



FINNISH FUR BREEDERS' ASSOCIATION

Sustainability review  
2019-2020

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Sustainability review 2019 has been updated in June 2020 with the most recent fur industry’s key figures (incl. state taxation 2019). New extensive review will be available in 2021.

# 1. Executive Director's industry overview

**THE FUR INDUSTRY** extends widely into Finnish society. We employ approximately 4000 people each year in our country, and in the 2010s we have contributed an average of EUR 400–500 million per annum in export revenues to Finland. This is a significant figure, especially in view of the employment and revitalizing effect the fur business has, particularly in rural areas. The industry potential is significant and certified Finnish fur breeding has strong societal approval. The majority of Finns (55%) support domestic certified fur farming.

**IN 2018**, the Finnish Fur Breeders' Association started a project to raise the profile of the industry so that the public might receive more correct information about our operations. A success plan for the fur industry, approved by our Board of Directors, was created, with key promises supporting the goals of the fur industry 2018–2020 strategy, and beyond. As part of the project, in 2019 association's ProFur auxiliary business name was changed to FIFUR.

**THE CORNERSTONES** of our operation, through which the goals are achieved are: the well-being of every animal, every day at the centre; recognizable and developmental entrepreneurship; the fur economy as a part of the domestic circular economy; and fur as a natural useful garment. Backed by this success plan, fur industry communications have become more active, and discussions with stakeholders are now taking place in for example several social media channels. One of the most important tasks of FIFUR is to make our industry more widely known in Finland, and to present diverse, honest information about the fur industry.

**THE FINNISH FUR INDUSTRY** is moving along with the times as an innovative actor making long-term development and research efforts. The industry is constantly exploring new opportunities, among others in the area of circular economy. For example, new solutions for preserving the nutritive value of fur animal manure and solutions based on nutrient rotation are under development. The projects aim to make use of the nutrient-rich manure of fur animals in a more efficient manner.

The fur industry looks to the future with confidence, and with a focus on social, economic and environmental responsibility, creating jobs and well-being locally in rural areas, but also economically throughout Finland. I wish you good reading moments with our Sustainability Review and Annual Report.



Marja Tiura  
Executive Director

” The well-being of every animal, every day at the centre.



## 2. Finnish Fur Breeders' Association FIFUR

**THE FINNISH FUR BREEDERS' ASSOCIATION** FIFUR is the parent association for the fur industry and the representative and educational organization of its members. The association was founded in 1928, even though professional fur farming has existed in Finland for more than one hundred years. The association's regional members include a total of 676 member companies with more than 700 fur breeding farms. The association and fur breeders own the majority of the Finnish marketing and auction company Saga Furs Plc. The Finnish fur industry is a pioneer in the certification of fur farms worldwide.

**THE ASSOCIATION** is guided by the vision that Finland is the most responsible and profitable breeding country for fur animals in the world. The mission of FIFUR is to support the well-being of breeders, animals and the environment, thereby safeguarding the living space, continuous development and competitiveness of fur farming. The association strives to achieve and implement the vision it has set by developing three welfare areas that affect the association members, the fur breeders. These three areas of well-being are the

provision of services, the provision of advice and responsible communication.

**FIFUR** has been certified by the ISO 9001 Quality Management System since 2014. This means that FIFUR follows a standardised management system designed to provide information on operational efficiency and functionality in support of decisions taken within the association. In addition, the objective of the system is to achieve cost-effective operations, to identify risks and to engage with stakeholders.

**THE FINNISH FARM CERTIFICATION SYSTEM**, FIFUR Finnish Standards, is vital for fur farming. It is a voluntary quality and environmental system that emphasizes responsibility and transparency. Nearly all members of our association follow the certification standards.

**THE FUR INDUSTRY** needs a strong lobbying organisation whose mission is to work for the continuity and success of the fur industry. This mission is carried out by FIFUR.

### 2.1. Fur industry key figures 2019

<b>312 MEUR</b>	Export value of the industry
<b>Approx. 4000</b>	People directly employed by the fur industry annually
<b>200 000 t</b>	Bio-based fertilizer produced from fur animal manure
<b>18 000 t</b>	Industry phosphorus production

## 3. Strategy

**IN THE STRATEGY** of the Finnish fur industry 2018–2020, the activities and measures are defined under five main objectives: continuity, profitability, acceptability, unity and desirability.

In its success plan, FIFUR has identified the cornerstones of the industry to be animal welfare, recognizable and developmental entrepreneurship, the fur industry as an important part of the

Finnish circular economy, as well as fur as a natural and sustainable consumer product.

**ACCOUNTABILITY** is reflected in all strategy activities. FIFUR develops and supports Finnish farming traditions, by creating new growth opportunities for the industry through innovation in various circular economy innovations and cross-disciplinary research.

