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00:00:00,630 --> 00:00:04,020

Hi and welcome to today's episode of our podcast.

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00:00:04,260 --> 00:00:11,310

My name is Moa and I'm here with Pauline. Today we're diving into the big question can meat be sustainable?

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00:00:11,730 --> 00:00:15,150

That's right. We're exploring eco partnership and farming.

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00:00:15,360 --> 00:00:17,880

How small scale farmers balance sustainability.

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00:00:18,060 --> 00:00:26,550

Biodiversity and financial pressures in a system that often prioritises growth and efficiency over environmental responsibility.

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00:00:27,240 --> 00:00:31,140

But before we dive in, let's start with a quick personal check in.

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00:00:31,590 --> 00:00:36,450

Do you eat meat? And if so, what kind? I actually don't eat meat.

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00:00:36,480 --> 00:00:39,180

I follow vegetarian diet for a mix of reasons.

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00:00:39,540 --> 00:00:47,220

For me, it's about reducing animal cruelty, lowering my environmental impact, and honestly, I just don't enjoy the taste of meat.

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00:00:47,610 --> 00:00:52,590

Instead, I try to focus on organic and locally sourced ingredients whenever possible.

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00:00:52,620 --> 00:01:02,490

What about you? I do eat meat, but I aim for quality over quantity in order to have sustainably produced options that industrial meat.

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00:01:02,730 --> 00:01:09,000

But yeah, convenience plays a big role too. Sometimes it's just easier to grab whatever is available.

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00:01:09,510 --> 00:01:13,170

And that's exactly why today's conversation is so relevant.

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00:01:13,560 --> 00:01:19,050

Let's explore what makes meat sustainable and how we as consumers can make better choices.

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00:01:19,950 --> 00:01:23,190

So let's put things into perspective.

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00:01:23,820 --> 00:01:28,889

Industrial meat production is one of the largest contributors to greenhouse gas emissions,

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00:01:28,890 --> 00:01:36,300

deforestation and biodiversity loss, according to IPCC's Special Report on Climate Change and Land.

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00:01:36,840 --> 00:01:42,420

And it's often driven by efficiency and cost cutting at the expense of sustainability.

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00:01:42,930 --> 00:01:49,440

In contrast, ecological farming, like the one we hear about today, follows the principles of regenerative agriculture.

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00:01:49,860 --> 00:01:58,470

This approach focuses on restoring and enhancing natural ecosystems by, for example, allowing animals to graze in a way that mimics natural patterns.

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00:01:58,740 --> 00:02:03,720

The soil remains healthy, biodiversity flourished, and carbon is stored rather than released.

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00:02:04,050 --> 00:02:07,680

Unlike industrial farming, which depletes resources over time.

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00:02:07,890 --> 00:02:14,100

Regenerative agriculture actively improves soil health, making it more resilient for future generations.

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00:02:14,850 --> 00:02:20,850

And according to statistics, only 14.4% of the agriculture in Finland is organic.

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00:02:21,150 --> 00:02:26,760

So there's definitely room for improvement. But what does sustainable farming really mean in practice?

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00:02:26,910 --> 00:02:31,380

Let's hear from Tomas Nyström, who's a regenerative beef farmer.

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00:02:32,550 --> 00:02:36,900

The main thing is we are not using fertilisers or pesticides.

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00:02:37,230 --> 00:02:43,080

We are just using our own fertilisers that are coming from the cows.

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00:02:43,440 --> 00:02:49,800

So it's, uh, it's everything is going in a circle and, uh, we are just producing grass.

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00:02:50,170 --> 00:02:54,480

Nothing else. So everything is, is, um.

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00:02:55,430 --> 00:02:59,660

We only we just grass. We we feed the cows. We have the grass from our own farms.

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00:03:00,350 --> 00:03:04,460

But small scale farmers often face significant economic pressures.

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00:03:05,000 --> 00:03:10,520

Industrial meat production is often cheaper, making it harder for sustainable farmers to compete.

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00:03:11,390 --> 00:03:17,630

This raises a crucial point. What is the biggest challenge for small farmers who want to operate sustainably?

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00:03:18,170 --> 00:03:25,160

Tomas shares some insight into the foundation of structural difficulties they face, as we can see a problem there really,

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00:03:25,190 --> 00:03:35,030

because if you are making this in small scale, really small scale, the the things we are doing to the environment, the thing is not as big as farming.

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00:03:35,030 --> 00:03:45,440

Do it as a big farm. So it's a you have to think about this also because the problem is we are using a lot of energy with the tractors.

