

## SHORT TERM SCIENTIFIC MISSION (STSM) SCIENTIFIC REPORT

This report is submitted for approval by the STSM applicant to the STSM coordinator

**Action number: CA18201**

**STSM title: Traditional farming and the link with endangered plant conservation**

**STSM start and end date: 24/09/2021 to 08/10/2021**

**Grantee name: KASPARS GOBA**

### PURPOSE OF THE STSM:

The purpose of the STSM was to gain insights of farming aspects as part of nature conservation across Iceland with the help of the Host Institution: Icelandic Institute of Natural History. One of the objectives was to document and analyse farming/traditional farming practices as part of protection/conservation of endangered plants (maintaining natural grasslands) in Iceland. Furthermore, the goal was to apply the gained information in the applicants Master Thesis which is linked to sustainable organic farming practice with focus on biodiversity protection particularly on supporting natural grasslands within the farmland.

The aim was to discuss the above mentioned aspects with the researchers from the Icelandic Institute of Natural History as well as with the researchers from the Agricultural University of Iceland. Organic farmers were also one of the main target groups to talk with in order to fulfill the purpose of the STSM.

### DESCRIPTION OF WORK CARRIED OUT DURING THE STSMS

The work as part of the STSM involved extensive planning the first days of the mission in cooperation with the Icelandic Institute of Natural History. At the beginning of the mission the time was dedicated to learn from the published sources about the Icelandic farming practices e.g. <http://www.matarlandslagid.is/> and Icelandic flora e.g. plant field guide; study from 2019 on a vascular plant red list for Iceland. Furthermore, a registration was done for the Nordic Food in Tourism Conference on September 30<sup>th</sup>, 2021 and was followed whenever possible.

Before approaching farmers and researchers a set of questions were noted as guiding points. As discussed with the mentors of the mission an open space was encouraged to be able for the interviewees to develop additional narratives within the topic of the STSM.

### DESCRIPTION OF THE MAIN RESULTS OBTAINED

Several discussions were initiated with the experts of the field including meeting the mission supervisor Rannveig Thoroddsen (Picture 1) and researchers from Agricultural University of Iceland. As for example, Rannveig Thoroddsen brought more issues on the table including appearance of invasive species, e.g., lupine. Prior and during the mission, email exchanges took place with the members from the Agricultural University of Iceland (e.g., Horticulture campus) and also experts from the food science area including graduate of University of Iceland, namely, Axel Sigurðsson.

Farms of various practices were interviewed including sheep farmer in Reykjavik, namely, Ólafur R. Dýrmondsson (77 years old, one of the the oldest interviewee across the whole mission). He is also a researcher and active supporter for organic farming. He is/has been part of Icelandic Farmers' Association and Slow Food Network as well as serving as adviser on Organic Farming and Land use. He brought various

perspective towards the need to take care of the land by applying organic farming approach/philosophy. Another farm (dairy) visited during the mission was situation outside Reykjavik at Kjós, namely, Neðri-Háls. After meetings in Reykjavik and Selfoss area the next stop was set at Solheimar ecovillage. Here Dóra Svavarsdóttir, a chef and the leader of the Slow Food Network in Reykjavik, introduced the approach of using local resources which was visible while entering large greenhouses at the ecovillage area (Picture 2). The subject of forestry or more precisely re-forestation was brought into the discussion by an organic farm in East Iceland, namely, Móðir Jörð - Vallanes Organic farm. The diversification of farming was emphasized and visible via the farm structure e.g. local market. A sheep farm and a cattle farm in Westfjords (northwestern Iceland) were also visited at the end of the final week of the mission. During the visit at the Agricultural University of Iceland, the importance of biodiversity in respect to meat quality was noted by the example of letting the farm animals to graze on certain taxa, e.g., wild celery. Besides that, while passing through Akureyri - where also part of the research team of the Host Institution is situated, a visit was made to a fur tanning Lab. The Lab was situated at a very small fishing village called Hjalteyri. Although not the primary focus on the mission, the workshop leader Lene Zachariassen introduced various concepts of using most of the resource the animal holds including the hair of the horse (the mane) which brought further ideas in respect to the use of our natural resources.



Picture 1. At the Icelandic Institute of Natural History.



Picture 2. At the Solheimar green-houses.

#### **FUTURE COLLABORATIONS (if applicable)**

The contacts and potential collaborations on various forms were established with all of the interviewed parties including farmers and researchers from Agricultural University and Host Institution. To add, additional informants were named including Hjörtur Þorbjörnsson head of The Botanic Garden in Reykjavik, Þórunn Wolfram - Head of the Sustainability and Climate Division at Landgræðslan and Breiðagerði - organic farm in Northern Iceland and farms near Akranes, Hvolsvöllur and Gautavík thus bringing additional ideas for possible follow up missions in the following years.

The discussed collaborations were both linked with the development of the Master Thesis as well as for new research perspectives including ideas of potential Ph.D. topic.

The preliminary results of the mission were also presented during an online lecture for the Environmental Science Master students at the University of Latvia.

Day before the mission ended a meeting was scheduled with the President of Iceland: Guðni Th. Jóhannesson. During this meeting together with the other STSM applicant Baiba Pruse - we outlined the overview of both missions and shortly introduced the Cost Action Network as well as asked about the vision the President holds for rural areas of Iceland (Picture 3).



Picture 3. Meeting with Mr Guðni Th. Jóhannesson.