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"In the future, there may be farmers who only have a grazing business and who cooperate with other farmers."

Cattle owner and rural entrepreneur
Matti Peltomaa, Pomarkku



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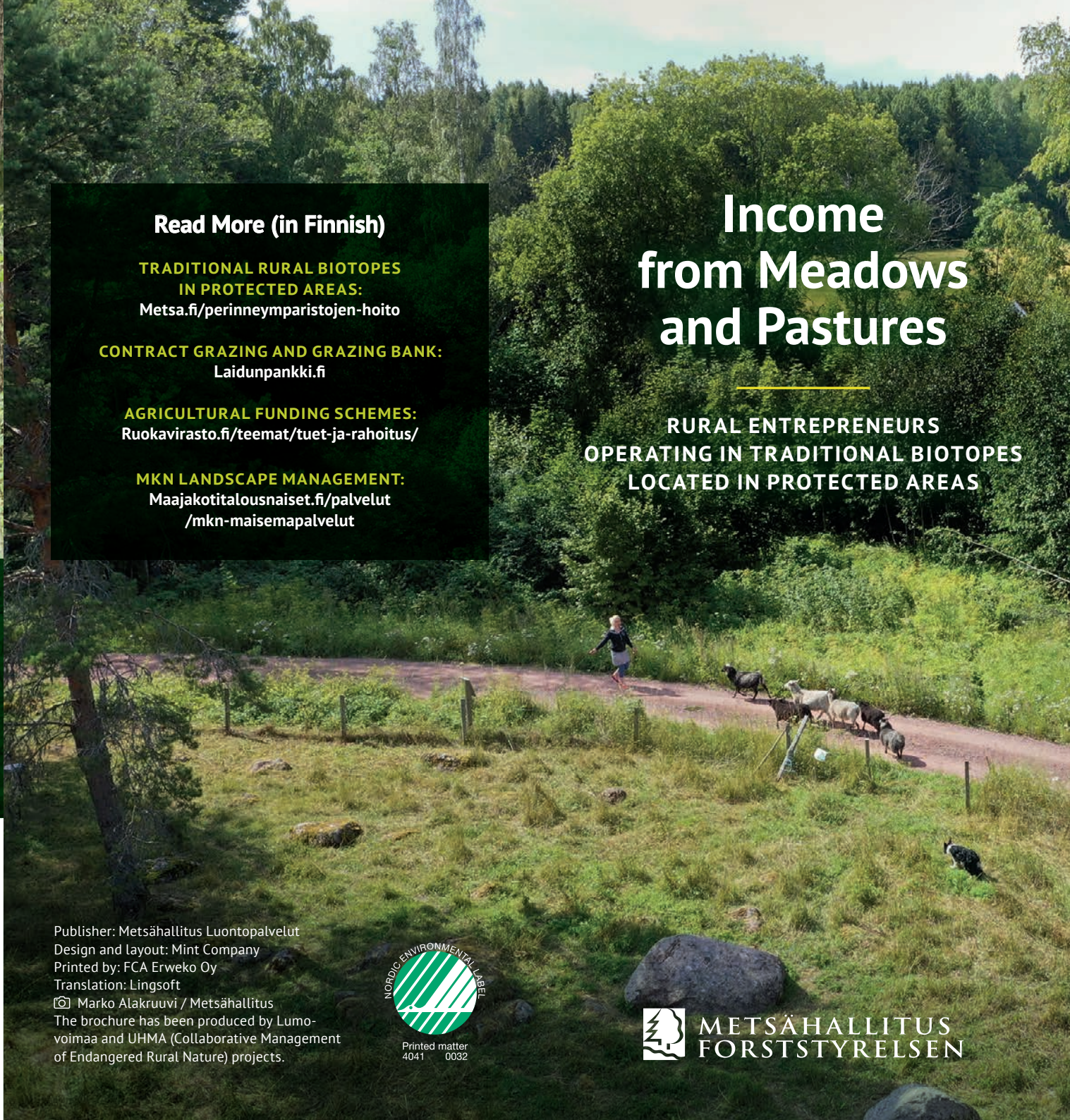
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Income from Meadows and Pastures

