

Fejø Fruit – a case of regional branding of fruit in Denmark.

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Background:

Fejø is a small island of 16 km², situated in the south-eastern part of Denmark. The soil is good and the climate is mild and gentle, perfect for pome growing. With the main income from agriculture and horticulture, the modernization within agriculture and horticulture has had a strongly negative effect on the livelihood of Fejø. Regional branding and high quality products seem to offer a new opportunity to increase the livelihood and sustainability of these marginal areas. Fejø Fruit is one of the few recent Danish examples of regional branding applied in marketing.

History

In 1993 the idea of a pear craft was reinvented. Loaded with fruit, posters, music and people in traditional costumes, it was sailed to Copenhagen. Fejø Fruit became a brand. The high quality supermarket chain Irma started to use the label of Fejø fruit for their marketing. In 2004 a more formal agreement between Irma and Danish Pome Fruit (the common marketing cooperatives of the Danish pome growers) was established. Since 2002 market prices for fruit have decreased and the economy of fruit production deteriorated. The number of large-scale producers has declined to only four or five left on Fejø. The success of the branding of the island has apparently not been turned into a clear advantage for the farmers of the island.



Two different paradigms and the dilemma for the Danish cooperatives of regional branding and quality differentiation.

The traditional COFAMIs stand for specialisation, efficiency and market control, and the avoidance of internal competition and differentiation between the farmers. Value adding is obtained in the storing, processing and marketing links of the chain, while the qualities of regional branding is linked to place and differentiation of production. The traditional farmers are caught in this dilemma, embedded in the first paradigm, but feeling more and more frustrated about the prices going down and their lack of influence on them.

The issue of shared ownership and mutual development

In the Fejø case marketing and branding is mostly a matter between primarily Irma and Danish Pome Fruit. In the way it is organized there are no strong incitements to farmers to get involved in the branding and story telling as well as the product and differentiated quality development.

Importance of social capital

Compared with the other Danish case Thise, it seems that social capital is the most critical form of capital in forming COFAMIs. The problem of shared values among the involved farmers becomes especially important in a case of regional branding. The potentially involved farmers of the area do not necessarily have the same ideas and understanding concerning farming and marketing. So although it seems obvious to use the strategy of regional branding in the effort to ensure rural development and increase of livelihood on Fejø, the big hurdle may be to mobilise the different actors and producers around a cooperative marketing strategy of the region.

