

Analysys Mason on behalf of
Nordic Forest Research (SNS)
and Nordic Agri Research (NKJ)



Inspiring rural entrepreneurs:

Five Nordic role models

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3	Common strengths and shared success factors

Nordic rural entrepreneurs are needed in today's challenging circumstances



Structural changes

Average farm size is increasing
Shift from family farming to hired labour
Technology transformed with digitalisation



Key concerns

Demographic changes: urbanization and ageing workforce
Skills mismatch and lack of educational pathways
Hard to attract young individuals to rural careers



Previous policy recommendations

Shed light on role models
Facilitate Nordic knowledge sharing
Highlight opportunities for rural young entrepreneurs

The project builds on previous policy brief recommendations*

This report presents five young Nordic role models

The material is based on interviews

*Sources: [NKJ's policy brief on farm diversification \(2025\)](#), [Nordregio's policy brief on Growing Food\(ies\) \(2025\)](#)

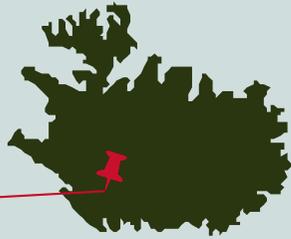
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Meet the inspiring role models



Óli is a former filmmaker who brought his skills to the remaking of a horticultural farm



Marthe took over Randby Aktivitetsgård when 24-years-old to expand into diary



Anna took over Mörby Gård at only 27 and have since bought her own mill



Tobias an entrepreneur who has pioneered Danish goat farming since he turned 20



Amanda is a 28-year-old from Sweden who operates the farm shop on her family farm

From theory to practice: the meal ecologist who became a food artisan

Meet Amanda: a 28-year-old from Sweden who operates the farm shop on her family farm



Amanda Hansson

Age
28

Training

Meal ecologist
(University)
Charcuterie (Eldrimner)

Location

Kärna, Västra Götaland

Active since
2022



Who is Amanda Hansson?

- Amanda Hansson runs the pantry and farm shop on **Hållsunga gård** outside of Kungälv in Sweden
- Her main production area is **charcuterie**, but she also sells her own cheese, jam, bread and ice cream. And not to forget, she caters the local delicacies to various events!
- She is the **sixth generation** on the farm and a shareholder together with her parents
- When not producing food, she takes care of the farm's administration



Why start a new business on the farm?

- Amanda is on a mission to produce great and environmentally-friendly food!
- As the sixth generation on a family farm, Amanda is **proud to keep the tradition going**
- She is also **motivated to create a meeting place** where consumers can better understand where the food comes from, and be able to try delicious, sustainable and local food products



From theory to practice: the meal ecologist who became a food artisan

Meet Amanda: a 28-year-old from Sweden who operates the farm shop on her family farm



Amanda Hansson

Age
28

Training
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Charcuterie (Eldrimner)

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Active since
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Important skills when doing what Amanda does

- Having a **thorough training** in food processing, she advises taking courses and seeing how others do it
- Being **creative and inventive** when introducing new products to the customer
- Having a **close collaboration** with other locals, both businesses and people

Benefits with the farm shop

- **Meeting the customer** and being able to talk about the added value of sustainable food
- Selling directly to the customer **cuts middlemen** which increases profitability

Her perspectives on success

- Having a **decent private life** (with vacation etc)
- Contributing to a **sustainable** food system
- Being a **meeting point** in her local community

Amanda's success factors

- A **solid education** within food processing
- **Growing up on the farm**
 - Understanding that agriculture takes time
 - Being familiar with the community, the people and the animals has benefited her
- Being a **sociable person** with a large network who is willing to ask for help

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Recommendations to others who wants to start a new rural business

1. **Dare to believe in your own idea!** Investigate the circumstances and its potential, there is a strong demand for locally produced food. (But don't forget to create a budget...)
2. **Prepare yourself for a substantial time-investment** in the business for the first 1-2 years
3. **Ask for help**, don't believe that you can do it all by yourself. Take advantage of the people around you, a friend might be an accountant, another might be a photographer



Words of wisdom!

