the project.

The goal of the Bull by the Horns project was to ensure that financial support for biodiversity and landscape management would be utilised in full and funnelled to locations where it would most further the diversity of the heritage, nature and landscapes in rural areas. The project paid particular attention to challenging sites that had been left untended for some time, that had special natural value and that required several parties to work together in order to restart the management activities. Another aim was to involve local people in the efforts to promote biodiversity.

Management arrangements were established for valuable locations that required care and were relevant to maintaining the cultural heritage, landscape and biodiversity of rural areas with the help of local agricultural entrepreneurs and associations. The project workers created detailed management plans for the sites and provided funding advice. Demand was highest for financial support advice provided to associations and for advice regarding investment support for the basic restoration of traditional rural biotopes.

The project focused on arranging continuous management for the locations, and on organising the required funding channels. The management or leasing of meadows and wooded pastures offers a source of income for farmers and livestock owners. A landowner or possible lessee who undertakes to manage the landscape in question is entitled to apply for partially EU-funded special support. Among the forms of agri-environmental special support for grazing, the project's advisory activities covered the financial support paid for traditional biotypes and efforts to promote the diversity of nature and landscapes. These types of support are available to farmers or registered associations with land tenure.

Grazing is a very minor ecological disturbance that promotes the diversity of species and increases the heterogeneity of the environment. Varying traditional biotopes also provide plenty of stimuli that have a positive effect on the well-being of the grazing animals. Photo: Leena Lahdenvesi-Korhonen.



The Bull by the Horns project prepared management plans for specific locations and provided advice regarding management funding.  
Photo: Tomi Aho.

## Management planning and special support advice

The Bull by the Horns project created nine wide-reaching general plans for nature and landscape management in, for example, valuable landscape areas where no such plan had yet been prepared. The aim of the plans was to increase landscape management through grazing. These

“MALU” plans were used to gather existing information from valuable rural areas and direct funding intended for nature management to these areas. Biodiversity sites were specified in the target areas of the MALU plans, with a special focus on locations eligible for grazing. Other natural habitats that could benefit from grazing were also taken into account. The plans served as the basis for more detailed management plans and follow-up plans. The residents of the



planning areas were encouraged to restore and maintain the sites. The locals were informed of the funding opportunities for management efforts – e.g. forms of special support. At a later stage, more detailed management plans and special support plans could be prepared for individual locations. The goal was to find people and parties to manage the locations in the planning areas.

If necessary, site-specific management planning and support advice services were expanded outside the MALU planning areas. Many of the locations were challenging and required precise customisation as they featured threatened species or were subject to restrictions due planning or nature conservation. Some locations were situated far from a livestock farm. Many livestock owners were interested in managing extensive collections of areas, which meant that special attention had to be paid to the supervision and transport of animals between pastures. The project organisation enabled the smooth cooperation of the ELY Centres and ProAgria landscape management advisors, which was found to be highly efficient and useful especially in terms of planning the management of nature reserves and locations with threatened species.

The management of the sites involved several people, and the project planner introduced them, leading the negotiations concerning management arrangements. The project provided the opportunity to engage in first-rate advisory work. In many cases, contact with the people managing the sites did not end with the preparation of the management plan: help was also provided in the support application phase and upon the commencement of the actual management work.

The project enabled the organisation involved to give first-rate advice on special support for the management of traditional rural biotopes and the promotion of biodiversity and diverse landscapes, and on the non-production-oriented investment support for the initial clearing and fencing of valuable traditional rural biotopes. This advice was free of charge and extremely popular: landowners and livestock farmers contacted the project workers who utilised background information to assess whether or not the sites in question were eligible for financial support and which form of support would be best for each case. In addition to this, advice was provided on the support application process. Among other things, the project created a widely-adopted land lease agreement template for leasing natural pastures.

