



Co-operation Programme 2017-2020

# Nordic Council of Ministers for Fisheries and Aquaculture, Agriculture, Food and Forestry



Nordic Council  
of Ministers

**Co-operation Programme 2017-2020**  
**Nordic Council of Ministers for Fisheries and Aquaculture,**  
**Agriculture, Food and Forestry**

ISBN 978-92-893-4828-7 (PRINT)  
ISBN 978-92-893-4829-4 (PDF)  
<http://dx.doi.org/10.6027/ANP2017-701>  
ANP 2017:701

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Layout: Gitte Wejnold  
Cover photo: norden.org, Ane Cecilie Blichfeldt  
Print: Rosendahls  
Copies: 100



Printed in Denmark

This publication has been published with financial support from the Nordic Council of Ministers. However, the contents of this publication do not necessarily reflect the views, policies or recommendations of the Nordic Council of Ministers.

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# Introduction

## Nordic Council of Ministers co-operation programmes

The Nordic Council of Ministers co-operation programmes describe the most important priorities in each policy area for the programme period. The co-operation programme steers activities in each policy area, but must also be considered in relation to other Nordic Council of Ministers policy documents, including the vision for the Nordic inter-governmental co-operation (*Together We Are Stronger*), cross-sectoral strategies, and the national presidency programmes.

The co-operation programme consists of an introduction, where the priorities and challenges of the policy areas are outlined, followed by a description of the strategic focus areas for the programme period.

Table 1. Nordic Council of Ministers policy documents

Policy document	Target group	Duration
1. Vision declaration of the Ministers for Co-operation	Nordic Council of Ministers	No fixed period
2. Cross-sectoral strategy	Nordic Council of Ministers	Up to 6 years
<b>3. Co-operation programme</b>	<b>Sector-specific</b>	<b>4 years</b>
4. Presidency programme	Ministers	1 year

## Co-operation programme for the FJLS sector, 2017-2020

The co-operation programme for the Fisheries and Aquaculture, Agriculture, Food and Forestry (FJLS) sector contributes to the vision of the Ministers for Co-operation, which is based on four pillars: freedom of movement, innovation, visibility, and international engagement. The programme also contributes to the three horizontal strategies of the Nordic Council of Ministers – sustainable development, children and young people, and gender equality – and other Nordic cross-sectoral strategies.

In addition to the Nordic strategies, the sector emphasises contributions to achieving the United Nations 17 Global Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), since the SDGs are expected to be of considerable importance for the Nordic countries in the near future. Not all the UN sustainability goals are equally relevant for the FJLS sector, so the work and priorities should be related to the various goals and sub-goals that are relevant for the FJLS co-operation.

The UN goals regarded as being particularly relevant for this strategy are:

- **Goal 2:** End hunger, achieve food security, ensure better nutrition, and more sustainable agriculture.<sup>1</sup>
- **Goal 3:** Ensure better health and a healthier life for all.
- **Goal 6:** Ensure sustainable access to water for all, ensure sustainable management of water resources, and access to sanitation for all.
- **Goal 8:** Promote sustainable economic growth, ensure full and productive employment and decent work for all.
- **Goal 12:** Ensure that consumption and production systems are sustainable.
- **Goal 13:** Take urgent action to combat climate change and its consequences.
- **Goal 14:** Promote sustainable use of the oceans and marine resources in order to preserve the oceans.
- **Goal 15:** Protect and promote ecosystems and natural resources in a sustainable way. Preserve and secure ecosystems, combat desertification, and prevent further loss of biodiversity.

The FJLS sector therefore contributes to resolving many of the most important global challenges, from climate change and the development of resistance in pathogenic bacteria to the growth of lifestyle-related disorders. By helping to tackle the global challenges, the Nordic countries, through the FJLS co-operation, can play an important role in identifying and implementing Nordic solutions to the global challenges facing society and by disseminating Nordic solutions to the rest of the world.

The Nordic countries will increasingly use their joint position of strength to promote Nordic interests in the EU and internationally. The Nordic countries are small, but together they present a significant strength on the international arena – economically, culturally and socially.

