

Jens Holme Pedersen: from conventional to organic blackcurrant growing in Denmark

With a big agenda of things to discuss, Jens Holme Pedersen, President of the IBA, decided to have an IBA Exec meeting in Denmark, at his farm in Kogsbollegaard near Nyborg, in April 2019.

The IBA Executive needed to meet

Jens Holme Pedersen believes that sometimes, it is necessary to meet physically. After last year's conference in Angers, the president, vice-presidents and General Manager of the IBA had no occasion to meet before the next conference in Ukraine in 2020. Nevertheless, there were lots of topics to discuss, and decisions to take. For this reason, we decided to meet in April 2019. And what better place could we choose than the farm of the newly elected IBA president in Denmark?



The venue



Jens Holme Pedersen's
farm

Jens' farm is situated on the island of Fyn, Denmark's Garden Island. We are not going to tell you stories of Hans Christian Andersen, who also comes from this island, or talk about the numerous castles on this beautiful place on earth. We will concentrate on blackcurrant growing.



one of Jens' blackcurrant
fields

In an environment, where the iodine smell of the sea is present everywhere, Jens farms a little over 200 hectares. A huge majority, 120 hectares, are blackcurrants, with varieties Ben Alder, Ben Connan, Ben Lomond, Ben Tron, Ben Finley and Zusha. Not surprisingly, the Scottish and Russian varieties suit best for the Danish climate is very similar to the of the places where these varieties have been developed. Jens has planted 25 more hectares of each rosehip and redcurrants. 20 hectares of his land are forests, to ensure biodiversity. The remaining land is either grassland or planted with trees for pears and sweet cherries - or a nursery

for ... blackcurrants, of course!



Jens showing his machines to Florent



A bit of Danish lifestyle



Between Smorebrod and Fynsk Kage, Jens Holme Pedersen explains that his parents bought the farm he now owns in the 1970ies. They had grown strawberries, apples, cherries and some more fruits on 50 hectares of land. When Jens took it over, he increased the surface little by little by buying more fields, and came naturally to blackcurrants.



“I grew them conventionally until 2015, but I have turned the biggest part of them into organic now, together with the redcurrants”, he explains. “This is mainly because of the low price I got over the past years for my currants: we harvest very late in the year, compared to the other countries. When my currants are on the market, all the buyers have already filled their warehouses with the fruits from the other European countries.”

“I have one permanent worker with me, and I employ some seasonal workers when I need to check the plantations for gall mites, and for planting new fields, for example.” Meticulous check-up of the fields is the best way to control gall mites, according to Jens. But it seems fastidious: one person can check around 1

hectare in 8 hours.

Out in Jens Holme Pedersen's fields

Jens is happy to show us his fields. "Unfortunately, 25 hectares of my plantations have been destroyed in 2018 during a hailstorm. Not only blackcurrants, but also the rosehips. I will have half of a normal yield this year in my best field." While he explains this, we can observe faisants hiding under the bushes, and here and there some deer in the middle of the blackcurrants. The nature seems to be harmonious, with the deer jumping over the rows of blackcurrant - but Jens is happy to see them run away. "They regularly eat and destroy the bushes, and even hunting doesn't help."



field of rosehips



faisant in the middle
of the fields

Meeting with Annemarie Bisgaard

Back at the farmhouse, with a cup of smoking coffee in our hands, we are happy to meet with Annemarie Bisgaard, a writer for the magazine Gartner Tidende, whom some of you may already have met at our conferences. It was a nice moment to share views about the situation for blackcurrant growers from different European countries. Of course, we will share Annemarie's article in our media section as soon as it is available.



Annemarie Bisgaard

Jens Holme Pedersen is up to changes

After two days of discussions and lots of emerging ideas, the IBA Executive has come to several resolutions. Over the coming months, there will be structural changes in the IBA. In order to be able to carry through our strategy, we need to secure funds and get more of the blackcurrant growing countries of the world on board. It has already started with Ukraine joining the IBA as a new member country, and we will work hard on enabling all other countries to join us.