## 4. The fur industry in brief

**APPROXIMATELY** half of the world's fur production is estimated to originate from Europe. China is the largest fur producer outside Europe. In addition to Finland, there are many other strong fur producing countries in Europe. Finland is Europe's largest producers of fox skins, while Denmark is the largest mink producer. Finland, as the only European country with a derogation, permit of exception, from the European Commission, will continue to breed Finnraccoon in accordance with the alien species regulation for at least the next 30 years. Currently, other major producer countries, in addition to Finland and Denmark, include Poland, Greece, Lithuania, Italy and Sweden. In the Netherlands and Norway, a political decision has been made to abolish

fur farming, and at present, farming will cease in these countries in 2024/2025.

**LONDON, MILAN, NEW YORK** and **PARIS** are the fashion capitals that define fur trends. These cities are also home to the world's leading fashion houses and designers. Hong Kong, in turn, reaches a large number of fur buyers.

**EUROPEAN OPERATORS** in the industry have a common lobbying organisation called *Fur Europe*, which conducts research, distributes information, promotes industry awareness and markets fur fashion around the world. *The International Fur Federation (IFF)* is an international umbrella organisation for the industry.

### 4.1. The fur journey from farm to store

**THE MAJORITY OF** Finnish farms are located in the four Ostrobothnian provinces, but there are farms in all the Finnish provinces, including Lapland. In 2019, approximately 1.9 million fox, 1.0 million mink, and 154 000 Finnraccoon skins were produced in FIFUR member farms.

**FUR** animals are put down on farms in accordance with regulations and without stressful transportation. The animals are then pelted and a bar code is attached to the pelt so it can be traced back to its farm of origin.

**FROM THE FARMS** the raw pelts are delivered to Vantaa, where the auction company *Saga Furs Plc* sorts and sells pelts four times a year at fur auctions. From Vantaa, the pelts continue their journey for further processing around the world.

**FUR GARMENTS** are mainly produced in China and Italy. The finished products will end up in stores all over the world.



## 5. FIFUR Finnish Standards

**FIFUR FINNISH STANDARDS** governed by the Finnish Fur Breeders' Association, is a voluntary certification scheme, and the most comprehensive in the world. It is a constantly developing toolbox. The certification scheme, which is complementary to regulatory control, is a self-imposed system for the industry. One of its key aims is to maintain and improve the welfare of animals reared on Finnish fur farms.

**THE CERTIFICATION** is based on the requirement of compliance with the current Animal Protection Act and Decree, and the regulation on fur animals. The farm can be given a certificate when the legal requirements and all certification criteria are met. The certificate is valid until further notice, provided that the farm during all annual audit visits is found to be in the condition required by the certificate.

### 5.1. Background and state of fur farm certification in Finland

**THE DEVELOPMENT** of the certification system began in 2005, but as early as 1996 a self-monitoring project, the quality manual, was launched by a FIFUR veterinarian. The fur industry certification work is thought to have taken its first steps at that time. In addition to representatives for the fur industry, representatives from the *Department of Animal Science at the Helsinki University, ProAgria, the Finnish Animal Protection Association, the Finnish Fishermen's Association and a representative*

*from the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry* participated in the formulation of the initial certification criteria. The first 30 fur farms were certified in Finland in 2006.

The certification criteria are based on existing legislation as well as on criteria defined by the industry itself. It is updated on the basis of feedback from stakeholders, and feedback received through practical work.



The above legislation criteria include animal health (plasmacytosis testing, vaccinations), feed supply, animal breeding and animal trade criteria. The verification of most of the criteria requires continuous documentation from the producer, which helps to strengthen good practices and to detect and correct any deficiencies.

**IN 2019**, at the time of writing this report, the certification system includes 653 Finnish farms, which represent 95.3% of all member farms (table 1), 99.7% of fox production (blue and silver foxes), 99.6% of Finn raccoon production and 96.5% of mink production.

The differences among species are due to the fact that the auction company *Saga Furs Plc* receives fox and Finn raccoon skins only from farms with a valid certificate. So far, the same certification requirement for mink skins is not available. Despite this, *Saga Furs Plc* has also started to sell certified mink lots.

**Table 1.** Finnish fur farm certification status 6/2019

Status	%
Valid certificate	95.3
Never certified	3.2
Certificate is not valid	1.5
Total	100.0

## 5.2. Certification criteria and general certification requirements

**THE FUR FARM CERTIFICATION** scheme includes 34 farm certification criteria and more than 80 inspection points. The farm certification criteria are divided into the following topic areas:

1. Animal health and welfare
2. Conditions for rearing animals
3. Feed management
4. Breeding
5. Environmental management
6. Farm hygiene
7. Training and preparing for exceptional situations

The criteria have not been published in full to safeguard our international competitive advantage.

