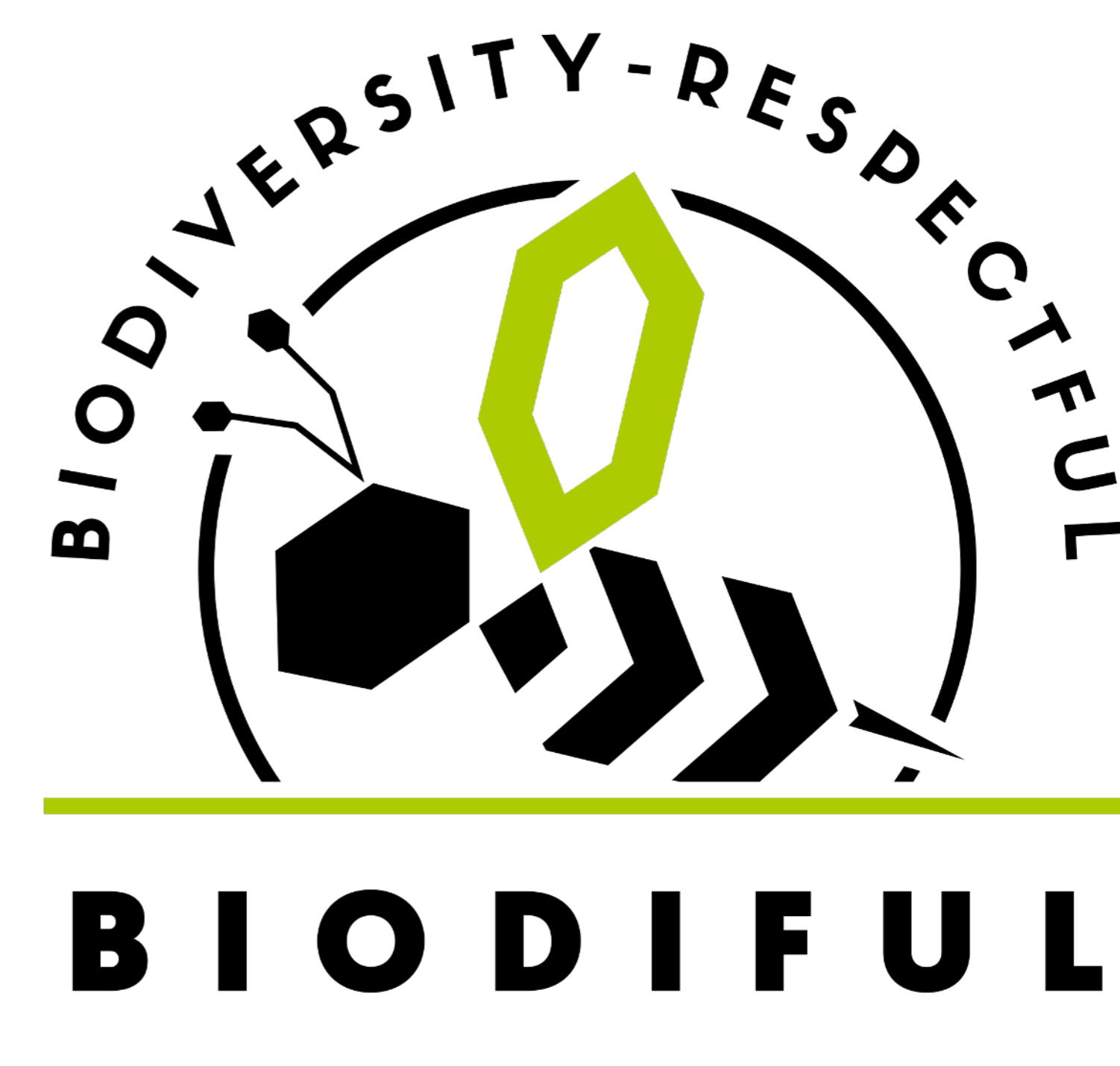


Acting for biodiversity – A closer look at the Finnish food industry

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Introduction

Food production is the primary driver for biodiversity loss around the world and halting biodiversity loss without involving companies operating in food production is impossible (Benton et al. 2021). In Finland, current biodiversity actions have not been enough to halt biodiversity loss so far which means that more actions are needed in order to reach the targets set at the EU and at the national level (Kangas et al. 2023).

To gather understanding on the current state of affairs in the Finnish food value chain, the aim of this research has been to investigate what kind of biodiversity actions are being undertaken by Finnish companies operating in different parts of the food value chain.

Biodiversity actions in companies

Companies' biodiversity actions vary in different parts of the value chain and also between individual companies.

The actions conducted in **primary production** are more concrete than those conducted in other parts of the value chain. The majority of actions are done directly in natural ecosystems with a direct effect on nature. The actions conducted in primary production include, for example, regenerative and organic farming, soil actions, decreasing chemical use, biotope management, and various pilot actions.

In other parts of the value chain, the actions are more indirect in their nature. The companies that operate in these parts of the value chain are situated in trade, industry, and food services.

In **supply chains**, companies are using different kinds of procurement criteria and doing direct cooperation with producers to decrease their impact on biodiversity.

In the **production phase**, the companies are developing new kinds of biodiversity-friendly products and production methods.

In **sales and marketing**, the companies are guiding consumers into making better selections and boosting the sales of their biodiversity-friendly products by marketing.

Finally, at **corporate level**, the companies are including biodiversity in their strategies and reporting, developing biodiversity measuring schemes, and training their staff.

Data

The research is based on 37 interviews of senior representatives from companies operating in the Finnish food sector. The interviews were conducted in the autumn of 2022.

The interviewed companies cover the entire food value chain from primary production to trade, industry, and food services.

Conclusion

According to this study, the state of biodiversity actions in companies varies greatly and the contrast between forerunners and others is sharp.

10 out of 37 companies did not have any actions and 6 had actions in only one category. Generally, it can be said that the more ambitious the actions, the fewer companies there were conducting them.

The majority of companies are still in the planning phase and they are planning to increase their contribution towards biodiversity in the coming years. Many companies have already set up their climate actions but setting up biodiversity actions has been seen as a much more difficult task.

The companies are facing many challenges which must be tackled in order to make the leap towards biodiversity-respectful food business. Among the challenges are economic factors, lack of human resources, structural issues, lack of transparency in global supply chains, lack of measurement systems, and the overall difficult nature of the concept of biodiversity. The companies are in severe need for tools, knowledge and resources if they wish to make the change.

As a positive sign, most companies are willing to increase the scope of their actions as long as they know where to begin.

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