*“Avoid losing all your energy when working too much, **manage your energy levels to maintain creativity**”*

*“**Start from your own specific circumstances**, it is impossible to copy someone else's path”*



Balancing tradition and innovation: a 10th-generation farmer's journey

Meet Anna: who took over Mörby Gård at only 27 and has since bought her own mill



Anna Alm

Age
40

Training

Unfinished vocational training as an agronomist

Location

Mörby, Tammisaari

Active since

2013



Who is Anna Alm?

- Anna Alm **operates a farm** which has been in the family for 300 years
- Her main production area is **cereals and organic beef production**, but she also manages her forest, owns a mill, and operates the farm shop (which was among the first in Finland, est. 1991)
- She is the **tenth generation** on the farm which is located next to a Baltic Sea fjord near Ekenäs
- She lives on the farm with her wife



Why take over the farm?

- Anna considers it a privilege to live on the farm, with the beautiful surroundings, ability to gather relatives and **keep the tradition going**
- Realized during her vocational studies that **being a farmer can be an incredibly exciting job**, depending on how it is done



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Important skills when doing what Anna does

- **Flexibility:** Being able to juggle a lot of different tasks while not having full control of them all! It is especially important due to the various external risks within agriculture, such as the changing weather
- **Autonomy:** Anna highlights how important it is to feel good about what you do and follow your own ideas, interests and aspirations, not just adhering to tradition which can lower your motivation

Benefits with diversifying the farm

- The life on the farm becomes **more interesting** with various activities, such as buying a mill
- Diversifying into more parts of the value chain, you typically get a **“larger piece of the pie”**

Her perspectives on success

- Being financially stable enough to pay the salaries with ease, then other factors kick in
- Feeling proud about what you do, satisfied customers, developing a delicious product

Anna's success factors

- **Early commitment:** Took over the farm at 27
- **Strong sense of place:** Deep attachment to the land, animals, and surrounding community
- **Resilience:** Willing to adapt, work flexibly, and endure challenges without losing motivation
- **Never saying no to publicity:** Always accepted visibility, interviews, posting on social media

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Recommendations to others who wants to start a new rural business

1. **Work on other farms!** The further away, the better. It can open your eyes for new ways of working
2. **Believe in the importance of what you do!** It is much easier to work with something that you care about
3. **Make sure that others also consider your work important!** Connect with your neighbours and care for them



Words of wisdom!

*“Never make investments without a proper cost-benefit analysis. You don't need to count too much, but **you should have a proper analysis and a Plan B**”*

*“Dare to **think a bit bigger** than you initially thought. A bit like Pippi Långstrump: I've never done this before, so it will probably go great”*



Life on the farm: family, dairy and community in rural Norway

Meet Marthe: she took over Randby Aktivitetsgård at 24 years old to expand into dairy



Marthe Bogstad

Age
35

Training
High school program in agriculture
Unfinished Uni-degree

Location
Randby, Kløfta

Active since
2015



Who is Marthe Bogstad?

- A Norwegian **dairy farmer** who produces 500 000 liters of milk each year
- Took over the farm at **age 24** (ten years ago).
- Alongside the dairy business, she grows grass, barley and produces meat
- The farm is part of “**Inn på Tunet**”, a network of farms which **offers adapted welfare services** for children and youth, mental health and dementia
- A married mother of three who makes time for football to remain healthy



Why take over the farm?

- Marthe appreciates having a job that's meaningful, which **actually produces something**
- Another advantage with being a farmer is that you **can do things your own way** – If you are efficient and work with your 'head first'
- Marthe emphasizes the **experience** of working on the farm; having grass under one's feet, you can see a reindeer, hear the birds chirping
- It should not be idealized as idyllic, but it's **authentic and good for the mind** to be in



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🔧 Important skills when doing what Marthe does

- Being an **efficient operations manager and planning logistics** well is important as you need to have oversight over multiple production areas
- Being flexible, **seeing the solutions to challenges** and adapting your plans when new circumstances arise

☀️ Benefits with the welfare services

- Having “**several legs to stand on**” (income streams)
- It provides the opportunity for disadvantaged groups to enjoy farm life, which makes the farm a more social and lively place

🎯 Her perspectives on success

- Maintaining the **family tradition**, leaving the farm in a better condition than when she took over it, ensuring a **good upbringing for her children** while at the same time making a profit

★ Marthe's success factors

- Focusing on **good agronomy** is the primary success factor
- Breeding proper bulls who have the right genes, **selecting the best traits** for the animals
- Ensuring **good grass** production for the cows
- Solar cells is a great way to **reduce the risks** of volatile energy costs, a good use of their roof!