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00:03:45,560 --> 00:03:55,740

That's the main thing. It's different if you farm on ten hectares or 500 hectares .

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00:03:55,740 --> 00:04:01,310

You don't use so much, so much energy to produce food on it.

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00:04:01,670 --> 00:04:14,150

It is quite um, in small scale and, and uh, if you have a lot of hectares, it's, uh, very difficult to produce something without energy.

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00:04:15,370 --> 00:04:21,490

As we heard, it's a complex issue. And have you heard about a proposed Caltex in Denmark?

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00:04:21,880 --> 00:04:24,940

It aims to reduce methane emissions from domestic animals.

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00:04:25,270 --> 00:04:29,380

But are emissions based taxes a necessary step for sustainability?

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00:04:30,730 --> 00:04:40,720

Yes, this is interesting because if you see the amount of cows in Finland in the 1950s, we had 1.8 million cows here.

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00:04:41,020 --> 00:04:48,960

And uh, last year we had 0.8 million, so 800,000 cows in Finland.

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00:04:48,970 --> 00:04:55,900

So we in 70 years, the amount of cows has gone down with more than 50%.

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00:04:56,380 --> 00:05:09,430

Globally, This has uh, the, the we have gone from, from 1.1 million billion cows to 1.8 billion cows in 70 years.

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00:05:09,580 --> 00:05:17,020

So, uh, globally, the cows have increased by 50%, but in Finland it has decreased by 50%.

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00:05:17,350 --> 00:05:23,980

So, uh, a tax for cows, that could be one way of doing it.

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00:05:24,700 --> 00:05:29,560

But, uh, then it should be in the whole world and not just for just one country.

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00:05:29,800 --> 00:05:35,710

So I don't see for Finland now, when the amount of cows have gone down 50% in 70 years,

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00:05:36,370 --> 00:05:42,340

uh, and in the same time, uh, the carbon dioxide emissions has gone up.

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00:05:43,120 --> 00:05:48,310

I don't know how much. So I don't really understand how the cows can be the problem there.

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00:05:49,240 --> 00:05:53,560

The problem is the that we are using so much oil for everything.

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00:05:54,250 --> 00:06:00,970

Uh, but about the taxes, I don't know, I don't really it's one way of going, but I don't really understand.

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00:06:01,900 --> 00:06:05,530

How do you see making a solution for anything.

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00:06:05,860 --> 00:06:12,990

So of course the price for the meat is going up. And that's perhaps reducing the volume within that way.

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00:06:13,440 --> 00:06:18,000

But it is a very difficult combination that you have to think about.

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00:06:18,540 --> 00:06:19,770

That was interesting.

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00:06:19,920 --> 00:06:29,640

It really makes me think maybe instead of individual control policies, a global approach to taxation and sustainability would make more sense.

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00:06:30,300 --> 00:06:34,440

That's a good point. Sustainability and farming isn't just about emissions.

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00:06:34,650 --> 00:06:39,570

It's also about the way we treat animals and how farming fits in the bigger ecological picture.

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00:06:40,470 --> 00:06:47,280

The animals we have here they are. They are growing quite slowly due to that, that they just eat grass.

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00:06:47,670 --> 00:06:56,670

So it's grass fed meat. Uh, you know, we have a slogan when we when we sell, sell the meat that kon som hinner dofta på blommorna .

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00:06:56,740 --> 00:07:03,360

That's meaning more or less in English, that cows that have time to enjoy the time on the field.

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00:07:03,960 --> 00:07:08,270

The cows here are not stressed at all.

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00:07:08,280 --> 00:07:13,470

They have a good life here. And we are marketing that also.

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00:07:14,310 --> 00:07:17,670

We have got a lot of a lot of customers that are commenting on this.

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00:07:17,670 --> 00:07:20,670

Uh, uh, are they really happy.

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00:07:21,450 --> 00:07:30,220

And we can, we can say that they are. And I have very good circumstances to live here also in that in a natural way.

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00:07:31,630 --> 00:07:38,710

That really challenges the industrial model, where speed and efficiency often come before animal welfare.

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00:07:39,430 --> 00:07:48,610

Yes, and that ties into the triple bottom line framework that we have covered in class balancing environmental, social and economic pressures.

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00:07:50,110 --> 00:07:56,380

Tomas clearly prioritises all three. But how does this balance actually play out in his business?

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00:07:57,990 --> 00:08:07,530

Yes, that's the fact that when you are organic about organic farm, it's, um, the production is less than conventional.

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00:08:08,040 --> 00:08:12,180

That's that's for sure. About 20% less.

