

Workshop Report  
Globalization and food security in the Barents Region  
Held at the Arctic Centre  
16 August 2016

Written by:

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On August 16, 2016 HuSArctic project hosted at the Northern Institute for Environmental and Minority Law (NIEM) in the Arctic Centre organized the seminar entitled: “Globalization and Food Security in the Barents region”. The seminar gathered over a dozen specialists and enthusiasts of the field to speak on diverse aspects on food safety and security in sub-Arctic and Barents region. During the meeting participants had a chance to hear seven presentations on variety of aspects connected to food security. The seminar started with an introductory speech given by HuSArctic project’s lead, Director of NIEM Associate Professor Kamrul Hossain, by which he introduced the central focus of the HuSArctic project and its connection to the seminar organized. Since the goal of the HuSArctic project is to promote knowledge on broader societal security in the region by integrating human security tools, Dr. Hossain explained how food plays an important role in regional context, which forms one of the seven components of human security. However, it is, in one way or another, connected to many other aspects of human security, such as environment, economy, health, culture and community etc. Therefore, the importance of food is crucial in the promotion of societal cohesion.

The first presentation by Lena Maria Nilsson, Research Coordinator, Arctic Research Centre at Umeå University, Sweden: “Food security or food sovereignty -what is the main issue in the Arctic?” dealt with the real accessibility of the food in the Arctic. It was said that food security means access to secure food. Later on, there were key principles of food security pointed out. These are primarily availability and accessibility. During the speech she brought attention to food insecurity which is exceptionally high among indigenous people. She also highlighted differences between *food security* and *food sovereignty* and stressed underrepresentation of publications on *food sovereignty* in scientific literature. She presented the key aspects of food sovereignty: autonomy, women’s role and diversity. What is worth to notice, is that in terms of food sufficiency, the Arctic Region is diversified. When it comes to fruit production, the North is dependent on other countries. In terms of meat, on the other hand,

the Arctic is self-sufficient. Eating in the northern part of Finland is more expensive than in the South. Along with the climate change, the amount of meat accessible will decrease. It was also said that Indigenous peoples should not be considered as inflexible when it comes to food preferences.

Following speaker was Päivi Soppela Senior Researcher at the Arctic Centre, University of Lapland. Her presentation: “The local food products of Finnish Lapland: their nutritional benefits and relevance to a local food system” acquainted the audience with variety of nature-food products of Finnish Lapland. The presentation started with the definition of local foods, which are produced, processed and distributed within a particular boundary that consumers associate with their own community. Examples of such foods in Finnish Lapland are for example wild berries, mushrooms, herbs, fish and reindeer. Listeners found out about components beneficial for health found in nature-based local products. Päivi Soppela informed for example that berries are source of vitamins A, E and C, polyphenolic flavonoids, anthocyanins, minerals, trace elements and fiber. It may have anti-oxidative, anti-inflammatory and anti-microbial effects. Reindeer meat contains more minerals and trace elements than meat of other animals, it is also low fat. Using nature-food products from Lapland in proper way may decrease probability of Coronary Heart Disease, stroke, mental health problems, Cancer, Urinary Tract Disease and digestive disorder among others. In connection to that, the idea of *healthy food* was separated from the idea of *healthy eating* which is focusing on diverse and balanced diet. Päivi Soppela introduced also definition of *food safety* which “refers to the conditions and practices that preserve the quality of food to prevent contamination and food-borne illnesses”.

The third presentation: “Policies and Legal tools for strengthening Food security in the Barents Region” was delivered by Shaun Cormier, Researcher at the Arctic Centre, University of Lapland. The speaker briefly outlined the institutions governing the region such as Arctic Council, BEAR/BEAC and the EU. The presentation also dealt with human rights. It was said that there is no short definition of human security. Shaun Cormier summarized the idea of collaboration between food and human rights. The basic human rights related to food are: the right to adequate food, right to water and to healthy environment. His speech was focused on food security in Barents Region and possibilities, ways and tools that could be used for strengthening it. Shaun shortly summarized the definition of *food security* and underscored its four pillars: availability, accessibility, utilization of food and food systems stability. He brought attention to the elements that should be taking into account while researching *food security*. For both indigenous and non-indigenous people, human security and human

rights are important elements to consider during the process of searching for improvement of food security. Shaun listed also factors that may increase “food (in)security”: transformation of the region, climate change and human activities among others. He presented existing tools and institutions that are in charge of *food security* and emphasized that food industry is one of the most regulated industries.