## The Laidunpankki website

One concrete tool in the promotion of natural diversity is the online Laidunpankki.fi website, which was developed further and revamped with the resources of the Bull by the Horns project. Laidunpankki is an online service for owners of grazing animals who are interested in landscape management or nature conservation. The site can be used to seek additional pastures for animals or find animals to maintain a landscape. Traditional rural biotopes and other natural pastures are good grazing grounds for sheep and suckler cows, but such lands are sparse on large livestock farms, as even low-yield areas have been cleared to serve as fields and woodlands are used for forestry. There are plenty of areas that could be managed through grazing, and also animals that could maintain new areas by grazing are available. The Laidunpankki service aims to bring the supply and demand together.

Laidunpankki's operating principle is to find parties on both sides within a suitable distance and provide tips on how they can establish common operating principles. The aim is to increase contractual cooperation that will benefit both parties. The Laidunpankki continues to forge links between pastures and animals in need of them, and its operations area expanding constantly. During the Bull by the Horns project, the listings on the Laidunpankki service nearly tripled and the service gained media coverage. Currently, the service features nearly 90 listings for pastures and nearly 50 listings for livestock. Currently, the listings are mostly from Western and Central Finland, but the goal is to expand the operations to cover the entire country. The service is maintained by the ProAgria Southern Finland association.

The update improved the usability of the website, which is hoped to encourage owners of animals and pastures

to post listings. The site also provides comprehensive information on grazing and the pertaining agreements. The site includes instructions for the practical implementation of contractual grazing as well as agreement templates that have been tried and proven in practice. Information on special support under the agri-environmental aid scheme is also available on the site. All services on the site are free of charge.

The needs of landowners and livestock farmers meet in landscape grazing. Natural pastures provide affordable feed for horses, cattle and sheep, which revitalise and maintain the landscape while feeding. Grazing on a traditional rural biotopes also increases animal well-being, since the pasture feature stimuli and varying terrain, in addition to highly nutritious natural feed. The aim is to harness grazing as a means to help the beautiful Finnish rural landscapes stay open, well-tended and diverse. In many cases, grazing is the best possible solution. The Laidunpankki service is an opportunity to take part in landscape management, nature conservation and the promotion of its diversity in a practical way that is also beneficial to those engaging in it.

## Study trip to Swedish landscape management sites

The Bull by the Horns project also gathered experiences and information from successful examples of grazing abroad. A short study trip to landscape management locations in the counties of Stockholm and Södermanland in Sweden was conducted in the spring of 2011. During the trip, the participants were introduced to landscape management at Swedish natural sites and the model for coordinating the management of Swedish traditional rural biotopes. Know-how on managing the participants' lands

The Bull by the Horns project forged cooperation networks, through which the landowners of valuable sites made grazing agreements with livestock owners. The Laidunpankki.fi online service will continue to help parties on both sides within a suitable distance to find one another. Photo: Riikka Söyrinki.





was also gained. The trip also provided the opportunity to compare the environmental aid systems of Finland and Sweden, and see how natural sites and their products have been marketed to the public in Sweden. Project workers and farmers involved in the project took part in the study trip.

The locations visited during the trip formed a diverse whole. They included groves, wooded pastures, woodlands, meadows and beaches. A local guide was mostly available on-site. The trip also included a presentation on the Swedish special support system. Plenty of positive feedback was received on both the presentation and the visits. The locations were found interesting and the visits sparked a great deal of discussion and contemplation. The people presenting the Swedish special support system knew the subject matter well, and the on-site visits that followed did a good job of demonstrating the theoretical portion in practice. Based on the feedback, the study trip was an eye-opening experience for the participants. In addition to this, the participants gained a wealth of practical examples for their own operations – on various animal enclosures, grazing and taking flora and fauna into account. Experiences gained on the trip were also implemented in the preparation efforts for the new agricultural development plan for continental Finland.

## Other

The conclusion of the project coincided with the preparation of the agri-environmental support system for 2014–2020, and Bull by the Horns Project Manager Kaisa Raatikainen actively participated in the efforts within the framework of the PerinneELO environmental support group and the subordinate working group on diversity and the environment as regards the new environmental compensation. The experience gained from the project, particularly regarding support

advice for associations and non-production-oriented investment support, was valuable to the groups' efforts.