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00:08:12,810 --> 00:08:20,340

Uh, but on the other hand, we got subsidies from the state and from the EU to have the organic farming.

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00:08:20,850 --> 00:08:27,660

And also, of course, the price of the meat is about 20-30% higher than conventional.

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00:08:28,410 --> 00:08:37,080

Uh, one thing also that, uh, the produce, the meat I produce on the farm here is, uh, about 50 animals a year that I can slaughter.

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00:08:37,710 --> 00:08:46,220

But then I'm buying also from other farmers in here nearby that are also organic, uh, at least the same amount of animals that those local.

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00:08:47,640 --> 00:08:58,650

So I got, all in all, a quite big, uh, volume to sell each, each month because I'm, I'm quite small anyway.

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00:08:58,680 --> 00:09:06,510

But, uh, all in all, when I'm buying it, buying also meat from other producers, the total volume is quite big anyway.

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00:09:07,230 --> 00:09:12,450

I used to say here in Ostrobothnia, I'm the biggest of the small farms,

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00:09:12,540 --> 00:09:18,870

small meat houses and competing with Atria, Snellman and HK.

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00:09:19,940 --> 00:09:25,590

Uh, they are the big. But, uh, i am the fourth supplier on the market.

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00:09:25,720 --> 00:09:34,350

And you can use this benefit or your knowledge from the corporate world.

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00:09:34,650 --> 00:09:42,720

Yes that's right. That's right. I know how the business has to be organised to be in good shape.

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00:09:43,320 --> 00:09:46,500

I know what the customers need also.

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00:09:47,790 --> 00:09:52,440

Uh, that's something that I learned during the, the work in the, in the paper industry.

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00:09:53,800 --> 00:09:59,200

Tomas has worked in the corporate world for 25 years, while also being a farmer at the same time.

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00:09:59,830 --> 00:10:02,050

And that brings us to ecopreneurship .

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00:10:02,440 --> 00:10:09,190

Tomas is a great example of an ecopreneur, someone who builds a business around sustainability rather than as an afterthought.

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00:10:09,580 --> 00:10:17,230

However, as we've learned, sustainability in farming comes with challenges, particularly in terms of bureaucracy and certification.

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00:10:18,910 --> 00:10:22,180

There's a lot of farmers are interested in organic farming.

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00:10:22,630 --> 00:10:29,590

Uh, but they don't really dare to do it because they see it's a much more work to be done.

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00:10:30,280 --> 00:10:40,120

A lot of things to take care of and, uh, handle. But I'm also quite used to, to take care of paperwork, and I don't see that as a problem.

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00:10:40,840 --> 00:10:45,010

Of course, it takes time, but, uh, I'm quite used to it, so it's no bigger challenges.

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00:10:45,610 --> 00:10:53,290

But on the other hand, to to produce grass organically, it's, um, it's not easy always.

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00:10:54,190 --> 00:10:57,160

And it's different on different soils also.

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00:10:57,670 --> 00:11:08,800

You have to take that into consideration also that you need everything is not growing everywhere, but luckily the grass is almost, well, almost.

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00:11:09,980 --> 00:11:16,940

Growing everywhere.

as we heard, these things can make it challenging for small farms to operate sustainably.

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00:11:17,420 --> 00:11:23,900

But it's a choice and a way of life. You know in your heart that you're doing something meaningful and right.

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00:11:24,230 --> 00:11:30,559

That's surely one of the key drivers as well. The problem, however, is even consumers, while well-intentioned,

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00:11:30,560 --> 00:11:38,180

often prioritise convenience and cheaper alternatives over sustainability, which makes it even harder for small firms to thrive.

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00:11:39,170 --> 00:11:43,040

Right. And it's making me think about consumer responsibility.

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00:11:43,610 --> 00:11:46,840

If we truly want to shift, it can't just come from the farmers.

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00:11:46,850 --> 00:11:54,560

It has to come from demand. If more people were willing to pay slightly more for sustainable meat, it could shift the market incentives.

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00:11:55,280 --> 00:12:00,200

But how do we balance that with affordability and accessibility?

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00:12:00,620 --> 00:12:04,280

That's the real challenge. It's not just about individual choices.

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00:12:04,550 --> 00:12:08,960

It's about creating a system where sustainable options are the norm, not the exception.

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00:12:09,290 --> 00:12:11,930

Right now, it's hard to say if it really become the norm.

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00:12:12,200 --> 00:12:20,840

However, education policy incentives and community support all play a key role in making that happen, even if this journey will take time.

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00:12:21,800 --> 00:12:27,530

Exactly. And that's also where growth driven economy becomes a real issue.

