

Fur Farming – A Major Industry in Kaustinen

A New Livelihood for the Countryside

Fur farming became an important industry in Finland during the twentieth century. The industry drew particularly on experience from Canada and Norway, where the northern climate had been found to produce high-quality fur.

Fur farming created a new source of income for rural communities. It complemented traditional agriculture by making use of by-products from fishing and slaughtering as animal feed. In Kaustinen, the industry expanded rapidly during the 1960s and remained one of the municipality's most important industries for decades.

Kaustinen at the Forefront of Finnish Fur Production

Finnish fur farming is concentrated in Ostrobothnia and the regions of South, Central and North Ostrobothnia, where the majority of the country's pelts are produced. Kaustinen has long been one of Finland's leading fur-farming municipalities. The industry has provided direct and indirect employment for hundreds of people, supported the livelihoods of many families and generated significant tax revenue for the municipality.

From Kaustinen to Global Markets

Finland has been one of the world's leading producers of fox pelts. At its peak in the 1980s, Finnish farms produced around 60 per cent of the world's fox pelts and 20 per cent of its mink pelts.

Pelts produced in Kaustinen were sold on international markets through Saga Furs auctions. The principal buyer countries included China, Hong Kong, South Korea, Italy and Greece.

An Industry in Transition

Since the 1990s, the number of fur farms in Finland has declined sharply. At the same time, the industry's economic importance has diminished, although Ostrobothnia has retained its position as the centre of Finnish fur farming. In Kaustinen, fur farming has had a significant impact on the local economy, employment and the vitality of the rural community. It has been part of the municipality's history for more than six decades.

Kuvatekstit:

Photograph taken during a fur grading course at the fur farm of the Kannus Agricultural School in 1965–66. Pictured are several pioneers of the fur farming industry from Kaustinen, including Heino Hanhikoski, Erkki Toivonen, Esko Kaustinen, Asko Pesola, Kalevi Timonen, Jorma Penttilä and Arto Kaustinen.

Fur farming became widespread in Kaustinen during the 1960s and quickly grew into one of the municipality's most important industries. In addition to the entrepreneurs themselves, the farms employed large numbers of seasonal workers, particularly during the pelting season. Pelts produced in Finland were sold on international markets through Saga Furs auctions. Fur farming has played an important role in Kaustinen's economic history, providing employment and contributing to the prosperity of the local community.