The project operations initiated a new field of research at the University of Jyväskylä. With help from the Olvi Foundation and the Ministry of the Environment's PUTTE funding, M.Sc. Kaisa Mustola's (now Tervonen) Master's thesis on the effect of grazing history on fungal diversity in broadleaved wood pastures was expanded into the "Metsälaidunten sien- ja sammallajisto" (Species of fungi and moss in woodland pastures) project, which will be carried out between 2010 and 2014. Once the Bull by the Horns project had concluded, Project Manager Kaisa Raatikainen initiated research for her doctoral thesis "The management and significance of traditional rural biotopes from the perspective of sustainable development" with funding from the Maj and Tor Nessling Foundation. The study sought solutions to the questions and problems related to the management of traditional rural biotopes that had emerged during the Bull by the Horns project. In addition to this, Ph.D. Panu Halme received four-year funding from the Kone Foundation for his project on the management of traditional environments and substitutive cultural environments, whose goals include determining the extent to which road sides can serve as replacement habitats for meadow species, and whether or not there are differences in the structure of species communities at different trophic levels.

As part of communications efforts, the Bull by the Horns project also launched a series of post cards that present the characteristics of the landscapes in the project – they became very popular. The practice of utilising postcards has since then been widely adopted into project communication work.

The old Petäjävesi Church was inducted into the UNESCO World Heritage List in 1994. The idea of using the meadows surrounding the church as pastures had been up in the air for quite some time, and now sheep are grazing on the meadows. Photo: Kaisa Raatikainen.



The Bull by the Horns project was nominated as the development project of 2010 in the Rural Network's national Best Practices competition, and made it all the way to the finals. The goal of the Rural Network's operations is to present the results of the Finnish rural development efforts and relay good practices for further use. The purpose of the competition is to communicate information on the Finnish rural entrepreneurship that has been created within development programs, and on development projects that increase the vitality of rural areas.

# ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The supra-regional project tightened cooperation between the regions, disseminated know-how accumulated from prior projects and unified operating methods in the project area. The project succeeded in maintaining and improving the diversity of rural nature and landscapes, and in diversifying the operations of livestock farms in the face of agricultural changes. The use of grazing livestock – cattle, sheep and horses – in the management of biodiversity was increased by indicating areas that would benefit from use as pastures, increasing the efficiency of the use of various forms of support and diverting additional funding to practical management efforts.

The project created business activity in the field of nature and landscape management in rural areas, as it provided a source of alternative income. The management of valuable nature and landscape locations was organised through local efforts. Some of the resources targeted at the management of nature reserves could be directed to local entrepreneurs. At the same time, the diversity of nature and landscapes and the state of management efforts were promoted significantly. The project increased knowledge on traditional rural biotopes and the diversity of agricultural nature among landowners, livestock farmers, representatives of Leader activity groups and residents of the project area. Additional locations were brought within the coverage of the special agri-environmental support. By focusing the support funding and guiding valuable locations to the special support, it was ensured that funds directed at special support could promote the conservation of biodiversity in the best possible way.

In addition to nine extensive MALU plans, 54 target-specific management plans were prepared. In total, the site-specific planning covered 398.5 ha of Natura 2000 areas, 223.5 ha of valuable inventoried traditional rural biotopes and 380.0 ha of other landscape management sites. As part of the planning work, 33 inventories of new traditional rural biotopes were conducted and the condition of 217 previously inventoried locations was monitored. In addition to this, special support advice was provided to over 60 locations where the actual planning was conducted by the support applicant.

The project provided advice related to special support and landscape management to a total of 438 landowners and/or farmers. As a result of the advisory efforts, the areas of responsibility for business and industry, labour force, competence and cultural activities in the ELY Centres received 117 applications. Particular attention was paid to the support advice provided to associations, which was received by 51 associations. 14 support applications for association were prepared in the project. The project was particularly successful in increasing the number of applications for non-production-oriented investment support: 33 applications for support intended of the initial clearing and fencing of valuable traditional rural biotopes were submitted (45% of the applications in the entire country in this specific period). Using financial support to fund management brings continuity to the efforts, as the five-year support agreements continued after the end of the project. Carefully prepared management plans and support advice give the applicants confidence for renewing the agreements.