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00:12:28,100 --> 00:12:32,360

Our tie and current system is designed around efficiency and expansion.

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00:12:32,870 --> 00:12:39,140

Small farmers often can't compete with industrial scale operations that have economies of scale on their side.

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00:12:39,680 --> 00:12:45,080

So what does this mean for small farmers?

We have a problem in Finland, all of that.

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00:12:45,950 --> 00:12:48,980

A lot of the small farms are not very efficient.

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00:12:49,940 --> 00:12:57,110

It's very difficult for a family to live on a small farm, because the profits are quite small in a way.

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00:12:57,350 --> 00:13:06,200

So you have to be big. But it's a problem to become big because you have to invest and buy land and buy machines and buildings and everything.

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00:13:06,980 --> 00:13:10,250

And I that's in my, in my life.

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00:13:10,250 --> 00:13:14,480

And that has been possible because I had the salary from the,

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00:13:14,690 --> 00:13:24,920

from my work in 25 years so I could live on that and invest all the money that came from the farm back to the farm, so I could grow.

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00:13:25,220 --> 00:13:35,840

So today I used to say that I want to be always 50% bigger than the average farm and that, but the average farm is growing all the time also.

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00:13:36,500 --> 00:13:41,450

I think when I started, the average farm was about perhaps 30 hectares.

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00:13:42,380 --> 00:13:47,680

Today it's 50 or no, it's all gone up to even a hundred hectare.

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00:13:47,690 --> 00:13:50,750

And I, I have now 160 hectares.

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00:13:51,770 --> 00:13:59,930

But always to be, you have to always be better than the average in the in the in the farming business.

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00:14:00,290 --> 00:14:04,760

If you want to succeed,

that connects to green extra activism.

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00:14:04,880 --> 00:14:11,690

A concept with also discussed in the course. Large companies and industrial farms can adopt the language of sustainability.

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00:14:11,690 --> 00:14:16,290

Carbon offset Ecolabel labels emission reductions mainly in order to further boost

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00:14:16,290 --> 00:14:20,360

their financial outcomes without actually changing the underlying structures.

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00:14:20,870 --> 00:14:28,670

If sustainability becomes just another marketing tool, we risk missing the deeper systemic changes needed, according to Tomas.

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00:14:28,880 --> 00:14:34,220

Many conventional farmers continue to expand their businesses, often at the expense of the environment.

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00:14:35,640 --> 00:14:39,690

Yes to be an entrepreneur compared to traditional farming.

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00:14:40,050 --> 00:14:45,150

you always have to try to live in balance with the nature.

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00:14:45,390 --> 00:14:48,420

Can't work against it. That's impossible.

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00:14:48,810 --> 00:14:58,770

But on the other hand, more of the conventional farmers are taking some parts of the ecological or organic way of farming also into use.

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00:14:59,340 --> 00:15:06,960

So they are coming closer and closer. You know, the herbicide to use is going down in, in Finland.

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00:15:07,500 --> 00:15:14,670

And also the pesticides. And then we have a really low level of antibiotics here in Finland.

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00:15:14,790 --> 00:15:19,440

So it's just Sweden in the world that have a slightly lower antibiotic use than Finland.

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00:15:20,040 --> 00:15:30,510

What else? To be an entrepreneur. You have to be interested in the both in the in the farming and also the, the business.

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00:15:30,870 --> 00:15:41,100

And a lot of farmers are good at doing the farming work, but perhaps not that that interested in business.

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00:15:41,400 --> 00:15:49,650

And that's also one reason, but that, uh, 20% of the farmers today in Finland are not making any profits at all.

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00:15:51,280 --> 00:15:56,050

So after all this discussion. Can meat be sustainable?

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00:15:57,340 --> 00:15:59,350

Yes, I think it can be sustainable.

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00:15:59,650 --> 00:16:10,479

For example, this farm that we are having here, I haven't exactly calculated how much coldioxide we are producing ,

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00:16:10,480 --> 00:16:20,170

but I know that everything that I produce here, the main thing is grass, and I know that grass is, is binding coldioxide.

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00:16:20,830 --> 00:16:28,569

And also on the farming, we have about 150 hectares of forest, and that is growing forest.

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00:16:28,570 --> 00:16:31,560

And that is also binding coldioxide (CO₂).

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00:16:31,570 --> 00:16:42,100

So I, uh, I think, in fact, that my production here is we are we are binding more coldioxide (CO₂) than we are producing coldioxide (CO₂) and methane.

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00:16:42,580 --> 00:16:50,140

So, uh, I think my all in all, I'm not, uh, giving out any, any coldioxide (CO₂).