**ONE IMPORTANT PART** of the FIFUR Finnish Standards is the *WelFur* system. It is based on the independent scientific *Welfare Quality Protocol* that focuses on the welfare of farmed animals. During each audit one third of the farm certification criteria is audited, and a *WelFur* assessment for the current period is made. If shortcomings are detected, a brief rectification time will be given, after which the auditor will review the corrections. The more serious the shortcomings are, the shorter the correction time will be. If the corrections are

not made by a given deadline, the farm certificate may become dormant or be removed.

In order to obtain the certificate, the farm operations must meet all criteria, with its production processes carefully documented and transparent. The certificate is granted only to the farms which meet all the criteria. Certified farms are audited once a year. In consecutive years, the auditing is performed in three different seasons based on the farm certification criteria and *WelFur* criteria for the production season in question.

**THE CRITERIA** below are divided by calendar year into three different periods. The periods of the calendar year are determined by the *WelFur* protocol for fox and mink that assesses animal welfare issues during different production seasons. Fox and mink protocols can be found in full through the links below:

**Fox protocol**

▶ [http://www.fureurope.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/WelFur\\_fox\\_protocol\\_web\\_edition.pdf](http://www.fureurope.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/WelFur_fox_protocol_web_edition.pdf)

**Mink protocol**

▶ [http://www.fureurope.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Mink\\_protocol\\_final\\_web\\_edition\\_light.pdf](http://www.fureurope.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Mink_protocol_final_web_edition_light.pdf)

**SINCE THE BEGINNING OF 2019**, the pilot phase of the *WelFur* assessment protocol for Finnraccoons has also been part of our certification criteria. The *WelFur* protocol for Finnraccoon will be finalised in the near future.

FIFUR's general certification requirements stipulate that a certified farm must undergo annual audits. Successive audits must be made in different seasons, i.e. during different production periods. The first period is January-February, the second period is May-July, and the third period is October-November. The audits for both the farm certification and the *WelFur* assessment are carried out during the same day.

After the three different *WelFur* assessment periods, the farm receives the overall *WelFur* score, points are awarded for each species and place of production. This means that all the different periods of the *WelFur* protocol have been evaluated on the same farm, and the total *WelFur* animal rating is calculated based on the scoring of these periods. If the same company has separate production sites, each unit receives its own *WelFur* rating. The FIFUR certificate requires that all premises and fur animals in the holding and under the same business ID must be included in the audit. Therefore, the same company may not have production sites with different levels, but all sites must meet the certification requirements.

All status certification criteria will be reviewed over a three-year period. Audit visits made in dif-

ferent seasons of the year enable observation of different production cycles on the spot and provide a comprehensive picture of the operation. At the time of the first audit there are only breeding animals on the farm, the second period has pups and during the third period the growing pups are assessed.

**THE TOTAL WELFUR ASSESSMENT** score must at least be at an acceptable level. An unacceptable *WelFur* rated farm cannot be granted a FIFUR Finnish Standards certificate. The aim is that the *WelFur* rating of certified farms will rise as the number of assessments for each animal species increases. This will demonstrate that attention is being paid to animal welfare on certified farms, and that measurable steps are being taken to ensure that animal welfare is improving.

**FROM 2018**, all certified farms began receiving annual audits. These audits are carried out by *Kannus Research Farm Luova Ltd*, a research facility in Kannus, which operates as a subcontractor for the international auditing company *Baltic Control*®. FIFUR holds 38% of the *Luova Ltd* stocks. The other shareholders are the *Natural Resources Institute Finland Luke*, the *Central Association of Agricultural and Forestry producers MTK*, and the *Central Ostrobothnia Training Federation of Kpedu*. FIFUR's ownership does not affect the impartiality of the audit.

## 5.2.1. Farm certification - mandatory for Finnraccoon breeding

**FINNRACCOON** is on the EU list of foreign species, and the breeding of Finnraccoon is subject to license. Finland has been granted a permit of exception from the *European Commission* for the Finnraccoon. The permit relies on the FIFUR farm certification system. Only licensed, FIFUR certified farms may breed Finnraccoon in Europe.

**THE EXEMPTION** in the foreign species regulation includes only the certification criteria for the Finnraccoon farms (so called IAS-criteria), which are audited separately during each farm certification assessment for the current period. In addition to farm certification criteria audits, the authorities

(Regional State Administration Agencies, AVI) is monitoring that the conditions of the permit are met by carrying out separate visits to the farms.





## 5.3. Farm certification and decision-making

**THE CONTENT** of the certification system is being supervised and evolved by the FIFUR Animal Welfare and Certification Committee. The committee convenes approximately 5–6 times per year and includes representatives from FIFUR as well as a qualified veterinarian and fur breeders and representatives from Luova Ltd.

