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## **Summary of the Final Report to SLU Ekoforsk**

### **Project 'Organic broiler production - hybrid, outdoor range and mapping of problems and factors of success on commercial farms'**

The project started 2016 with funds also from other funding bodies. During the project time Swedish broiler production has changed and the organic production has firstly increased and then stabilised. The organic broiler production in Sweden is still less than 1 % of the total broiler production in the country.

Our results show a large variation in growth and some unpredictability in the organic broiler production, affecting all aspects of the sustainability of this production form. As the birds are kept in sex mixed flocks and grow a lot older than conventional broilers and the hybrids are heterogeneous, these slower growing birds are very unequally large when they are sent for slaughter. This means that handling at the slaughterhouse needs to be adjusted and that consumers need to have a larger tolerance for variation in size in the meat. We have only find minor differences in behaviour, growth and meat quality between the commercially available broiler hybrids. However the breeding is changing these hybrids rapidly compared to the conventional hybrids. The use of environmental enrichment is of high importance for the welfare of the birds as well as access to outdoor range.



*Picture: Broilers in an outdoor range with protection in the form of vegetation as well as an artificial protecting structure in the form of a potato box turned upside down.*

The largest challenges for this production form are the variation in growth, variation in mortality, health aspects in general and lameness in particular and the use of outdoor range by the broilers. A limiting factor for this production form is that there is today only one place to slaughter the birds, which limits the production geographically. Furthermore, even though we found that the farmers were willing to share their knowledge with each other, this young production form still needs to find best practice for a lot of procedures. To conclude we see a large potential as the production can give the animals a high welfare level if the issues with a safe outdoor range, well designed environmental enrichment and health issues are resolved.