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00:16:50,380 --> 00:16:59,580

I'm binding everything.

I personally think the answer is yes, but it depends on how it's produced.

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00:16:59,850 --> 00:17:02,759

Industrial meat? Not really, but ecological.

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00:17:02,760 --> 00:17:10,980

Small scale farming can be far more sustainable, especially when it prioritise biodiversity, animal welfare and regenerative practices.

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00:17:11,400 --> 00:17:15,870

But what role do consumers play in making sustainable meat a viable choice?

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00:17:16,410 --> 00:17:20,700

Tomas emphasises the importance of buying local and supporting domestic farmers.

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00:17:21,210 --> 00:17:27,450

The main thing is that all Finns are consuming products that are produced in Finland.

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00:17:27,990 --> 00:17:32,160

We don't need to import and we have a quite good situation on meat beef.

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00:17:32,160 --> 00:17:38,070

Today 80% of the production is domestic and we are importing 20%.

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00:17:38,730 --> 00:17:44,190

That's quiet compared to Sweden where the percentage is about 50%.

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00:17:44,580 --> 00:17:55,020

So the Swedes are importing a lot of meat from South America and Australia and these and from Poland, also Central Europe.

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00:17:55,530 --> 00:18:01,530

But the main thing is due to that the customers or consumers are using Finnish meat.

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00:18:02,100 --> 00:18:11,429

And that also is important because we have become more and more difficult or not difficult,

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00:18:11,430 --> 00:18:18,570

but important that in a crisis, Finland should be able to feed its own,

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00:18:19,290 --> 00:18:29,940

uh, inhabitants, because it's not sure that if we have a really big crisis, it's not sure that we can import so much food to the country.

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00:18:31,300 --> 00:18:34,810

And that's where we as consumers and policy makers come in.

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00:18:35,800 --> 00:18:38,980

Supporting local sustainable farms makes a real difference.

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00:18:39,340 --> 00:18:43,510

And consumer behaviour is already shifting. Tomas explains how.

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00:18:44,320 --> 00:18:54,820

Yes, I see really it is a growing awareness of it and I, I, you know, I had to two segments when I sell to me to have the private customers and

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00:18:54,970 --> 00:19:00,970

to the restaurants and I see especially now on the under segment customers,

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00:19:01,360 --> 00:19:08,620

private customers that it is really an increasing demand for organic meat.

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00:19:09,250 --> 00:19:12,250

The last year I have a lot of new customers.

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00:19:12,700 --> 00:19:17,870

I don't really know where they're coming from, but they say when I ask them when I,

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00:19:17,870 --> 00:19:22,230

deliver to meet them: why are they choosing us?

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00:19:22,260 --> 00:19:27,309

What has happened? And they say that they want for the first they want, uh, meat.

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00:19:27,310 --> 00:19:30,580

That is for sure. Guaranteed.

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00:19:31,270 --> 00:19:35,290

free from antibiotic. And they know the taste is better.

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00:19:35,980 --> 00:19:40,360

And also that they want to, uh, so support local production.

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00:19:41,380 --> 00:19:50,560

And of course, don't give so much money to the, to the to the detailed business (bid chains).

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00:19:50,860 --> 00:20:01,780

So as S- and K-chains

looking ahead to key challenge is gaining sustainability without falling into the trap of greenwashing.

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00:20:02,080 --> 00:20:06,220

Can we shift economic incentives to support real ecopreneur farming?

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00:20:06,760 --> 00:20:11,080

That's a question for policymakers, businesses and all of us consumers.

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00:20:11,590 --> 00:20:16,180

But will sustainable farming ever become the norm? Tomas is sceptical.

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00:20:17,320 --> 00:20:19,389

I don't think it will become the norm,

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00:20:19,390 --> 00:20:27,040

but I think the whole agricultural business in Finland is becoming more and more environmentally friendly all the time.

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00:20:27,220 --> 00:20:31,600

Not only the organic ones.

Absolutely.

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00:20:31,780 --> 00:20:36,790

And now I have to ask, after this discussion, do you think meat can be sustainable?

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00:20:37,750 --> 00:20:39,760

You know, that's a tough question.

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00:20:40,060 --> 00:20:47,830

If we want real change, it's not just about buying, but it's about supporting policies and farmers who are committed to doing things differently.

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00:20:48,580 --> 00:20:53,650

And to our listeners, if this conversation made you reflect on a future of food and farming, consider supporting small local producers who prioritise sustainable practices. Real change starts with how we value and invest in responsible agriculture.

Thank you for joining us.

Thank you.