Routine decisions at the farm level are made by an auditor, who submits a report in writing on each visit to FIFUR. The decision of the Certification Committee on individual issues is based on the auditors' findings during each farm visit. Possible regulatory oversights during official inspec-

tions are also included in the decision-making. For example, infringements of the Animal Welfare Act would lead to the farm certificate becoming dormant until the producer submits an inspection report by the authority stating that things are in order. An infringement of the Animal Welfare Act is verified by an animal protection decision served to the farm.

When necessary the FIFUR Committee may decide to adjust the certificate for a certain period, i.e. to lay it dormant. The FIFUR Board decides if changes to certification status are needed.

## 5.4. Future development of FIFUR Finnish Standards

**IN THE FUTURE**, the role of the Animal Welfare and Certification Committee will be to further support the development of the certification scheme. The critical role in the development work is the well-being of animals and the environment, as well as the well-being of fur farmers and their employees.

The criteria are regularly updated, and the aim is that their content will improve fur farm operations. Changes in the certification criteria are always made by the Board and are based on detailed proposals prepared by the FIFUR Committee.

## 5.5. Laws and regulations

**THE LAW** and complementary regulations set the basic requirements for fur animal farming and are monitored by local authorities.

### 5.5.1. Fur animal welfare

**ANIMAL WELFARE REGULATION** sets requirements on the facilities, care, treatment and handling, as well as transport of fur animals. Updated animal welfare legislation can be found in the directory of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, F-Registry (in Finnish):

► <http://mmm.fi/lainsaadanto/elaimet-elintarvikkeet-ja-terveys/lainsaadanto/f-rekisteri>

**THE FINNISH FOOD AUTHORITY** (formerly Evira) brochure, «Fur animals — animal protection legislation» brings together the content on animal welfare and regulations for fur animal breeding (in Finnish):

► <https://www.ruokavirasto.fi/globalassets/tieto-meista/asiointi/oppaat-ja-lomakkeet/viljelijat/elainten-pito/elainten-suojelu-ja-kuljetus/turkiselain-elainsuojelulainsaadantoa-koottuna.pdf>

### 5.5.2. Feed and by-products

**UP-TO-DATE LEGISLATION** on feed and by-products is compiled in the H directory of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry of Finland (in Finnish):

► <http://mmm.fi/lainsaadanto/elaimet-elintarvikkeet-ja-terveys/lainsaadanto/h-rekisteri>

### 5.5.3. Environmental well-being

**ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION** and ecologically sustainable development are core to environmental well-being. Legislation and guidelines can be found the website of the Ministry of the Environment (in Finnish):

► [http://www.ym.fi/fi-FI/Ymparisto/Lainsaadanto\\_ohjeet](http://www.ym.fi/fi-FI/Ymparisto/Lainsaadanto_ohjeet)

### 5.5.3.1. Environmental permits for fur farms

**FUR FARMS** apply for an environmental permit which includes individual instructions on environmental protection measures. These permits are granted by the municipal authority for smaller farms, and by the Regional State Administration Agencies (AVI) for the larger units.

**THE ENVIRONMENTAL PERMIT** gives instructions on the operational work of the fur farms, including:

- **scope of operation, animal facilities and production**
- **location and the surroundings**
- **storage and use of manure, urine and wastewater**
- **treatment of animal carcasses**  
(e.g. licensed incinerator and treatment of ash)
- **other waste and handling**
- **storage of fuels**
- **traffic to and from the farm** (e.g. feed transport)
- **mitigation of environmental load**  
(e.g. raised manure platforms, watertight manure platforms and sealed tanks for liquids, sufficiently long eaves and gutters, watertight platforms for feed silos, treatment of wastewater in maintenance buildings, waste storage and recycling etc.)

**THE MINISTRY OF THE ENVIRONMENT** has issued environmental protection guidelines for fur farms (Attachment 6), that were completed in 2018. The environmental protection guidelines provide guidance on the decision process for the environmental permits, so that the licensing practices for fur farms are as convergent as possible.



## 6. Continuous communication with stakeholders

**IN LINE WITH THE STRATEGY** and communication policy, the fur industry communicates openly and actively through different channels. The association publishes the *Turkistalous* magazine, which is a member of the Finnish Association of Magazines. In addition, the association runs several websites and has an active presence in, among others, social media to ensure a true and varied view of the fur industry. The main communication themes are in line with the cornerstones of the strategy.

**THE PUBLIC DEBATE** on the fur industry, animal welfare, health and breeding are all part of the business environment. Discussions with different stakeholders on animal welfare is important, although not all opinions are always in favour of maintaining and developing the fur industry. Discussion with stakeholders may provide the industry with important information for future planning and implementation of development projects. In line with the FIFUR administration's ISO9001 approval, we measure our stakehold-

ers' experience of our operation on a regular basis. An independent research company also carries out an annual demographic survey on our behalf, to identify the views of the general public on Finnish certified fur industry.





