

THE INNOVATION JOURNEY

In 2015, Mrs. Sonja Jokiranta made a big move, bought a farm and moved into the countryside, which had been her long-term dream. She now lives in Tiistenjoki village in the municipality of Lapua, Finland. She has an artistic background (dance, music) and a master's degree in communications. She also has a vast background in social services, including speech therapy, dance therapy, clinical supervision, family psychotherapy and nursing. When she moved to the farm, she still gave dance lessons and only had a few horses. In 2017 she bought sheep. During the 2021-2022 period, she started to offer social services to have the public sector as a customer. The resources and facilities include an office and activity building (old warehouse), 8 horses, 26 sheep, 3 rabbits, 4 dogs, 1 tortoise and 2.5 hectares farmland.



With her team, she provides two types of services: recreation and welfare services, music and experiences ('Satumaa') as well as animal assisted therapy, music therapy, family therapy and psychotherapy ('Sarastus'). Her business has the status of a social enterprise.

THE INNOVATION IMPACT

Customers come mainly from the own province South Ostrobothnia. Both jobs and incomes have been created for the region. Dozens of families have also received aid and solutions for their problems through these activities. Sonja's courage and way of doing things have inspired many people, including colleagues. She was a forerunner in this kind of business and thus she is well known within the sector. FIDA gave her a reward as a 'benefactor of the year'.



Rural green care businesses are not supported as much as traditional farming businesses and should be given more attention. Private and public organisations dealing with rural businesses and service providers should have a more positive attitude toward female entrepreneurs and small businesses. Meeting other innovative people and peers is important to get new ideas and should be encouraged. Also, to become heard and seen is important for women innovators.

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