



Photo: Erik Wilhelmsson

Interest in forest education varies widely among the Nordic countries

The number of applicants for the master's degree in forestry has increased sharply in Sweden.

Norway has the fewest applicants, and has about the same number of forestry students as Iceland.

Denmark has far fewer students than 10 years ago, but has still more applicants than are accepted.

Iceland has recently started its own master's level programme, and is experiencing new interest in forestry issues.

The following is a short summary of how forest and forestry education at an advanced level appeal to the younger generation in the Nordic countries.

SWEDEN

The number of applicants for the MSc in Forestry ("jägmästare" in Swedish) has increased over the last eight years. In 2009 there were 380 applicants for the 88 places on the five-year

educational programme. The number of applicants increased by 30% in 2009 compared to 2008; this is a larger increase than the average for all university programmes in Sweden.

A total of 300–400 applications is, however, low compared to the interest in forest education in the early 1990s, when there were almost 1,000 applications to join the forestry master's programme. Interest declined in the middle of that decade coinciding with changes

in the education system. The well-established title *jägmästare* was withdrawn, and apparently the appeal of that level of education was affected. In 2002, the title was reintroduced, and interest increased once more.

The traditional programme for the MSc in forestry comprises professional education provided by the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU). The programme has many elements of vocational training, and field studies covering the whole of Sweden are one feature intended to prepare participants for a career in forestry-related occupations. The labour market for foresters has been buoyant in recent years. Among the forestry students who graduated in 2005–2006, 86% were working in a related job in 2007, according to statistics from SLU.

There are also several other forestry programmes at the master's level which can be taken by students from other backgrounds. These include:

- Management of fish- and wildlife populations (SLU, Umeå)
- Plant- and forest biotechnology (SLU, Umeå)
- Environmental monitoring and assessment (SLU, Umeå)
- Forests as a natural resource (SLU, Uppsala)
- Euroforester (SLU, Alnarp)

Forestry at the bachelor's level is also offered by other universities and institutions. The forest technician programmes at SLU in Skinnskatteberg and by the Gammelkroppa Forest School are old, established courses. Växjö University also offers programmes for engineers in forest and wood technology at the bachelor's level.

Photo: Erik Wilhelmsson



NORWAY

The master's degree in forestry is offered by the University of Life Sciences (UMB) in Ås, outside Oslo. In addition, there are bachelor's programmes in forestry given by UMB and Hedmark University College.

In 2009, only nine students started a master's education, and six students embarked upon the bachelor's programme. The number was even lower in 2006, and there has been a sharp decline since the mid 1990s. At that time, between 50 and 60 students were accepted on to the bachelor's programme each year.

There are several reasons for this decline, according to Cathrine Glosli, adviser at UMB: Overall student numbers were higher in the 1980s and 90s than since the turn of the century; recession in the economy; the negative exposure of forestry in the media; poor communication by the forestry sector about job opportunities; and changes in forest management.

UMB has launched several projects to enhance recruitment to the forest sector, since they see an increased need for competent practitioners. The forest sector has, for example, initiated trainee programmes for new foresters.

DENMARK

The Faculty of Life Sciences at Copenhagen University offers a four-year bachelor's programme in Forest and Landscape Engineering and a two-year master's programme in Forest and Nature Management. The teaching is undertaken by Forest and Landscape Denmark.

About 40 students were accepted on to the bachelor's programme in 2009, and the number of graduates over the last six years has varied from 26–41. More candidates apply than are accepted. In 2006–2008 188 people applied for the course and 76 were accepted.

Applications for the master's programme have decreased sharply since the late 1990s, when about 60

students were accepted each year. At present, about 10–20 students start each year.

Until the early 1990s, the master's programme in forestry was considered to be somewhat exclusive, with 10 applicants for each of the 20 places. The programme was subsequently expanded to take 60 students, and almost all applicants were accepted. The increase in the number of foresters was followed by an economic decline and staff reduction in the forestry sector, which apparently affected interest among potential students.

Denmark is also participating in the European Erasmus programme, offering master's programmes in Sustainable Forest and Nature Management. In this programme, students start their studies at one of three European universities, and continue at another.

ICELAND

A full programme in forestry for a Master degree started as late as 2005 in Iceland. The Agricultural University of Iceland has a bachelor programme in restoration ecology and management, and also a more science directed master programme.

About 6–12 students are accepted for the bachelor programme and 4–6 for the master programme each year. The interest for the forestry programme has increased in the last years, according to Bjarni Sigurdsson. He notes also that the number of forestry students is about similar in Norway and Iceland, despite the large difference in the role of the forestry sector.

Thanks for the information to: Andreas Bernhold, SLU, Sweden; Cathrine Glosli, UMB, Norway; Petrine Steen Nielsen, Forest and Landscape Denmark; Bjarni Sigurdsson, Agricultural University of Iceland.

Finnish Academy worried about the level of research

Finland has the highest proportion of people with a doctorate degree in the EU. Grants for research and development are among the highest in the world. Despite this, the Finnish Academy is worried about the level of science in the country. Finland's research capacity has declined compared with the other Nordic countries, according to an evaluation.