## 7. Social responsibility

**FIFUR** offers its members training, events, support and services to help sustain the tradition of responsible fur farming in Finland. Animal welfare starts from the well-being of fur breeders. If breeders are unable to take care of themselves because of illness or financial problems, it also affects their ability to do their job well.

One important task of the association is to take care of its members while supporting their work. A free, confidential network of support personnel is a good example of this. Those who are in financial difficulties have a personal mentor to assist with for example bank negotiations.

FIFUR officials and veterinarians, as well as our

entire field staff are often the trusted contacts, with whom the breeders can discuss their business comprehensively, not only when it comes to animal care. The association also assists with the various licensing matters. Thus, farmers can be confident that all necessary licenses and permits are in order. Regional fur counselors inform and guide the farmers about current issues in the industry and provide training.

**THERE** are several kinds of jobs in fur industry that do not require personnel to speak the local languages. Thus, fur branch can offer employment to immigrants, promoting social integration.

### 7.1. Local influence

**THE FINNISH FUR INDUSTRY** is concentrated in Ostrobothnia, where the operating and breeding conditions are favorable for fur farming. The core areas of production are Southern and Central Ostrobothnia, as well as the Swedish speaking Ostrobothnia, where 95% of all farms are located. In addition, farms are located in southern, eastern and northern Finland.

**OVER** the decades, the total number of fur farms has decreased moderately, and production has consolidated. This trend is the same as for other livestock sectors, i.e. the number of farms has decreased at the same time as farm sizes have increased.

At most, there were over 5000 farms in Finland

in the 1980s. At that time a significant number of the producers were part-time breeders. Today, the majority of Finnish fur breeders are full-time entrepreneurs whose success in this field requires dedication and professionalism.

Thanks to the concentration of the farms, the industry has a network of specialized service providers for its needs. The regional production of fur animal feed is economically efficient, as transport distances are short and the feed quantities are high. Machine operated pelting centres make the heavy and labour-intensive work easier. Machines, equipment and tools are available from local specialist stores. Consulting and advisory service providers are professional and efficient thanks to the demand from a wide range of clients.



## 8. Economic responsibility

### 8.1. Export

**FUR PRODUCTION** is economically significant for Finland. The industry sales revenue comes almost entirely from abroad. In 2019, the export value of Finnish fur production was EUR 312 million.

### 8.2. Taxes

**IN 2019**, the fur industry produced a minimum of EUR 116 per capita for the eight largest producer municipalities. The majority of the fur industry taxes originate from Uusikaarlepyy, which in 2019 received approximately EUR 364 per capita in tax revenues. In other major producer communities, taxes generated by the fur industry accounted for

between 3.7% and 12.4% of all tax revenue in the municipality.

Thanks to tax revenue, many rural municipalities are thriving and capable of producing basic services for the local residents, such as childcare, care for the elderly and schools (Appendix 1).

### 8.3. Economic importance of the business in Finland

**ACCORDING TO THE FUTURE REPORT** commissioned by the Finnish parliament, the fur industry is the only primary sector with significant economic potential (Appendix 2).

Fur production is an economically significant industry. Despite the long-lasting economic recession in the 2010s, the fur industry has been

able to generate export and tax revenue and provide job opportunities.

In recent years, the value of Finnish fur exports has fluctuated considerably. In 2013, the value of Finnish fur exports reached its peak of approximately EUR 810 million, compared with an average level of EUR 600 million in 2015.



The main export countries are China, Japan, South Korea and Russia.

Foreign visitors attending fur auctions bring about EUR 80 million in tourism income to Finland. For example, flights from Asia generate a turnover of over EUR 9 million for Finnair. In addition, ac-

ording to foreign trade statistics, the main export destination for Finnish fur is Asia. Fur exports to Asia are transported by air, and fur airfreight exports amount to nearly EUR 8 million annually. (PTT 2016)

## 8.4. Fluctuations in the economic cycle are part of the fur industry

**LARGE CYCLICAL FLUCTUATIONS** are part of the fur industry. The price for fox fur varies greatly each year. In a follow-up period of over 30 years, at least one recurring feature is noticeable, the steeper the decline, the faster the rise. The development for mink prices is more stable than for fox skins.

In the early 1980s, demand for fox fur was high, and production increased tenfold in a few years. However, as a result of oversupply and the global recession, prices fell during the latter half of the decade. In the autumn of 1989, the auction company sold all the offered skins at a price that the market was willing to pay. Production fell and only a third of the peak year production remained. After this, the market began to show signs of recovery.

At the beginning of the 1990s, the global economy showed a slow recovery, the production of fox began to grow, and China began to develop a market for the export of fur alongside the Rus-

sian-dominated market of that time. At the end of the decade, the ruble collapsed, and the price of fox fur fell sharply.

