



VÖRTSUKALA: ADDING VALUE TO BYCATCH

AUTHOR

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HIGHLIGHTS

- *Valuing bycatch at Vörtsukala started with a research project and got funding from Implementation program of the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund 2014-2020.*
- *Business clients prefer pet food made of bycatch or fish waste.*
- *There is high potential for the bycatch but currently it is not convenient for the fishermen to report bycatch due to the labour-intensive process of determining quantities and species.*

ABOUT CIRCLE

The CIRCLE project develops an interdisciplinary perspective on the circular economy in the Baltic-Nordic region by integrating insights from sociology, economics, philosophy, political science, and environmental science. The emphasis is placed on the use of by-products (bio-resources) generated as part of primary production in agriculture, forestry, and aquaculture and across the sectoral boundaries.

ABOUT THE CIRCULAR PRACTICE

The 2020 research project found that numerous food items, such as fish sauce, various culinary products, as well as animal food, can be made from bycatch. These results encouraged Vörtsukala to apply for funding to build a production site for processing bycatch. This case illustrates cooperation in the efficient use of bioresources, albeit it is not a fully operating business yet and the production of fish meal is done only on a small scale.

BUSINESS MODEL

Vörtsukala uses their own fish processing residues and additionally buys bycatch from local fishermen to produce fishmeal. As a member of Lake Vörtsjärv Fisheries Development Agency, the company can ensure stable bioresource flow for their production. The company's own renewable energy plant allows them to produce with smaller CO2 emissions than other producers. The company sells fishmeal directly to individual customers and retailers.

OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

The circular practice has been mainly driven by fishing regulations that require that bycatch is brought to land and not discarded back into the lake. Throwing bycatch back into the lake causes pollution as biomass begins to decompose, which worsens water quality.

With this opportunity also come two main challenges. First, bycatch flow is seasonal and uneven. Hence it is difficult to agree on quantities in advance. Second, determining bycatch species is currently labour-intensive and does not pay off for the fishermen. According to the regulation, reporting the bycatch by fish species is mandatory, but it is very time consuming for fishermen to fill in the reports for fish without high market value. They are also afraid that if they report too much bycatch of specific species the fishing limits might come down.

More about CIRCLE:
<https://circle-eea.eu>

Iceland
Liechtenstein
Norway grants

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