<sup>1</sup>Note that food security embraces both food security/food safety and ensuring food supply/sufficient food. In the UN sustainable development goals, fisheries and aquaculture are included in the concept 'agriculture'.



The 17 sustainable development goals of the United Nations.

# Strategic initiatives

This section describes the most important strategic initiatives for the sector. The Nordic Council of Ministers for FJLS is divided into four components – fisheries and aquaculture, agriculture, food and forestry. In order to integrate and create synergies between these four components, two overall strategic initiatives have been identified: development of the Nordic bioeconomy, and sustainable food systems.

These themes are not mutually exclusive, but should be seen as two different approaches to the same agenda, i.e. to make the Nordic FJLS sector more economically, environmentally and socially sustainable. Therefore, the ambition is also that all parts of the Nordic FJLS co-operation should help to lift the two strategic initiatives, and to establish connections with other sectors.

## **1. Development of the Nordic bioeconomy**

The FJLS sector involves sustainable production of biomass from soil, water and forest, and the journey of the products to market in the form of food, food ingredients, textiles, fuels, or various industrial raw materials and products. The policy areas address the economic, social and environmental aspects of sustainability in these value chains.

The Nordic countries have very different strengths, but common to all of them is that the bioeconomy is of great economic importance. The Nordic region has also taken responsibility for developing sustainable use of its biological natural resources. The Nordic bioeconomy creates a framework for the FJLS sectors to contribute to solutions to some of the biggest challenges of our time, such as resource efficiency and greater generation of economic value, adaptation to climate change, regional development, food security, and preventing loss of biodiversity. The bioeconomy has also attracted increasing attention in the EU and internationally, with great demand for Nordic experiences and solutions.

## **2. Sustainable food systems**

Food is a vital part of the Nordic bioeconomy, so the FJLS sectors will focus on sustainable and profitable development of the Nordic food systems. The focus is on efficient and responsible production of safe food from land and water, sustainable resource use, minimisation of food waste, including better utilisation of by- and residual products throughout the production chain, and consumer information, so that consumers can make informed and sustainable choices.

As a society, we place stringent requirements on the food system. It must be transparent and offer healthy and safe food to consumers, so the Nordic countries will further develop their existing collaboration on issues such as animal welfare, consumer information, food inspections, and nutrition policy.

The Nordic co-operation is built on great professionalism and expertise. The core is the collaboration on research and sharing of experiences that forms the basis for successful and cost-effective solutions for the Nordic countries. Many of these solutions can also be relevant for the rest of the world.

By 2020, the leading position of the Nordic countries will be consolidated and new areas will be incorporated in Nordic co-operation. This includes greater collaboration on supporting innovation and developing new bio-based products. The Nordic FJLS sectors will be made more resilient against, for example, climate change, and sustainability will be an important element in all relevant consumer-related initiatives, such as to promote consumer demand for healthy and sustainable products.

Finally, the Nordic countries will increasingly use their collective position of strength to promote joint Nordic interests in the EU and internationally.

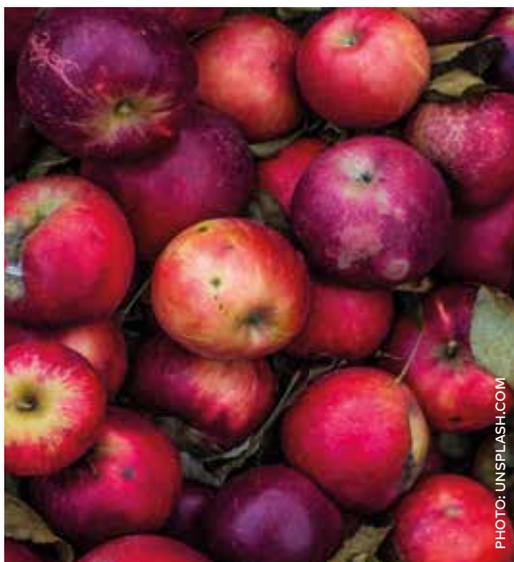


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## Focus areas

MR-FJLS has identified seven focus areas that describe the most important common challenges under the two overall strategic initiatives for 2017-2020.