In the early 2000s, the market recovered rapidly. The growth of Chinese fox production increased international competition, which again resulted in a fall in prices. China's production was unable to meet the growing demand, and the price started a long and strong rise in autumn 2009. In 2013, the price of fox was at its highest level in history. After that, it declined more sharply than ever due to overproduction in Finland and China, combined with economic difficulties in China.

Producers have reduced their production after record highs in previous years, but still believe in a rapid price increase after the drop in production and stock worldwide.



## 9. Circular economy in the fur industry

**FUR** is a recyclable and durable natural material that, properly preserved, can be used by several generations for decades – either as such or refashioned in accordance with the latest trends. Fur production as a whole is a circular economy at its best.

**THE MAIN OBJECTIVE** of fur animal breeding is high quality fur. In addition, the carcass also has value. To prevent anything from being wasted, the animal carcasses are used to almost 100%. After pelting, the fat is recovered from the skin and carcass and used in the production of industrial fats and biofuel. The animal fat turns into sulphur-free biodiesel. The rest of the carcass is ground into a meat-and-bone meal, which is used as a calcium and protein supplement in fur feed.

**A NUTRITIVE FEED** for fur animals is derived from slaughter by-products consisting of 40% meat processing and about 20% from fish processing. Using by-products unsuitable for humans as animal feed creates value and eliminates waste.

Instead of disposing of this waste, the meat processing industry can sell its by-products to the feed industry, and thus recycle the nutrients.

**WHEN THE FEED HAS BEEN CONVERTED** into manure, it works as a fertilizer. About 200 000 tonnes of rich manure is produced per year, containing about 18 000 tonnes of phosphorus. Although some farmland contains too much phosphorus and nitrogen, other areas lack these necessary nutrients. Manure from fur animals contains larger amounts of phosphorus than manure from other farm animals. Most of this manure is composted and used in crop fields.

**PHOSPHORUS** is a scarce natural resource that the European Union has added to the list of 20 critical raw materials. Both the EU and the Finnish fur industry invest in nutrient recycling, and several research and development projects improving manure use are underway. All manure and urine are collected from farms and processed for recovery.



Fish caught for the purpose of fur industry feed eliminate significant quantities of phosphorus and nitrogen from the Baltic Sea. The MTT study (Appendix 3) estimated that the amount of nutrients extracted is 155 tonnes of phosphorus and 1 080 tonnes of nitrogen per year.

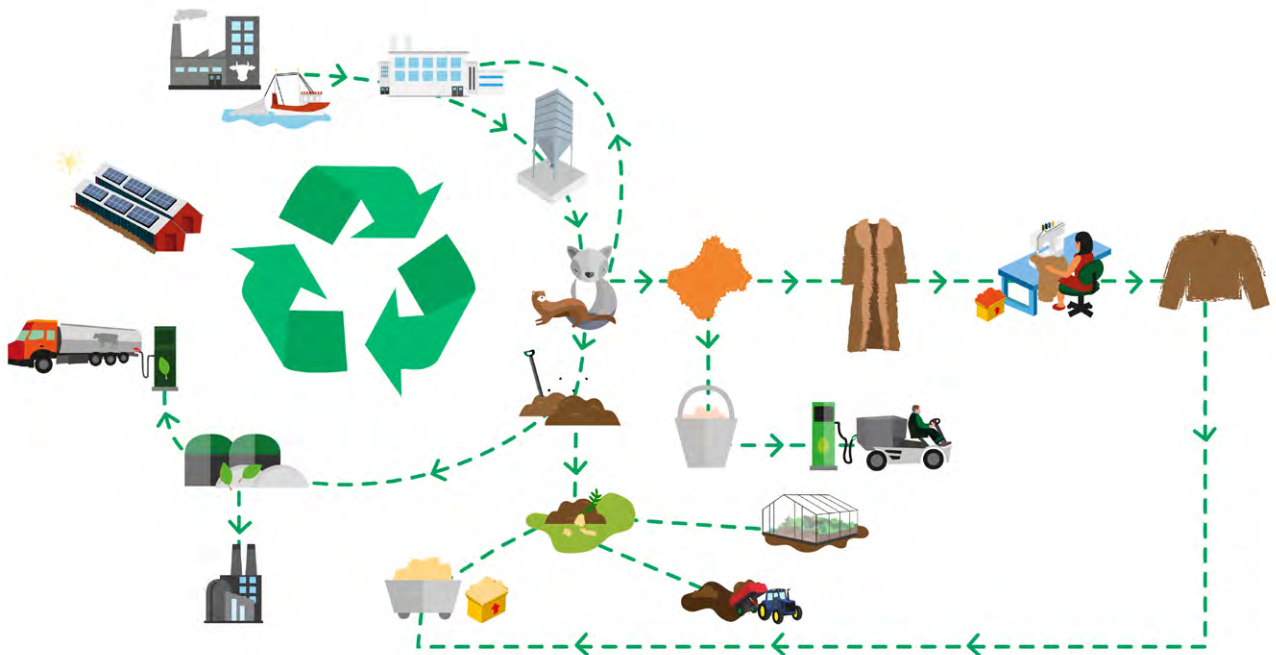
As a point of reference, water treatment plants in the metropolitan area, Helsinki Viikinmäki and Espoo Suomenoja, loaded 23 tonnes of phosphorus and 1 048 tonnes of nitrogen into the Baltic Sea in 2018 (Appendix 4).