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Recommendations to others who wants to start a new rural business

1. **Train to become an agronomist**, adapt your practices to the latest research
2. **Take over early** and get started with building your business and farm experience
3. **Make sure to have a social life** on the side, don't let the farm consume all your time

Words of wisdom

*"I can see how the effort I put in, taking in a calf, following it for two years and turning it into a good dairy cow yields results. **Getting to work with nature, experiencing life and death is very authentic.** It's not a morning trip to sell alarms"*

*"Don't go too hard and think that working around the clock is fun. **It's important to find something that is sustainable over time.** It's a lot of work, you have to work, but find a middle ground and try to balance your farm work with spare time"*



Goats, grit and global recognition: a journey to award-winning cheese

Meet Tobias: an entrepreneur who has pioneered Danish goat farming since he turned 20



Tobias Christensen

Age
30

Training
Self-taught

Location
Videbaek, Jutland

Active since
2016



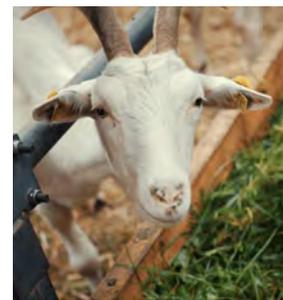
Who is Tobias Christensen?

- Operates a **goat farm and dairy** on Jutland, he brought 120 goats to the farm when he was 20
- Currently keeps around **250 goats** for milk and breeding, cultivates **75 hectares** of grassland
- Sells through a **farm shop**, local cheese shops and restaurants – not supermarkets
- **Offers guided tours** for schools, families, and associations (with 10 000 visitors annually)
- Lives on the estate with his wife, three young children, his parents and grandfather (who is 90)



Why take over the farm?

- Chose farming to be independent and **work with his hands** instead of sitting in front of a computer
- He is motivated to make the **best possible goat cheese** and has been awarded the prize for “Best Goat Cheese in Denmark” and in the world
- He enjoys working with goats and insists on perfecting the entire process, which is the reason why **the farm is organic**
- He wants to take over the property they live on, which he rents from his parents



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Important skills when doing what Tobias does

- Being young in agriculture in Denmark **requires courage** and the ability to make decisions without hesitation
- It's important to **be able to tell your story**, not just about yourself but about Danish agriculture, because there are so many critics

Benefits with the diary

- The diary has future-proofed the business since **goat-cheese can't grow old**, while milk does
- Tobias started his diary through a **crowdfunding** campaign when his milk-contract ran out

His perspectives on success

- Making the **best possible goat-cheese** in Denmark (and in the world)
- Maintaining **extraordinary quality** of production

Tobias's success factors

- **Using social media effectively**, showing how they live with several generations on the farm. (One of the reasons why they were able to break Denmark's crowdfunding record)
- Working **on the animals' terms**, only using barley from their own feeds (no concentrates)
- Accepting the trade-off with less milk for better quality

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Recommendations to others who wants to start a new rural business

1. If you believe in it yourself, then **do it**
2. **Don't be afraid** to explore something new
3. **Just do it**



Words of wisdom

"I want to inspire people to just do things, I have never been afraid to try something new. Many people are so hesitant"

*"You have to be careful when building something, so it's **important not to just believe the first person you ask.** You have to ask around in several different places and get lots of different prices. (Partners, dairies)"*



From film to greenhouses: creating a pepper niche in Icelandic farming

Meet Óli: a former filmmaker who brought his skills to the remaking of an horticultural farm



Óli Finnsson

Age

38

Training

BSc in

Business/marketing

Horticulturist

Media Technology

Location

Heiðmörk, Laugarás

Active since

2021



Who is Óli Finnsson?