### **1. Sustainable management of biological resources**

The 'new' bioeconomy creates a framework for a Nordic development of the FJLS sectors with greater focus on sustainable management of biological resources. Each of the Nordic countries has particular competence in different areas, but together they hold a strong position in the bioeconomy. This applies equally to the availability, management and processing of resources.

The Nordic countries are good at producing, for example, meat, milk, fish, and wood with a relatively low environmental impact, and with minimal use of energy and water in processing. The Nordic countries hold a leading position in terms of stringent environmental regulations and initiatives to limit the discharge of nutrients and pesticides to groundwater, rivers, streams and lakes, which is not least important for freshwater and drinking water systems as well as the Baltic Sea. In recent years, the Nordic countries have also increased co-operation on reducing food waste throughout the food system.

The advantages of efficient and sustainable resource management and combating waste at all stages from primary production through processing to consumption are evident. The environmental impact of primary production is reduced, resources in the economy are made available, and long-term security of production is ensured. There are also ethical considerations in relation to unnecessary food waste, not least from a global perspective. In order to retain its leading position, Nordic data on sustainable management of resources, especially with regard to resource efficiency, will be extended, and collaboration between the primary and processing sectors will be strengthened. Here, productivity also plays an important role as the basis for sustained competitiveness and growth.

The Nordic countries will increasingly explore the interest from international organisations such as FAO, OECD and EU in the work taking place in the Nordic region on sustainable management of natural resources and reduction of waste in production and consumption.

### **2. Increased resilience and reduced impact of primary production on climate**

Emission of greenhouse gases poses a real threat, both locally in the Nordic region and globally. Of the

FJLS sectors, agriculture makes the biggest contribution to greenhouse gas emissions in the Nordic countries, but the growing biomass in Nordic forests helps to reduce the quantity of greenhouse gases, by sequestering carbon and by replacing fossil fuels. The fisheries sector also contributes to greenhouse gas emissions.

The expected climate change and associated changes in the marine environment and ocean currents will affect the framework conditions for the FJLS sectors in the Nordic countries. Fish stocks will move northwards, across fishing boundaries, and the productivity of the oceans will change. Agricultural production will mostly increase, but this may be limited by changes in the patterns of pests and diseases. Forests will extend further north and to higher ground; here we will also see a positive development in terms of growth, but also certain challenges relating to pests, diseases, and extreme weather conditions.

The FJLS sectors will collaborate on developing methods to reduce the contribution of primary production to climate change, while increasing the resilience to these changes.

### **3. One Health, healthy animals and animal welfare**

Animal health and animal welfare are core values in Nordic food production, and are vital in the Nordic countries' efforts to maintain responsible use of drugs. The Nordic veterinary collaboration focuses particularly on sharing experiences between authorities, on having joint preparedness in place for dealing with outbreaks of livestock diseases throughout the Nordic-Baltic region, and on sharing experiences of managing multi-resistant bacteria.

However, challenges relating to the spread of antimicrobial resistance do not stop at the farm gate; resistance spreads between animals and people and across national boundaries. This is why the health, veterinary and environment sectors in the Nordic countries will work together on the basis of a holistic 'One Health' approach to maintain a low level of antibiotic resistance in the Nordic region. The countries will also utilise their position of strength to influence international decisions regarding animal welfare and One Health.

#### **4. Healthy, secure food and good food habits**

The Nordic countries have been more successful at preventing obesity and unhealthy lifestyles than many of the countries we normally compare ourselves with. A strong scientific base in the form of the Nordic Nutrition Recommendations is the cornerstone in the extensive Nordic co-operation on nutrition, with a common action plan, common monitoring, and a common nutrition label, the Keyhole. The concept 'New Nordic Food' has helped develop and show good food culture in the Nordic countries.

