

Can you introduce yourself and share what drives your passion for agriculture?

My name is Ellen Rydbeck, and I'm 34 years old. Five years ago, I took over our family farm, Suontaka, from my mother, becoming the fifth generation to run it. Working with nature and animals, and being part of something bigger, brings me great joy. This is such a meaningful job.

What challenges have you faced in your career and how did you overcome them?

This job comes with enormous responsibilities; you not only bear the responsibility for your employees, your animals, and all the bureaucratic and financial aspects, but you also feel a deep responsibility to the generations before you, to manage and improve the farm that has been in your family for over a hundred years. When I transitioned from a corporate job to farming, I really missed the sense of community I had from working in teams at a large company, surrounded by many colleagues. Farming is often a lonely job, and being the sole owner of a farm—or any company—can be isolating. You alone make the decisions and bear the consequences.

What led you to your current role? Was there a defining moment?

I've always known I would take over the farm after my mother, but after high school, she encouraged me to study something other than agriculture, just in case I changed my mind and needed a 'backup plan.' I studied business, and after completing my Master's degree, I worked in logistics and consulting for a few years. After about three years in consulting,

I felt ready for a change, so I moved back to the family farm and worked with my mother for a year. We both agreed it would be a good way for me to try farming before fully committing to it. In 2020, I officially took over and now own 100% of the farm. It's the best decision I've ever made.



Ellen Rydbeck
Farmer at Suontaka

What advice would you give to women entering your field today?

Be blind to the gender roles which still exist in some parts of this field. Learn everything you can; if animals are your passion, do that but also learn about cultivation and machinery. You will benefit from having experience and knowledge of all areas in farming. Find people who you can ask for help, they may be your senior or your own age, men or women, it does not matter, but you need good people you can ask for help and with whom you can talk about your ideas and problems.

What are your key responsibilities, and how does your work contribute to the future of agriculture?

As owner I am CEO, CFO, CMO and all the other managerial roles. My two amazing employees have worked at the farm for over 20 years and together we manage all the operational tasks, which differ according to the seasons. Striving to continuously improve our animal welfare,

cultivation practices and environmental impact we try to preserve all the hard work previous generations have done for the farm, and to leave it in an even better state for the generations to come. Hopefully we might also inspire others to do things better and more sustainably.

Can you share a moment when you felt particularly supported or uplifted by other women in your field?

I am so grateful for my mother who passed on the world's greatest job to me, and who for over 30 years worked hard to make the farm better and more successful in every way.