**IN THE FUR INDUSTRY**, nutrients circulate, and energy is generated from waste. In Ostrobothnia, a local energy company produces biogas from agricultural waste. The gas is used for heating purposes and gas-fueled cars. Fur manure has been turned into seedbeds that provide nutrients for the entire growing season. They also bind water well and are therefore ideal for urban cultivation, balconies and roof terraces. According to the Natural Resource Institute Finland, food production will

rely more strongly on recycled fertilizers in the future (Appendix 5).

**THE PRODUCTION POTENTIAL** of solar power is significant on fur farms. Ecological solar energy will at its best increase the competitiveness of the industry and is an integral part of the sustainable development of the fur industry. Using solar energy, however, is still challenging due to its storing, and electricity consumption peaking in the winter months when solar power is less available. However, solar energy is predicted to increase significantly as storage technology develops.

A study conducted at Lappeenranta University of Technology in 2019, simulated the production of solar electricity in a situation where the farms would have solar panel system. The study estimated how much electricity would be used for the farm and how much would be sold. With current energy transmission prices, solar energy is more profitable when used for the farm's own purposes.







## 10. Animal health and Fureva

**FUREVA** is a health care system tailored to fur farms, which is operated and funded by FIFUR. *Fureva* health visits focus on animal health and welfare, and on developing farm productivity by improving animal health and welfare. The entire animal stock and their immediate environment are checked during the regular health care visits. Farm records are inspected and, if necessary, advice given on different issues. After a visit to the farm, a health care plan for the next period will be written and the implementation of the plan is monitored during future farm visits.

The *Fureva* system is a health care agreement between the fur farmer and a veterinarian. The agreement is added to a registry, which gives both parties access to the data for the farm in question. Within the framework of the health care system, one to four health care visits are made to the fur farm during the year, with an average of two visits. Currently, the *Fureva* system includes 124 member farms.

**THE INTENTION** is that in the future *Fureva* visits will also take advantage of the information provided by the *WelFur* assessments. This will improve the quality and effectiveness of advice given to the producer, as advice is also provided by veterinarians. FIFUR staff and regional fur counselors also have an advisory role. However, due to a conflict of interest, *WelFur* assessors cannot advise the farms they have assessed.

**THE FUREVA SYSTEM** has been in use since 2015 and is constantly being developed. The goal is to include the majority of producers and more veterinarians to carry out farm visits.

**THE PUBLICATION** of Finnish Food Authority for *Animal Diseases 2018*, contains information on the animal disease situation in Finland (Appendix 7).



# 11. Research and development

FIFUR has set four main objectives for fur farming research:

1. Halving the price premium for Danish mink
2. Improving the efficiency and quality of the feed chain
3. Maintaining the leadership position in fox production responsibly
4. Raising healthy animals

**UNDER** these objectives FIFUR is running about 30 research projects in cooperation with Finnish and international universities and research insti-

tutes. The most important projects recently have been the fur animal foot health development project (*Sustainable feet*), optimisation of the blue fox feeding programme, the “*Turkisteho*” project for using fur animal manure, as well as *WebSampo* and “*Kestävä turkiseläin*” the projects, which outline a blueprint for the future of blue fox breeding.

**FIFUR** invests in research. The association’s research database includes thousands of studies on fur animals and responsible breeding, which have been collected over a period of several decades.

## 1.11. Commitment to the Baltic Sea Action Group

**IN 2017**, the Finnish Fur Breeders’ Association made a four-point commitment to the *Baltic Sea Action Group*, which promotes the welfare of the Baltic Sea. The purpose of the commitment is to develop methods for the treatment of phosphorus rich manure from fur farms, and to initiate research projects in collaboration with different research institutes.

**THE FIRST POINT** of the commitment focuses on the harmonisation of composting cooperatives, scheduled for implementation in 2019.

**THE SECOND POINT** of the commitment includes training courses to be arranged between 2018-2020, with a focus on reducing the environmental impact of fur farming nutrients and increasing knowledge on Baltic Sea water and climate protection.

