

COST Action FA1305

Training School 3

Commercial Aquaponics: How to develop a business opportunity

The COST Action FA1305 Training School 3 on Commercial Aquaponics: How to develop a business opportunity was held in Iceland September 8th to September 12th 2015.

There were 15 trainees from nine countries, one film maker from Greenwich and four trainers participating. The Training School was held at Solheimar ecovillage in South Iceland.

The participants met up in Reykjavik at 19:00 on Tuesday September 8th and the group drove to Solheimar. The evening agenda included a short walk in Solheimar ecovillage, introduction of participants and light snacks.

On Wednesday September 9th Herdis Fridriksdottir introduced Solheimar ecovillage, its history and how it is run today. Ragnheidur and Mitja introduced the agenda of the Training School and all trainees presented their business ideas with short presentations. After lunch four business ideas were selected by the group and four working groups were formed.

Mitja went through idea evaluation and presented tools to be used for business plan development and the working groups started to work on their business plans. Ragnheidur informed about the greenhouse farms Akur and Fridheimar and asked the participants to notice the differences between the two farms during the field trips and how added value opportunities can be formed through tourism, education, experience and by-products. At the end of the day there was a plenum summing up the first day's work followed by after dinner pool discussions.

Thursday morning the group went on a field trip to the organic farm Akur visiting the aquaponics unit constructed by Svinna-verkfraedi Ltd and the University of Iceland. Lunch was provided with grilled tilapia and vegetables from the production unit.

After returning to Solheimar Paul presented business plan calculation methods and risk management was discussed by Ragnheidur and Mitja. The working groups started to put numbers into their business plans. The working groups went on with their plans and the day was summarised with a plenum and pool discussions.

On Friday Morning the group went on a field trip to Gullfoss, Geysir and the greenhouse and tourist attraction Fridheimar. A presentation was given by the owner of Fridheimar about the history and development of the company followed by a lunch.

After lunch Wendy Brawer gave a talk on Green maps and Kristin Vala gave a presentation on sustainability and circular economy focusing on aquaponics. Then contracts (Ragnheidur) and management and marketing strategies (Mitja) were discussed. The working groups worked hard on finalising their business plans and none of the trainees had time for the evenings pool discussions. They were rewarded for their hard work with astonishing aurora borealis.

On Saturday all groups presented their business cases including feed back and discussions.

Ragnheidur presented a questionnaire provided by Maja Turnsek from Cost Action WG3 for the trainees to take home and provide feedback from the respective countries. All trainees filled in the evaluation form for the Training School.

Ragnheidur closed the formal programme and the day ended with a field trip to Thingvellir and a swim in the geothermal swimming pool in Laugardalur Reykjavik Saturday evening.

The Training School was very succesful with an excellent group of young visionary people. All participants were actively participating and the atmosphere was positive and comfortable during all days. A strong network was formed with open discussions and share of knowledge.

Sunday September 13th

Ragnheidur Thorarinsdottir