

COUNTRY REPORT – FINLAND

Mr. Chairman, Secretary General, Mr. President, Ladies and Gentleman, Fellow Cattlemen & Cattlewomen!

It's a great honour to be standing here and to give you the country report of Finland. I promise to keep my report short and sweet – if you have heard our Mikko Leikola talking, he's trusted to be loud and clear!

Many of you have already been to Finland and have some perspective of the country already. We certainly spent a couple of hilarious days together and all Finnish hosts enjoyed your good mood and curiosity enormously!

Finland is a land of nearly 200 000 lakes. Forest covers 69% of total area and arable land is 2,2 million hectares. Ian Harvie admired us Finns for clearing out the forest, turning the stones and kicking some dirt there to grow a crop..

We're not a country of high grain crops but we do well in grass and beef cows are well suited to Finland.

Some of you noticed that you don't see much cattle grazing around. That's true. Cows in the landscape are nowadays a rare sight. Dairy farms are growing bigger in size and they find it hard to graze large numbers of cattle when the pastures are small and scattered around. Their solution is to keep the dairy cows in yards and feed them in there. While the number of dairy cows in Finland is decreasing, the responsibility – and, I might say *opportunity* to keep the landscape open, moves on to beef cows. In Finland they are grazing old meadows, seashores, islands, forest areas, eating grass, reed, bushes. Cattle is maintaining the traditional heritage of our landscape, making parks in the cheapest way as the conference theme says. And they are doing an excellent job! Man can't beat them!

The grazing systems are also forming new opportunities. We have a website where farmers with grazing land but no cattle offer areas for cattlemen and vice versa; cattlemen offer their cattle groups for grazing. The interests of two groups meet and both benefit. Landscape stays open and cattlemen get ease with the grazing pressure.

One of the good improvements that has happened in recent years is the new kind of bull stations. Many top breeders sell their pure bred bulls to the station as weaned calves. Bulls are recorded for their growth ability, structure (according to Danish linear scoring model) and temperament. The not so well behaving and nervous ones are left out from the bull sale. That's reasonable – I wouldn't want a cranky husband, who would care for a cranky breeding bull??

Many breeders still continue to sell their bulls from the farm. The stations collect a large number of data and information that is valuable for breeders. Since our own EPD's are inadequate, based only on birth weight, weaning and yearling weight, all new knowledge is welcomed. What we are eagerly waiting for, is to get the slaughter quality data added to EPD values.

The future of the Herefords in Finland looks bright. New members join the association especially through internet. Dairy farms give up the hard competition in milk production and change to beef cows. Herefords are appreciated for their calm temperament and easy management.

New breeders are enthusiastic and yearning for knowledge. Thanks to them the society meetings have been all the more lively lately!

Artificial insemination is also popular than ever at the moment. We're looking forward to get more new bloodlines to Finland.

There's three issues our association is concentrating on at the moment.

1. To keep the Hereford as number one breed in Finland. That acquires energetic and active promotion – although with Hereford you could say that the breed speaks for itself!

2. Educate new breeders. They don't need to make the same more or less experimental mistakes we have made in the past. We must ensure that they have all the knowledge, contacts and experience at hand.
3. Communicate with consumers. Cooking is a fashion thing at the moment and we should make the best of it. Hereford must be served to customers by advertising and to get them really hooked by tasting the real thing. People who buy high quality meat are families with children, people with academic education or environmental awareness, people who care what they eat and are ready to pay for it. People enjoy stories and want to know persons behind the products. In Finland all meat and agricultural products are traceable back to the producer. We should make the best use of this tool. Also open barn days are an excellent way of the producer and consumer to get acquainted and prevent the gap between the city and the rural life style and understanding.



I end my report here. It's nice to be among friends. I have always felt that the most genuine, good humoured and trustworthy friends are found among Hereford people. They are like their cattle; easy going and good temperament. Carry on! Thank you all for listening!

Johanna Jahkola