

Summer pasture farming is an integral part of our cultural heritage!



Summer farming is valuable in so many different ways. It allows for grazing areas with limited access to be used for food production, and forms a key part of sustainable agriculture. It helps to preserve flower meadows, and keeps the mountain from becoming overgrown by scrubs and trees. It maintains a diversity of handicraft and food traditions, and serves as a bridge between generations. The summer farm is a sanctuary for people and animals, and in today's hectic world it is perhaps more important than ever to protect this precious culture.

Summer farms are under threat!

Summer farming is a long-standing tradition in Norway. In the past, utilising outfield pastures for grazing was crucial, and the winter supply of cheese and butter was produced at the farm. 150 years ago one farm could have several summer farms on different levels, and there were probably almost 100000 summer farms in operation in Norway, but this number has fallen sharply. Today, there are fewer than 800, with several of the current farmers expected to leave the industry within a few years. If we are to avoid losing this knowledge and cultural heritage, summer pasture farming needs a boost now!

How is summer farming of value to society?

Not only does summer farming represent a unique cultural heritage, it is also a tradition worth investing in because it is sustainable:

Environment and climate:

- Contributes to maintaining a rich biodiversity
- Increases carbon sequestration and the albedo effect
- Strengthens the level of self-sufficiency/food safety

Economy:

- Local feed resource; other fields released for food crops
- Grazing provides extra high quality of meat and milk
- Increased willingness to pay for unique farm products
- Summer farms and their surroundings are an attractive tourism product

Socio-cultural:

- Unique arena for positive, local experiences
- An intersection between agriculture, cultural heritage, and people
- Visitors get to learn about the farm, pet the animals, and enjoy traditional summer farm food
- The farmers are excellent stewards of our cultural heritage, which is made accessible through active summer pasture farming





Summer farming nominated for UNESCO's list of intangible cultural heritage

The intangible - or living - cultural heritage has been transmitted naturally from generation to generation and is both diverse and complex. The summer farming culture includes, among other things, knowledge of traditional crafts, of milk production and processing and practical skills related to animals and nature, but also different rituals, stories, luring and music.

Summer pasture farming can only be preserved through practical management. Viable operations depend on both politics and the goodwill of the community. That is why, in recent years, Norwegian Seterkultur and Swedish Fäbodkultur have worked to ensure that Seterkultur gets an entry on UNESCO's list of intangible cultural heritage. The nomination was sent to UNESCO from the Swedish state in the spring of 2023. The decision will be made in the autumn of 2024.

In our work, we have brought a wide range of supporters with us. The process has contributed to more people becoming familiar with, and seeing the value of, summer pasture farming. In the spring of 2023, we also received a report on what affects summer pasture farming, and as a result, the subsidy for settlement was increased. The work has already yielded fruit and optimism for future summer pasture farming.

The needle's eye for an entry on UNESCO's list of intangible cultural heritage is narrow, but if we are lucky, this is an important recognition that gives the summer pasture farming increased positive attention.

It will inspire us to continue the work, to a greater extent oblige politicians, and contribute to the summer pasture farming being better equipped in e.g. conflicts of interest related to land use. A UNESCO status can also be a door opener for cooperation with mountain areas in other countries (EU) on larger development initiatives.

The project is run by Norsk Seterkultur

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