RURAL ENTREPRENEURS
OPERATING IN TRADITIONAL BIOTOPES
LOCATED IN PROTECTED AREAS



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A LARGER ROLE FOR RURAL ENTREPRENEURS IN ECOLOGICAL MANAGEMENT WORK

Rural entrepreneurs and livestock owners play a key role in the work to ensure the diversity of rural habitats. In particular, the preservation of traditional rural biotopes would be impossible without the efforts of contractors and livestock owners.

More than 11,000 hectares of protected areas are already managed by means of grazing, and ecological restoration work (such as clearing and mechanical mowing) also keeps contractors busy. The aim is to increase the managed area by 4,000 hectares by the year 2025.



Working to Maintain Traditional Rural Biotopes

The aim of the work carried out in protected areas is to preserve and enhance their natural values. Protected areas are home to Finland's most valuable natural habitats and the rarest species and it is essential that these are considered in the practical management process.

By concluding a contract with Metsähallitus to manage a protected area, the rural entrepreneur undertakes to meet the management targets set for the area and to ensure that meadow species and other important species thrive at the site.

Preserving traditional rural biotopes requires restoration work and continuous management. In initial restoration work, excess shrubs and trees are removed from overgrown meadows and wooded pastures using clearing saw and chainsaw, and sometimes heavier machinery is also needed. At shore meadows, initial restoration often includes mowing or shredding of reeds. Continuous management is usually through grazing. At many sites, excess vegetation that continues to spread despite grazing must be removed by other means. For this reason, in addition to grazing livestock, machinery and contractors knowing how to do the restoration work are also needed at traditional rural biotopes.

Income to Rural Entrepreneurs

Many of the protected areas are sites of high economic value.

Under the agricultural subsidy scheme, entrepreneurs may receive compensation for grazing and management work carried out in accordance with the requirements. Rural entrepreneurs may also receive income from carrying out ecological restoration work as contractors.

The pastures located in protected areas may also provide opportunities for tourism revenue and marketing of products.



Cooperation – a Critical Factor in the Ecological Management Work

Successful ecological management work is a cooperative effort.

Metsähallitus concludes an agreement on state-owned pastures with the entrepreneur in which the required management measures are laid out. Metsähallitus also assists in the planning of management in private conservation areas. During the contract period, Metsähallitus guides and supports the entrepreneur in the practical aspects of the work.

Environmental compensation can only be granted for the care of natural pastures for which a management plan has been prepared. The management plans for sites located in state-owned protected areas are always drawn up in cooperation with Metsähallitus.

Metsähallitus can also help private landowners to prepare management plans for protected areas.

Cooperation between landowners, Metsähallitus, providers of rural advisory services (such as ProAgria), ELY Centres and the rural entrepreneurs themselves is particularly important in sites located in protected areas.

Meadows and Pastures Located in Protected Areas

OPPORTUNITIES FOR RURAL ENTREPRENEURS

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New rural business opportunities with natural pastures.

The sites with the highest value are often **located in protected areas.**

Many of the pastures located in the protected areas can also be used for tourism. Shepherd holidays – a source of additional income?

Boost to marketing? Ecological and tasty meadow meat as an image factor.

By using natural pastures, arable land can be spared for crop farming. **Natural pastures diversify the farm's crop rotation.**

Additional income through contracting work in traditional rural biotopes?

Animals enjoy grazing in a natural pasture. Their health improves, and their social life is active. For example, the muscles of sheep grow stronger and the wool quality improves.

Natural pastures are suitable for all grazing animals: cattle, sheep, horses and goats.

In state-owned protected areas, **entrepreneurs are also entitled to Metsähallitus' advice and assistance** during the contract period.



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