The road linking the villages of Viisarimäki and Rutalahti runs through the exceptionally beautiful cultural landscape of the Vihijärvi Valley. This is one of the nine areas for which a general nature and landscape management plan was prepared within the scope of the Bull by the Horns project. Photo: Tomi Aho.



## CUSTOMER AND PARTNER EXPERIENCES OF THE PROJECT

Plenty of positive feedback was received with regard to the project from customers of the support advisory service and other collaborators. The following are examples of comments that were sparked when experiences were being collected for the project's final publication called *Laiduntarinoita*:

*“The project has enabled us to build cooperation arrangements that are essential to nature and landscape management at our location.”*

*“It goes without saying that the project has been helpful. It's always good to have someone urging you along and reminding you of what needs to be done.”*

*“The management plans, in particular, have been a big help, since they can be difficult to prepare on your own.”*

*“The project has been a huge help – a big thanks to the planner.”*

*“The contact has been exemplary and I've always felt that the people involved really put their minds to finding to right solution.”*

## AFTER THE BULL BY THE HORNS PROJECT

In addition to implementing the management plans in the designated locations, the operating models of the Bull by the Horns project will be continued by maintaining and developing the Laidunpankki service. The locations for which management arrangements were implemented through the project could, in the future, be used as model areas and farms for various communication and education purposes, for example. Furthermore, there is a clear need for new projects that would continue the application of the Bull by the Horns practices. It is important to utilise the information and networks gained and built through the project in future contexts to enable the distribution and application of its good practices.

The general view has been that the project idea is good and it is likely that similar projects will continue to emerge. In fact, even during the project, practices that were found feasible in the process were already disseminated outside the project area when projects including similar measures were initiated in Northern and Southern Finland (Maisemat ruotuun, Maaemo and Tasapainoa luontoon - Balans i naturen). In addition to this, once the Bull by the Horns project had concluded, the ProAgria centres of Central Finland and South Savo and the environment and natural resources areas of responsibility of the ELY Centres continued their landscape management cooperation within the framework of the Mahdollisuutena Maisema, MAMA project managed by ProAgria South Savo.



## SUMMARY

The Bull by the Horns project encouraged local people – agricultural entrepreneurs and associations – to participate in and take responsibility for the efforts to promote the biodiversity in their local environments. The goal was to maintain and promote the diversity of agricultural nature and landscapes, and to establish management arrangements for threatened natural habitats and species.

The Bull by the Horns project operated in several regions with the objective of conserving and improving the diversity of agricultural nature and diversifying the operations of livestock farms in the face of agricultural change. The project promoted the use of grazing animals for nature and landscape managed in order to prevent overgrowth in the project area and bring new threatened traditional biotypes, and their rare species, within the coverage of the management arrangements. The Centre for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment of Central Finland administered the landscape management project, which involved partners in four other regions in addition to central Finland: South Savo, Pirkanmaa, Central Ostrobothnia and Ostrobothnia.

The project activities exceeded all expectations. There was a clear demand for the project services, and within the scope of the project, management arrangements were established for a considerable number of valuable natural habitats and landscapes. The project organisation enabled the smooth cooperation of the ELY Centres and ProAgria landscape management advisors, which was found to be highly efficient and useful especially in terms of planning the management of nature reserves and locations with threatened species. The efforts would not have been successful without smooth cooperation and the professional expertise of all those involved. In their feedback, the participating agricultural entrepreneurs, livestock owners, landowners and associations praised the project. However, without their efforts and enthusiasm the project could not have been realised on the scale that it was. The participants will continue to manage their landscapes although the project itself has ended.

**The project is implemented by:** The ELY Centre of Central Finland, the ELY Centre of Pirkanmaa, the ELY Centre of South Savo, the ELY Centre of South Ostrobothnia, ProAgria Pirkanmaa, ProAgria South Savo and Österbottens Svenska Lantbrukssällskap.

Printed by Kopioniini Ltd., Helsinki, 2015. Cover photo: Tomi Aho. Layout: Erika Várkonyi/SYKE.