The Nordic countries also have a high level of consumer protection, based on targeted inspection strategies and well-balanced consumer information aimed at establishing a balance between risks and benefits regarding our food. The Nordic countries will continue this successful collaboration, while strengthening the work on food security and healthy and sustainable food habits in the Nordic countries. This will be done by increasingly incorporating into joint Nordic consumer-based activities food knowledge, food culture and consumer demand for environmentally friendly products. Good and healthy food habits are established at an early age, and initiatives aimed at the eating habits of children and young people will therefore be important.

#### **5. Innovation-promoting agencies and development of new products and services**

The Nordic countries have a high level of innovation in the sectors under MR-FJLS, from new ingredients and upgrading of residual products to New Nordic Food and use of the unique Nordic genetic resources in making new high-value products.

Development of new bio-based products offers great potential for the FJLS sector. This applies to both current primary production and the use of residual products, which can be recycled and upgraded to products of high value in the food sector, particularly chemicals and functional materials. The raw materials for this upgrading potential are found in plant fibre, proteins, fatty acids, and enzymes from all sectors.

Research and innovation organisations within the FJLS sectors play an important role in providing advice and supporting innovation, in both the small local producers and the large export-oriented companies.

Another example of collaboration between the public and private sectors is 'public-private partnerships', where competing partners combine with public agencies on developing new knowledge or new methods. Here, NordGen's experience from the PPP co-operation

on the early phase of pre-breeding, can be used as inspiration.

Also important for innovation in the FJLS sector are efficient public agencies that set stringent requirements, while also being prepared to adapt to new challenges arising from developments such as the sharing economy and circular economy, online shopping, and the growing organised fraud involving food. Here, the Nordic countries can benefit from sharing experiences and tackling the new challenges on a united front.

At the same time, the public agencies must be receptive and able to offer the necessary flexibility and guidance to enable innovation in the food sector. This applies both to the small local producers with the alternative ideas, and the big export companies that are working in completely new ways.

The Nordic authorities will collaborate on working with companies in a way that promotes growth and jobs, while also seeking experiences from other countries where the Nordic region has something to learn.

Successful co-operation between Nordic food authorities in the Nordic countries can also help to ensure uniform interpretation and control of, for example, EU regulations in the food

area, and thereby prevent cross-border obstacles in the Nordic region.

## **6. Labelling systems and accredited production**

The Nordic countries have long held a leading position globally in ethically responsible primary production in terms of sustainability, environmental footprint, resource utilisation, and animal welfare.

There are already many different accreditation systems in the Nordic region aimed at raising standards, while also improving business competitiveness. The most widespread certification type is probably the organic, which considers both animal welfare and the environment. Other significant certification schemes include the EU labelling scheme for protected designations and certification of sustainable forest and fisheries management.

Further development of existing certification schemes and establishment of a forum for sharing experiences should be prioritized.

## **7. Diversified rural economies**

The primary industries are an important part of the economic base in sparsely populated areas in the Nordic region. However, technological developments



have reduced the number of people employed in these sectors, causing a decline in rural population in large areas in all the Nordic countries.

The bioeconomy can help to reverse this trend, but this will require coordinated efforts involving a number of actors at both regional and national levels. This needs to be based on location-specific development strategies, supported by investment in new industries, such

as ecotourism (e.g. farm holidays, recreational fishing, farm shops), development of new products based on local food production, or new industrial initiatives.

The FJLS sector will enter into partnerships with relevant actors on developing strategies to realise the potential afforded by more diversified and sustainable rural economies in the Nordic region.



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## Results by 2020

By 2020 the FJLS collaboration will have enabled the Nordic countries to strengthen and extend joint Nordic priorities in the areas in which we already enjoy close collaboration. In particular, we have strong collaboration on resource efficiency and long-term economically sustainable production, and a clear focus on replacement of fossil-based materials by bio-based materials within the framework of a growing bioeconomy.

By 2020 the FJLS sectors will have contributed to the UN Global Sustainable Development Goals, particularly those pertaining to sustainable resource utilisation and food systems. This will include a common Nordic strategy and platform for the work with One Health, and reduction of the impact of agriculture and fisheries on climate. There will be collaboration on certificated production standards, including organic food production, and further work will be carried out on resource-efficient production and reduction of food waste, including

promoting the use of by- and residual products. Concrete results will have been attained in relation to developing new high-value products from primary production and residual products from the agricultural, forestry and fisheries sectors, and contributed to diversification of local economies in rural areas in the Nordic countries.

