



## Webinar: Wild Berries in Transition. Navigating Tradition, Sustainability, Labour and Innovation in the Nordic Region

**Time: 13.12. 10.00 - 13.00 CET**

[Webinar link](#)

**Program, please note that all times are in Central European Time (CET):**

### **10:00 – 10:05 Opening words**

*Seija Tuulentie, Research Professor in Arctic Sustainable Livelihoods. Natural Resources Institute Finland*

### **10:05 – 10:40 The World Changes, But Heritage of Nordic Wild Berries Remain**

*Rainer Peltola, Senior Scientist. Natural Resources Institute Finland*

The presentation explores the enduring significance of wild berries in the face of societal, economic, and environmental transformations. Beginning with the evolution of forest general use, the talk examines key milestones - land reforms, the development of everyone's rights, and the rise of commercial berry picking. The presentation also delves into the need for sustainable resource management and envisions potential futures for the utilization of wild berry resources, encompassing both industrial applications and recreational aspects. Amid uncertainty, the presentation underscores that informed, proactive approaches are essential for managing change and preserving the legacy of natural product use.

### **10:40 – 11:15 Challenges of labour in the wild berry industry**

*Charlotta Hedberg, Professor in Human geography and Nils Pettersson, Researcher. Umeå University*

Issues of labour have always encountered the development of the wild berry industry in Sweden and Finland but are today more topical than ever. The current form of the industry is dependent on foreign workers, and has been accused for labour exploitation and even forced labour. Presently, the governments of Sweden and Finland are acting to improve the situation, which has put the procedures around activities of labour import in the wild berry industry to the test. This presentation introduces challenges of labour in the wild berry industry in Sweden and Finland and brings some future issues of labour migration to the table of discussion.



## Wild Berries in Transition: Navigating Sustainability, Labour, and Innovation in the Nordic Region

**11:15 – 11:30 BREAK**

**11:30 – 12:05 Past, present and future. A journey through Norwegian wild berry traditions, innovations and research**

*Inger Martinussen, head of department Horticulture, NIBIO and Laura Jaakola, professor, University of Tromsø*

The tradition of wild berry harvesting in Norway has deep roots, initially serving as a vital food source and, more recently, transitioning into a recreational activity. This shift aligns with the growing interest in local, sustainable food sources. Despite this, Norway's infrastructure for picking, receiving, and storing these berries lags behind that of neighboring countries. Yet, the demand for Norwegian wild berries in various product lines is high. To address the need for a consistent supply of high-quality berries, research has been conducted on predictive models and mapping for optimal berry locations and yield estimations. Innovation and research have primarily focused on cultivating wild berry stands and studying the environmental impact on flowering, yield, and quality. Over time, new products have emerged, and many perceive potential in developing nature-based tourism. Towards the end of the presentation, potential business prospects will be discussed.

**12:05 – 12:40 From Forest to Orchard. Advancing the Domestication and Commercialization of European Blueberries in Denmark**

*Martin Jensen, Senior Scientist. Aarhus University*

The presentation will initially give a status on exploitation of wild berries in Denmark including regulation for private and commercial picking in public or privately owned forests. Then the R&D program of domestication of European blueberry, native to Denmark, to a new Danish machine harvested orchard crop will be presented, outlining the process from identification of barriers, important R&D knowledge that has been achieved, characteristics of the superior genotypes selected and the general progression of the program. Further needs and opportunities of research and development towards commercial implementation will be discussed. Finally, comments will be given on the potential use of the obtained Danish knowledge and superior genotypes in establishing production of 'genetically improved' and 'selected low frost risk forest areas and adapted to future mechanized harvest' with the aim to implement a 'semi-wild' European blueberry production in Nordic forests.

**12:40 – 13:00 Concluding remarks and discussion**

*Pasi Rautio, Research Professor in Silviculture. Natural Resources Institute Finland*