



GRØNNE FOLK: MEALS FROM WASTE VEGETABLES

AUTHOR

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HIGHLIGHTS

- *Grønne Folk (Green People) produces vegetable-based ready meals for the Norwegian consumer market.*
- *One third of the vegetable inputs come from vegetable side-streams that are otherwise treated as waste.*
- *Green People creates added value for many actors involved in the value chain; from the farmers that get paid for delivering waste vegetables instead of shouldering the cost of disposal, to the company owners who valorise waste side-streams.*

ABOUT THE CIRCULAR PRACTICE

Grønne Folk (Green People) is a company that produces vegetable-based ready meals for the Norwegian consumer market. Their products range from vegetable burgers, pea-based chilis to meat-free bolognese and beetroot hummus. Grønne Folk is situated in one of the core regions for vegetable production in Norway, and its production is based on waste vegetables from the producers in this region. It is unique in a Norwegian context, and the first of its kind to upscale what would otherwise become waste to food under a separate brand name. Grønne Folk promotes themselves as a producer of vegetable-based ready meals with no soy and no additives. Their circularity stems from valorisation of side streams that are turned into both new products, added profit for the company, and added value for the local community. Waste from the Grønne Folk production, including peel and cut-offs from the food production, is returned to local producers as compost.

BUSINESS MODEL

Grønne Folk captures value in several ways, both at the local community and CBI level. The CBI management describes their business model as very straightforward and simple in its design. They saw a market for vegetable-based ready meals and could start production at a relatively low cost since a large share of the input could be sourced locally. The alternative use of the locally sourced vegetables is as waste, providing a potential cost for disposal for the producers. By delivering these waste vegetables to Grønne Folk, local producers save time, effort and money. They are now moreover also earning money. During the start-up phase, Grønne Folk revenue was too small to pay farmers for delivering waste vegetables. However, during the last two to three years, Grønne Folk has started to pay the farmers for their waste, thus creating added value for the local and regional producers. Additional value created by Grønne Folk is the provision of local workplaces (both skilled and unskilled labor), reduction of food waste, and the provision of an alternative for people concerned about a healthy diet and a healthy lifestyle.



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ABOUT CIRCLE

The CIRCLE project aims to develop 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 to explore the underlying models of socially- and commercially-driven collaborations, and the factors facilitating and hindering the development and wider use of circular practices and collaborative arrangements thereof.

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

*More about Grønne Folk:
<https://www.gronnefolk.no>*

OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

The factors *enabling* the establishment of Grønne Folk and acting as a basis for its relative success are the increased awareness of food waste in the Norwegian consumer market (which Grønne Folk helps to reduce) and increased focus on eating more vegetables. Also, Grønne Folk is situated in a vegetable-producing agricultural region, which means that they have easy access to waste vegetables and transportation distances are kept low.

Grønne Folk faces two main challenges. First, they have recently been bought by the largest vegetable wholesaler in Norway (BAMA, now owning 51% of the shares). This has increased the financial stability of Grønne Folk but deprived the entrepreneurs of their former strategic decision power. Second, Grønne Folk has outgrown their current production facilities, and need to expand the production area and capacity to meet increasing demand. There are plans for a new factory, but under the current owners the expansion plans and progress has been put on hold.

In public dietary guidelines, increased consumption of vegetables is encouraged. This dietary advice has political backing, and there are a few support schemes aimed at increasing vegetable production in Norwegian agriculture. However, there is a general lack of policy instruments and direct policy support for circular start-ups. Both national and regional policymakers treat circular CBIs like any other start-up.