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HOW CAN TOURISM BENEFIT FROM ORGANIC PRODUCTION IN FINLAND?

Organic production is an EU product quality scheme. Requirements related to organic production are specified under EU legislation. While this is a quality scheme, it also represents sustainability issues. Sustainability is required in tourism and this is why broadening organic tourism product development is beneficial. Organic production in the context of tourism could also be a sign of responsibility, safety and quality.

In tourism the word organic is usually associated with either organic food or organic agriculture. In addition to organic farming, a part of organic crop production is collection of wild plants. At present, about 12 million hectares of Finland's forests are certified organic collecting areas. These areas cover about 40% of Finland's land area and they could be doubled as forests cover more than 86% of Finland's land area. This means a large potential to produce organic wild berries, mushrooms, herbs and special nature products, such as birch sap, without inputs.



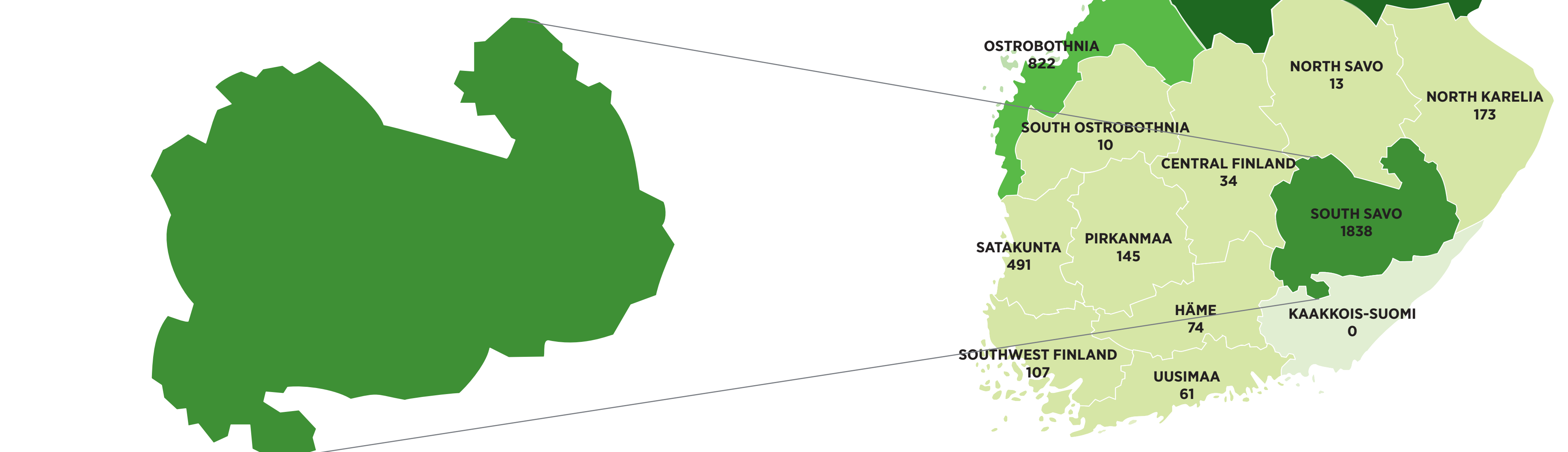
The pristine nature, purity and safety are strengths of developing of tourism in Finland.

While these organic natural products can be part of tourism services, the organic certification of collecting areas is also an effective means to demonstrate and enhance the reputation of the purity of Finnish nature. Organic certification is an internationally known and widely confessed quality system. The certification has very precise rules and it is controlled every year. Therefore this certification differs from numerous certification labels connected with tourism, whose rules can be challenging to clarify for an ordinary tourist.



Photo Antero Teittinen

The tourism companies can offer their customers organic products and trips on organic collecting areas.



South Savo is an excellent pilot area:

- the best region for recreation, with 47796 vacation home
- a significant centre of organic production, research and development
- the most forested province in Finland
- possible to certify over one million hectares as organic collecting areas

Set out for organic! Benefiting the added value of organic in tourism business of South Savo. The project is financed by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF).

The aim of this study is to investigate and innovate the possibilities how organic production can be used in tourism in Finland, how the tourism sector perceives the benefits of organic in their business and customers' experiences. Organic production is weakly utilised and investigated in the context of tourism. As a result of the study will be obtained an overall picture on how the tourism sector benefits from organic production.