

Green Care in Norway

Fundaunet environmental Farm

Class and group training, education adapted to elementary school pupils with special needs, sheltered employment for psychiatric patients.



Farm facts

Location: municipality of Meråker, North Trøndelag County
Arable farmland: 40.7 ha + 20 ha fenced-in pasture.
Rough grazing land: 39 ha.
Crops: Fodder (grass)
Livestock: 200 winter-fed sheep and 13 suckler cows
School garden: vegetables, herbs and flowers
Schoolroom facilities: 163 m², including kitchen, classroom, toilets, showers, cloakroom and storage room.

Contact information

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Objectives

The Fundaunet Environmental Farm's educational programme aims to be an integrated part of the teaching activities at Meråker school.

The curriculum of numerous subjects is well adapted to being carried out on the farm, including natural and environmental sciences, home economics, art and crafts, as well as physical education.

Farm activities also enable a practical approach to certain aspects of theoretical classroom work. By using the farm as a classroom, it is possible to:

- link the school's curriculum to practical farm work
- help pupils see the connection between theory and practical work
- enable children to experience personal growth by overcoming practical challenges
- motivate pupils by giving them responsibility
- let pupils experience that they can contribute in a working environment
- experience a working rhythm in step with the changing seasons

A brief history

The Fundaunet Environmental Farm is based on cooperation between farmer and owner Svern Tore Ness and agronomist/pedagogue Kjetil Aarbakke. Svern and Kjetil founded a cooperative society, constructed housing for teaching and training and established a school garden on the farm.

Through contact with their local government, they have established cooperation between the farm, school authorities and the health and welfare sector. Things have happened fast, and are still in a process of development. The green care services are based on political decisions and formal agreements.

The environmental farm has been well received among pupils, teachers, school authorities, social authorities and local politicians. The farmer and a teacher participated in training courses provided by the national project "Levende skule" ("Living school").

The teaching activities on the farm are adapted to the Norwegian curriculum "L97". The focus is on providing a better quality of education than can be achieved in a traditional classroom setting. This was a necessary prerequisite for the general acceptance of the farm's services. Meråker school has



previous experience with outdoor schooling and other forms of off-campus education. This made it easier for both teachers and pupils at the school to utilise the potential of the Fundaunet Farm.

Available services

The farm is a large, well-run sheep and suckler cow farm. It is located close to Meråker, three kilometres from the school, where the farm also has a plot of land and teaching facilities.

Three days a week, the farm is used by the local school, and two days a week it is used in connection with a sheltered employment service for psychiatric patients. This presentation focuses mainly on the school-based services.

The farm provides an educational programme for classes and groups throughout the entire year, but most activities are concentrated in spring and fall. Specially adapted teaching of individual pupils can be provided two days a week.

The general educational programme consists of:

- Class teaching (1st to 10th grades)
- Pupil's choice
- School business

The fixed, annual class programmes are the backbone of the farm's activities. The standard programme includes one visit in spring and one in fall for all grades. A curriculum for each grade has been agreed upon, thus ensuring the continuity of the programme in the long run. In addition, there are project-based periods, such as "pupil's choice" in grades five to seven, farming experience, and school business establishment in 9th grade.

Organisation

The farm is organised as a cooperative society, which runs the teaching facilities. They have a rental agreement with the municipality, and the owners are employed by the municipality on an hourly basis as teacher and milieu therapist, respectively.

The farm's activities are based on political decisions and formal agreements. One-year agreements regulate the rent, which shall cover capital costs related to buildings, electricity, insurance, accounting services, telephone and office expenses, land rent, maintenance, operating equipment, furniture and machine rent. The local school and Fundaunet Environmental Farm cooperate closely.

Results

General feedback and a user-survey among 7th graders show that the provided services are very popular among pupils. Teachers also expressed that the farm's activities are positive and useful for their classes. The children are able to develop through the practical farm work they are assigned and their close contact with the farm animals.



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