**THE THIRD OBJECTIVE** of the commitment is to develop and commercialise fur animal manure and its nutrients.

**THE FOURTH OBJECTIVE** is to find out if the zeolite used in animal nutrition increases nitrogen binding and reduces nitrogen emissions.



## 12. Other regulatory controls

### 12.1. Animal protection control

**KEEPING**, care, treatment and handling of fur animals, like other animals, is regulated in Finland by the Animal Welfare Act, the Animal Regulation Act and animal protection at the time of killing.

In addition to these regulations and laws, animal protection requirements for the protection of fur animals have been defined in the Decree on the protection of fur animals.

On-site animal protection visits to the fur farms are supervised by specialized municipal veterinarians and county veterinarians. In addition to these, the police may visit the farm in animal welfare matters, and the municipal health inspector during inspection visits.

### 12.2. Business supervision

**FUR BREEDERS ARE ENTREPRENEURS** and their activities are subject to the same laws as other business operators. Supervisory authorities include tax administration and the Occupational Safety Authority.

### 12.3. Environmental supervision

**UNDER THE ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION ACT**, the rearing of fur animals is subject to an environmental permit. The type of permit will also define the regulatory authority, which is either a municipal or regional administrative office. Environmental authorities carry out inspection visits to fur farms,

and monitor compliance with the conditions in the environmental permit. The permits for fur farms include the obligation to submit reports, which are followed up by the authorities. If environmental permits are breached, the supervisory authority will take measures appropriate to the seriousness



of the situation. The third clause of the Environmental Protection Act «authorities and their tasks» defines the bodies responsible for protecting the environment and their functions.

**THE SUPERVISORY AUTHORITIES** under this law are the Centre for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment (regional environment authority) and the municipal environment authority (Section 22 of the YSL).

**THE CENTRE FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, Transport and the Environment** draws up a control plan for the licensed activities in its area. The plan sets out control objectives, supervisory practices and available resources. The facilities subject to environmental permits are divided into four control categories, with the inspection of animal shelters usually in categories III to IV. The frequency of the periodic inspections is connected to the category in question.

## 12.4. Building supervision

**THE BUILDING CONSTRUCTION** of a fur farm, as well as other building work, is subject to the approval of the Building and Environmental Act.

Building and construction permits are needed not only for new construction, but also for expansion and conversion. Permission is sought in writ-

ing from the local building supervision. Building supervision is regulated by an administrative board or other institution appointed by the municipality. Construction consulting and supervision is carried out by the municipal building inspector.

## 12.5. Fire and rescue supervision

**THE RESCUE ACT** and Decree require that medium-sized and large fur farms submit a written emergency plan to the municipal rescue services.

The purpose of the rescue plan is to improve the safety of people and animals on the farms and to reduce economic losses by preventing accidents and rationalising action in the event of incidents.

The rescue plan maps the fur farm construction, the number of animals, the fire extinguishing equipment and the rescue routes among others. The plan is updated annually and checked by the rescue authority during fire inspections. Supervision responsibility lies with the rescue authority.

## Attachments

**Attachment 1:** The economic importance of the fur sector, PTT, 2016

► [https://profur.fi/sites/default/files/ptt\\_2016.pdf](https://profur.fi/sites/default/files/ptt_2016.pdf)

**Attachment 2:** Future report commissioned by the parliament, publication 6/2013

► [https://www.eduskunta.fi/FI/tietoaeduskunnasta/julkaisut/Documents/tuvj\\_6+2013.pdf](https://www.eduskunta.fi/FI/tietoaeduskunnasta/julkaisut/Documents/tuvj_6+2013.pdf)

**Attachment 3:** Life-cycle assessment of Finnish mink and fox, MTT, 2011

► <http://www.mtt.fi/mttraportti/pdf/mttraportti29.pdf>

**Attachment 4:** Wastewater treatment in the Helsinki metropolitan area, HSY, 2018

► <https://julkaisu.hsy.fi/jatevedenpuhdistus-paakaupunkiseudulla-2018.html>

**Attachment 5:** Search for recycling fertilizers for solution to phosphorus and nitrogen fertilizers -European nutrients for map and circulation in new project

► <https://www.luke.fi/uutiset/kierratyslannoitteista-etsitaan-ratkaisua-fosforikatoon-ja-typpilannoitteiden-paastoihin-euroopan-ravinteet-kartalle-ja-kiertoon-uudessa-hankkeessa/>

**Attachment 6:** Environmental Protection Guidelines for Fur Farms, Ministry of the Environment, 2018

► <http://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/handle/10024/161033>

**Attachment 7:** Animal diseases in Finland, Finnish Food Authority, 2018

► <https://www.ruokavirasto.fi/globalassets/tietoa-meista/julkaisut/julkaisusarjat/julkaisuja/elaimet/animal-diseases-in-finland-2018.pdf>



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