- Originally worked in filmmaking, producing TV shows, adverts and online media.
- **Started with cauliflower and broccoli on one hectare**, borrowing equipment and greenhouses
- Purchased a 60-year-old greenhouse farm where he operates **four main greenhouses**
- Main crops are **snack, chili, and bell peppers** (sold to Icelandic supermarkets). Also grow parsley.
- He has had **3–6 employees** on the farm, including his wife. His children lives on the farm as well.



Why become a horticultural farmer?

- Óli just loves the **feeling of growing something which he can eat himself**
- Saw horticulture initially as a side option, not a viable future
- Inspired by father-in-law's suggestion to grow cauliflower for a ketogenic diet
- Wife saw long-term potential in horticulture
- At the end of the day, it is all about trying to make something which is sustaining his family



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🧩 Important skills when doing what Óli does

- Having a **good knowledge base** before starting is the most important part, you need to at least understand how the climate and systems function in a green house
- Agriculture in small communities requires a **toolbox of skills** including doing repairs, machine maintenance and networking with contractors

☀️ Farm shop and plans for the future

- Inherited an existing farm shop; transformed from self-service into a **farmers' market model**
- **Plans to expand** with industrial kitchen for value-added processing and Airbnb lodging and dining

🎯 His perspectives on success

- His goal is to **live comfortably from the farm**, not being pressed to sell and move elsewhere
- Success is to **produce food Icelanders want and need** while maintaining the family-run company

★ Óli's success factors

- Only Icelandic farm supplying peppers to supermarkets — **strong niche**
- Products popular with families, parties, and schools; **strong local demand**
- **Flexible production:** can adjust greenhouse mix (bell, snack, and chili peppers)
- Strategy is focused on maximising greenhouse space for the **highest harvest per square meter**
- Selects **varieties best suited** to Icelandic conditions (taught by Dutch seed producers)

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Recommendations to others who wants to start a new rural business

1. **Start with knowledge and courage:** Learn from others and grow step by step – or buy a functioning farm
2. **Think twice:** Success in greenhouse farming requires choosing viable crops, matching varieties to the setup, and building efficient support systems without overspending
3. **Know what it entails:** Greenhouse farming is tough, full-time work — far from the romantic image, it demands sweat, grit, and daily perseverance



Words of wisdom

*"The biggest thing others can learn from my example is just from the **mistakes I have made by not looking thoroughly enough into the numbers** which were given by the previous farmer"*

*"The biggest advice I got was not to change anything too quickly. Looking back, maybe I should have waited, but making early changes felt right for me. As a newcomer, **you have to trust your own judgment and find your own way**"*



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Common strengths across rural entrepreneurs



Deep connection to place and tradition: family farms, local roots, pride in continuity



Adaptability and diversification: multiple income streams, value-added products, new business lines



Community orientation: shops as meeting places, social services on farms, creating local value



Courage and grit: daring to try new things, from crowdfunding to niche crops



Visible storytelling: using social media, publicity, and customer engagement to build trust and demand

Key success factors to replicate



1. Building a strong foundation

The core business must be the core focus:

- Ensure your products are demanded at a decent price
- Consumers buy local food for its premium quality

2. Focus on the operations

Spending time where it counts:

- Logistics, planning, and time management is key in complex farm businesses



3. Start from your context

Build on what you have:

- Skills and experience
- Land and property
- Networks
- Family assets

Instead of copying others



4. Seek opportunities

Find new business models:

- Sell through farm shop
- Try food processing (dairies, charcuterie)
- Find new use cases for buildings and tools (machine contracting)



5. Diversify smartly

Aspects to consider:

- The profitability of the new business
- Synergies with the core business
- Planning for added administration/time



6. Strengthen your brand

Share your perspective:

- Tell your story through social media
- Gain publicity through collaborations
- Sell directly to the consumer (market fairs, farm shop)

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