By 2020 the Nordic countries will have:

- Incorporated sustainable food habits in consumer-directed activities.
- Strengthened implementation of the Nordic Nutrition Recommendations.
- Strengthened the collaboration on resource-efficient and economically sustainable production.
- Improved the framework for innovation in food production by greater public-private collaboration.

By 2020 the Nordic countries will have further developed their collaboration on EU and global issues, with the aim to promote joint Nordic interests in the EU and internationally where relevant.



PHOTO: PEXELS.COM

## Organisation in the FJLS policy areas

The organisation of senior officials in the Nordic Council of Ministers for FJLS comprises five integrated departments, i.e. an executive committee and one department each for fisheries and aquaculture, agriculture, food and forestry. The executive committee and the four departments each have the status of a committee of senior officials.

There is one Nordic organisation under MR-FJLS, the Nordic Genetic Resource Center (NordGen), which works with preservation and utilisation of Nordic genetic resources for agriculture and forestry.

The committees vary in terms of underlying structure. Under EK-FJLS (Fisheries and Aquaculture) is the

Nordic Working Group for Fisheries and Aquaculture (AG-Fisk); under EK-FJLS (Agriculture) is the Nordic Joint Committee for Agricultural and Food Research (NKJ); under EK-FJLS (Forestry) is Nordic Forest Research (SNS), and under EK-FJLS (Food) are three working groups: Nordic Working Group for Diet, Food and Toxicology (NKMT), Nordic Working Group for Food Safety and Consumer Information (NMF), and the Nordic Working Group for Microbiology & Animal Health and Welfare (NMDD). Finally, the steering group for New Nordic Food is under the EK-FJLS Executive Committee.

## Nordic Genetic Resource Center (NordGen)

NordGen is the organisation responsible for all coordination of genetic resources in agriculture in the Nordic countries.

The institute operates according to two overall objectives: a) preservation of genetic resources, and b) sustainable use of genetic resources relevant to food, agriculture and forestry.

NordGen will contribute to the efficient dissemination of knowledge to users in the Nordic countries, and will coordinate activities where relevant and cost-effective. NordGen will also promote interaction and mutual understanding between agricultural production and environmental protection in the Nordic collaboration; this applies to both sustainable use and preservation of genetic resources and the interaction between genetic resources and the environment. NordGen will support and assist the Nordic countries and the Nordic Council of Ministers as necessary.

NordGen also administers the *public-private partnership for pre-breeding*, the purpose of which is to support the development of Nordic plant breeding, thereby helping to satisfy long-term needs in agriculture, horticulture and gardening.

NordGen operates in an international environment and must comply to common standards and guidelines for managing plant genetic resources established through the European collaboration (AEGIS).

In the Kalmar Declaration of 2004, the Nordic countries describe their overall views and vision, and the foundation was laid for how NordGen will work with genetic resources. All accessions to the gene bank, with the exception of security collections held by NordGen on behalf of other gene banks, are under common Nordic administration and are accessible to the public.

NordGen is responsible for the operation, marketing and logistics relating to the Svalbard Global Seed Vault (SGSV), which is funded by the Ministry of Agriculture and Food in Norway and the Global Crop Diversity Trust.



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## **Co-operation Programme 2017-2020 Nordic Council of Ministers for Fisheries and Aquaculture, Agriculture, Food and Forestry**

This co-operation programme describes the main Nordic political priorities for 2017-2020 regarding fisheries and aquaculture, agriculture, food and forestry: developing the Nordic bioeconomy and sustainable food systems.

With this co-operation programme the Nordic Council of Ministers develops and strengthens the Nordic cooperation on fisheries and aquaculture, agriculture, food and forestry. The programme also contributes to resolving many of the important global challenges agreed on in the Global Sustainable Development Goals, from climate change and the development of antimicrobial resistance to the growth of lifestyle-related disorders.

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