

# FOOD AND PROCESSING

## – *conditions and opportunities*

*In Sweden, the interest and opportunities for private forest owners to benefit from the production and sales of non-wood forest products is a relatively unexplored area with great development potential for the future.*

The use of birch sap for food and medical products has a long tradition in Sweden but the commercial use is currently low in comparison to countries like Finland, Estonia and Russia. The season for collecting birch sap from the forest is short, and the sap spoils quickly without proper treatment, which implies challenges for forest owners and entrepreneurs who wish to commercialize birch sap products. However, with birch growing all over Sweden, many forest owners should have the prerequisites to collect and sell birch sap.

### Purpose

Increasing forest owners' awareness of the conditions and possibilities for birch sap production may help and inspire some of them to create new businesses or start collaborations with local entrepreneurs. Therefore, this pilot examines the basic conditions for birch sap production and how the activities can be organized between different parties depending on the scope and nature of the operations. Furthermore, four private forest owners were given the opportunity to try out birch sap extraction in collaboration with a local entrepreneur

### Conclusion

The pilot focused on small-scale extraction of birch sap, which is possible for most forest owners to engage in since it only requires a

small initial investment cost for equipment and a few suitable birch trees. Here, the cost for one complete kit of equipment was 250–300 SEK (25–30 €) and the participating forest owners used 2–4 kits each. The amount of time forest owners had to spend on the activities was also small since they mainly used birches close to their homes.

However, as noted by the forest owners, upscaling of the birch sap extraction would require better processes and equipment for storage and handling of the birch sap. It will also require more time if birches need to be found further away from home. The forest owners were able to extract the volume demanded by the entrepreneur who participated in the pilot, and they also extracted some for their own consumption. Thus, the pilot shows that there are good conditions and opportunities for forest owners to increasingly utilize their forests for birch sap production and that it would be possible for interested entrepreneurs to develop this type of service concept. However, a prerequisite is of course that there is a market demand for birch sap products. This is a question that was not explored in this pilot.

Finally, to aid the establishment of future collaborations, the pilot outlined three examples of how contracts between forest owners, entrepreneurs and buyers (processing companies) may be set up depending on the nature of the relationship. Key aspects in all of them are each party's rights and responsibilities, forms of payment, and duration.

## PILOT SUMMARY



EUROPEAN UNION

**Interreg**  
**Botnia-Atlantica**  
European Regional Development Fund



**Prosperous forest**  
Diversification through Inclusion and Specialisation