

Accelerating innovations of small scale regional food products

Matis is interested in collaborating with partners from other countries in fields of small scale regional food product design and development, food tourism initiatives, regional food development projects and food design.



Traditionally dried flatfish



Innovative rhubarb-caramel bar

Number of regional products have gone through sprint product development in the food incubation centre. These products can be categorized into three groups:

1. Products based on regional traditions.
2. Novel food products often suited for experience marketing.
3. Products suited to improve regional access of quality food items.

Globalization of the food industry has resulted in both economic and social marginalization of rural areas. Recently, there has been a strong initiative for re-localization of food products with the aim of rebuilding the link and shortening the distance between producers and consumers. Re-localization of food products can strongly contribute to rural sustainable development in economical, social, and environmental terms. This may be achieved with strategies of recovering traditional products and designing new ones. A key aspect of success in such transformation is the knowledge-based practice of focused product development.

Need for product development assistance in regional small scale food industry

When large food companies develop new products they rely on multi-disciplinary team to serve as intellectual backbone for the food innovation process. For small scale rural producers such approach is not possible. This frequently results in lack of conversion of good products ideas into real products. It is therefore of major importance ensure successful and cost-effective small-scale product development in the region.

Regional food innovation centres

Support from regional food innovation centres is a proven strategy for small-scale product development. They both allow access to the needed know-how and the production equipments. This ensures more streamlined R&D process reducing the associated cost and risk. Further the small scale producer can start pilot production in the facility to test the response of the market.

The entrepreneur can then either start his own production or he can use the food innovation

center for production based on co-packing agreement. That could be ideal for small scale producers that may even only produce food items over a short period of time annually.

Matis food innovation centre in Höfn

Matis has operated a food innovation centre in the town Höfn since January 2009. Agriculture and fishing industry are strong in this area but with focus on primary production for decades. Vatnajökull National Park is nearby resulting in great grow of the rural tourism industry in the region. The centre has equipments and technical expertise for developing and initiating production and distribution for small scale producers. It e.g. has a freeze drier, smoke oven and climate controlled drying room. A special interest has been on development of products suitable for marketing for tourist in the region.

Sprint product development strategy and its success

To ensure efficiency in small-scale product development, we have proposed and applied a sprint product development strategy. In the strategy, we assemble team of specialists (e.g. food scientist and designer) to work with the entrepreneur during the R&D phase. The product development is then carried out by the team in the food incubation center where the focus is on delivering product ready to be tested on a market. Typically each sprint should only take 1-3 months. To allow for efficient project management we have adapted the SCRUM methodology typically applied in software design projects.