

SUSTAINABLE REINDEER HERDING AND HUSBANDRY

International Workshop organised in Kautokeino, 8-11 March 2000

Chairmen's summary

Following a Norwegian initiative the conditions for sustainable reindeer herding and husbandry have been discussed for the first time within the framework of the Arctic Council. The main focus of the workshop was on circumpolar reindeer husbandry, but issues raised by the hunting and management of caribou and wild reindeer were also discussed. The seminar was attended by about 70 participants from Norway, Sweden, Finland, Russia, Denmark/Greenland and Canada. They represented every aspect of reindeer husbandry - reindeer herders, administrative authorities, and researchers. The fact that Russia was broadly represented was particularly significant. We would also like to make special mention of the participation and active support of the Association of World Reindeer Herders.

Reindeer husbandry builds on the general principle of sustainable development, based as it is on an annual harvest of a natural surplus, and helps to maintain an essential equilibrium that has developed over thousands of years. Reindeer husbandry is thus an example of a human activity that is carried out in harmony with the principles of the Brundtland report. The special nature of reindeer husbandry as a way of life and as an industry must be acknowledged by the authorities at all levels, and the rights of reindeer herders and of the industry itself, must be secured in legislation. At the same time, reindeer husbandry provides a material base for the culture of a great many indigenous peoples in the Arctic, and is thus an essential element in the preservation of cultural diversity in the world, cf. the report by the World Commission for Culture and Development, *Our Creative Diversity*.

Today, however, there are a number of aspects of reindeer husbandry that require attention and active efforts from local and central government authorities in the countries where reindeer husbandry is practised.

The workshop focused on five main topics:

Products, markets and infrastructure

Emphasis was given to product development and the market potential of reindeer meat. This will depend on private and state investment in infrastructure that will facilitate sales, an aspect that was particularly emphasized by the Russians. The difficulties encountered by the reindeer husbandry industry in Russia with regard to the building up of slaughtering and processing facilities with the standards of hygiene and quality required, for example, by the European market were pointed out. Cooperation with the Nordic reindeer husbandry industries on equipment and knowledge in the fields of processing and marketing should be continued and enhanced. An important question that was raised at the workshop was whether individual countries should act separately on the market or whether they would be better served by acting together. The current customs and veterinary legislation has led to differences in market access.

Human resources

Expertise in reindeer husbandry includes traditional knowledge on the use of the natural resource base. Several of the participants emphasized that reindeer husbandry is based on knowledge that is handed down from generation to generation. It is therefore important to

ensure recruitment that take this into account and can create a basis for the involvement of the whole family in reindeer husbandry.

The natural resource base for sustainable reindeer herding and husbandry

The protection of the natural resource base and environment on which reindeer husbandry depends is of overriding importance for the whole Arctic region. Reindeer husbandry is seriously affected both directly and indirectly, by pollution of the soil, air and water and by climate change. Industrial and other forms of development have considerably reduced the grazing areas in many places, and this has created a deep sense of insecurity in many reindeer herding communities. This trend is continuing and is making the situation even more difficult. Within the limits of available grazing land, an acceptable seasonal balance must be created, and steps must be taken to ensure that the grazing land is used in a way that promotes stable, efficient production.

Local and central government authorities in the Arctic countries should be particularly aware of the weak position of reindeer husbandry in the face of competition from other users of the grazing land. When planning measures, special attention must therefore be given to the needs of reindeer husbandry. It is also often the case that less permanent activities interfere with the fundamental aspects of reindeer husbandry. Moreover, the loss of reindeer to predators puts a considerable strain on many reindeer herding communities. Land-use planning must therefore be based on a broad understanding of sustainable development, including both biological diversity and the needs of the reindeer herding communities.

It is extremely important that knowledge and management of the natural resource base for reindeer husbandry is strengthened and that local, national and international legislation is adapted with a view to ensure the fair and long-term protection of the basis for reindeer husbandry.

Organisation and management

There are traditionally a number of different ways of organizing reindeer husbandry interest in the Arctic region, and many groups lack a joint platform for expressing their experiences, need and wishes. In the view of the participants at the workshop, the strengthening of the local, national and international reindeer herders organisations is a vital task for all the countries involved. It was stressed that at international level the Association of World Reindeer Herders is the organisation it is most important to strengthen both financially and in other ways.

Many of the participants emphasized the vital importance of strengthening the cooperation between the reindeer herding communities and the local, regional and central government authorities in their respective countries. The authorities are requested to strengthen their management bodies and focus on building up broad expertise in such bodies, not only with respect to biology, economy and administration, but also with respect to social science and cultural subjects.

Research, mapping, education

We would particularly like to stress the importance of carrying out research into the social structures of the reindeer herding communities and the changes in these structures. It is also important to preserve the wealth of knowledge that the reindeer herding communities themselves possess in the form of skills and traditions. Training for and recruitment to reindeer husbandry are crucial to the long-term development of the industry.

It was pointed out by Russian participants that the international breeding efforts involving the four Russian races of reindeer will be an important element of sustainable development.

It is essential to have broad international cooperation in research and development. The need for the exchange of knowledge and the experience was stressed repeatedly during the workshop. We recommend a broad review of the need for research and a discussion of long-term goals with the emphasis on division of labour and cooperation.

Follow-up by the Arctic Council

The question of how the Arctic Council can continue its work on reindeer husbandry was discussed at the workshop. A number of proposals were submitted. We attach particular importance to the following:

- The Arctic Council should approve the Association of World Reindeer Herders' application for observer status in the Arctic Council. We also suggest that reindeer herders should be represented in the national delegations to the Arctic Council.
- Opportunities should be created to discuss the different aspects of reindeer husbandry, including socio-economic factors, environment and culture, in the Arctic Council.
- The Arctic Council should initiate a project to survey the situation in the reindeer husbandry industry. Such a project would have to consider the different aspects of reindeer husbandry and be carried out in collaboration with the Association of World Reindeer Herders.
- The Arctic Council is urged to prepare the way for international cooperation in reindeer husbandry.

Many participants expressed the wish to continue the dialogue started in Kautokeino by organizing a similar broadly composed forum in a couple of years' time.

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Ole-Henrik Magga
Öje Danell
Pekka Aikio
Johnny-Leo Jernsletten