Every third year the Finnish Academy evaluates the state and level of research in Finland. The report for 2009 notes several positive signs. One is the high level of research and development as a proportion of the gross national product. Another positive factor is that industry dedicates a large amount of its finances to research, and that the industry and research communities

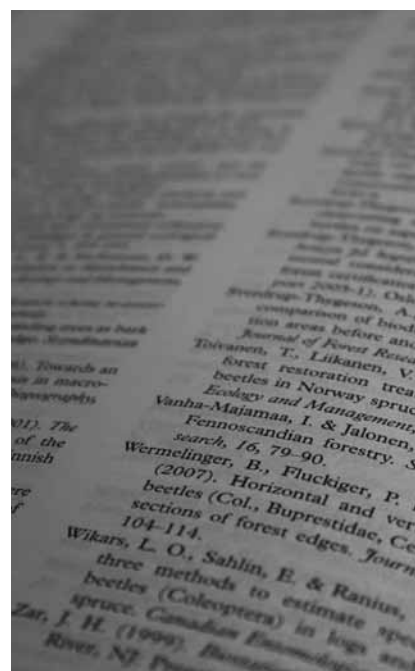
exhibit healthy cooperation.

However, there are also less positive points. Finnish researchers' international activity has declined, and the number of scientific articles has decreased. The number of references to Finnish scientists' articles has also decreased to the lowest level of all the Nordic countries.

One explanation for the poorer result could be the high proportion of applied research at the expense of basic research. Other explanations are a sub-optimal scientific infrastructure, and the high proportion of PhD-students in the research pool.

The Finnish Academy suggests that Finland should establish a ten-year national research strategy with the aim of improving the success and quality of Finnish research.

Read more: www.aka.fi



Articles with Finnish research origin are less cited than articles from other Nordic countries.

Photo: Silvinformation

Forests and climate change in focus on Forest Day

“I expect Forest Day 3 to be very important for forests and forestry, focussing on the science–policy interface following on from a post-Kyoto global climate agreement”, says Niels Elers Koch, head of Forest and Landscape Denmark, and one of the organisers of the meeting.

Forest Day 3 follows Forest Days 1 and 2, the first of which was held in Indonesia in 2007. The meetings are arranged by CIFOR and the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF).

The third Forest Day is also hosted by the Government of Denmark, and will be arranged in conjunction

with the UN climate conference in Copenhagen in December 2009. The previous Forest Days have involved 800–900 researchers and decision-makers.

Forest Day aims to raise the profile of forests and forestry with respect to the effects of climate

change. Participants at the meeting in Copenhagen in December will discuss topics such as adaptation to climate change, climate change mitigation and forest degradation.

Read more: www.cifor.cgiar.org/Events/ForestDay3/Introduction/



Tropical forest and adaptation to climate change is one topic to be discussed at Forest Day 3. Photo: Silvinformation

Nature is important for city-dwelling Finns

Only five percent of city-dwelling Finns are so urbanised that nature has no meaning for them. Nearly half of all Finns living in cities chose a forest or other natural location as their favourite place to be.

The Finnish Forest Research Institute and the University of Tampere studied the importance of nature to the citizens of Helsinki and Tampere, two of the three most populous cities in Finland. Over 80 percent of the respondents said that green areas have a great effect on their perceptions of living in a city.

Green spaces represent places to exercise and to enjoy the aesthetics, as well as places to experience peace and quiet outdoors. However, the available areas in cities do not meet these needs of all citizens. Most of the respondents felt that they had to leave urban areas in order to experience nature fully.

Urban green areas increase the positive emotions of Finns but do not completely alleviate negative health indicators such as stress. On the other hand, country areas outside cities, such as forests, both invigorate the visitor and significantly reduce any negative feelings they were previously experiencing.

Professor Liisa Tyrväinen, one of the researchers behind the study, says: "More of the original, natural environment in cities should be preserved. A natural forest could

be managed and the difference this would make to an urban park is obvious.

There is too much exposure in parks for those searching for quietness and privacy. The many layers of vegetation in forests reduce visibility and create that sought-after feeling of privacy."

The time spent in favoured places, such as on lakeshores and in forests, has a positive impact on mental health. According to the study, two to three visits or the equivalent of at least five hours a month is enough to improve a person's mental well-being.

"These are the minimum time periods required to produce beneficial results. The more time you spend in your favourite places, the greater the benefits" says Tyrväinen. It takes visits at least once every six months to the countryside to reduce the effects of stress or anxiety.

Source: www.forest.fi

Photo: Skogforsk



Forest industry unions go Nordic

Cooperation has been initiated between the unions in the paper industry in Sweden, Finland and Norway. "We are employed by the same companies acting in many countries, thus it's natural for us to cooperate", says Juhani Siira the secretary of the Finnish Paper Union, speaking to Swedish Radio. "The unions in the Nordic countries face similar problems with working environment, education, safety and temporary personnel. However, we do not strive for common wage negotiations."

The first discussions have started between the unions in Finland and Sweden, but Norway will also be invited to participate.

Source: www.sr.se

Joint Nordic campaign for wood products

Use Wood Right is the name of a campaign jointly launched by the forest industry in Finland (Finnish Forest Industries), Sweden (the Swedish Forest Industries Association) and Denmark (the Danish Association of Wood and Furniture Industries and the Wood, Industry and Building Workers Union). Use Wood Right is a global campaign created to draw attention to the environmental advantages of wood, and is on line before and during the UN climate meeting in Copenhagen.

Read more: www.usewoodright.com

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