The topic of presentation prepared by Dele Raheem from University of Helsinki was “Traditional Foods and their relevance to Food security in the Barents Region”. He pointed that the goal of actions in global scale should be reducing the gap between current situation and best possible scenario and reducing the carbon footprint on planet earth. Presentation showed global situation of food security – 2 billion of people are deficient in nutrients, 2.5 billion are overweight or obese. Very big amount of produced food is wasted, food systems are emitting 20-30% of anthropogenic greenhouse gas and food production accounts for 70% of all human water use. Dele Raheem also presented the Joint Research Council Science and Policy Report for 2030. The Report states that 60% of global population will be concentrated in cities and thus a more balanced mix between local and global food system is needed. He described the ways of promoting local food in Barents region: participation of food producers in local festivals and market days, promoting “arctic brands” as bilberries, pine mushrooms, cloudberries, reindeer meet and creating special, unique products from arctic ingredients, for example: reindeer chips, *biokia marjavaimaa (force of the berry)*, arctic warrior (line of health beneficial products from ingredients from Lapland).

Martine Dalgaard Hansen from Department of Community Medicine at The UiT Arctic University of Norway in her presentation: “Heavy metals in food from the Norwegian, Finnish and Russian border region” showed results of studies about amount of heavy and harmful metals in food from this area. Studies investigated the level of concentration of Ni, Cu, Co, As, Cd, Pb and Hg in five different food categories: berries, edible mushrooms, freshwater fish, reindeer and moose. Results shows difference in metals concentration related to geographical location and category of food. General increase of harmful metals in food can be observed in the north-east direction. As a potential reason of this effect was pointed nearby situated industry areas. It was noted that the major contributor to the pollution of the region is local mining and metallurgic industry. The key objective to protect the area is to investigate the concentrations of heavy chemical elements. Potential health risks are yet unknown, but the level of metals in local foods is in general low or moderate. The speaker also pointed out the fact that it is difficult to reach an agreement due to the differences in maximum levels of air pollution

between Norway and Russia.

The sixth presentation “Characteristics of Agriculture in Finnish Lapland” by Rainer Peltola, Senior Researcher at the Natural Resources Institute in Finland concentrated on the various aspects of agriculture in Lapland. His presentation highlighted briefly history of agriculture in Finland and Lapland. Small-scale agriculture was present already in hunter-gatherer communities. The agriculture in Lapland started in the years of 1600 and 1700 when the new settlements emerged and Indigenous peoples started farming. They settled mainly by the riversides. Early agriculture was not very efficient, and great hunger in years 1866-1868 led to realization of need for development and modernization in this area. Currently only 5% of Finnish workers works in agriculture industry. Farming business is not very profitable and majority of farmers are of age group over 50; there is no big interest in farming among younger generations. Farms in Lapland can fulfill consumption requirements only for few categories of products: turnip, milk, reindeer, domestic fish and beef. Moreover, Rainer Peltola introduced the listeners to the factors that are important these days to the farmers. It seems that the mental satisfaction from being a farmer and decent living are the most essential. Being a farmer is a crucial part of identity, it is not just a business. While highlighting the challenges in today’s agriculture in Lapland, the speaker emphasized the fact that most of the farmers in Lapland consider to be producers, not entrepreneurs.

First part of seminar was closed with the presentation from Anni Koskela, project coordinator from Arctic Flavours Association. Her presentation: “Export Opportunities for Finnish Non-Wood Forest Products” focused on the actions taken by the organization. Its main goal is to promote gathering of the non-wood forest products (NWFP) which are not only environmentally friendly but also healthy. Anni Koskela enumerated the tasks of the Arctic Flavours Association. These are mainly: information distribution, educational materials, campaigns organization, projects, networks, research efforts. She explained the value of NWFP and pointed their benefits for health, good taste, natural origins, low carbon and water footprint. NWFP was described as *superfood* which is healthy, natural, hand-picked, exotic food. Part of the presentation was focused on export of berries and mushrooms. Additionally, it was said that Finland exports 50% commercially picked berries and mushrooms mainly to Southern Europe but also to Asia. Export had its record in height in 2015. But there are still challenges that should be completed to optimize the use of resources. One of those is the competition on the market between European bilberry and American blueberry. Next are, for instance: remoteness, lack of

resources, lack of product development, commercialization of research results and misleading marketing.

Afternoon session was prepared by Riitta Liisa Heikkinen-Moilanen, development director from Arctic Centre. It was focusing on searching for new ideas for future projects in the field of food security. Riitta Liisa Heikkinen-Moilanen asked audience what were the most relevant needs in this matter, what there was to do, how to act in innovative ways, do things different than usual and identify the partners with regard to food security. She also emphasized the importance of research for business activities. Then participants were divided into four working groups which turned out to be both fun and productive. Task for the groups was to brainstorm ideas and present them to the rest of the participants. Range of ideas came up during this part of the seminar. There was proposals for research areas and industry development. Participants expressed their willingness to continue actions connected with food security.

To sum up, the seminar day was an incredible time for everyone. It opened the eyes for plenty of problems, presented directly by the specialists of the topic concerning food security and safety in the Barents Region, and gave hopes for future development in this sector as well. There is a chance that that meeting in Arctic Centre will be fruitful in farther actions and activities in the field and established contacts will outlast and develop in the future.