



**DYSTERJORDET  
ANDELSLANDBRUK**

## **Business Plan 2023**

*The business plan is a living document that is revised annually. It can be seen as a supplement to the articles of association, which collects and elaborates on certain topics as needed.*

### **1) Number of members**

Article 4 of the articles of association states "The board may determine an upper limit for the number of shareholders if the implementation of the operation so requires." In the proposed budget for 2023, the board has taken 135 adult shares as its starting point, based on the high response to the 2023 waiting list, with nearly 80 entries. The land has the capacity to grow food for several more shares, and therefore, the board can consider expanding to 150 shares if there is demand and the farmer agrees. If there are more who want membership by 20.04, the board will consider increasing from 135 shares.

Opportunity for registration for this year's season is closed for all approx. May 1st, 2023. In 2022, registration was closed May 31st; 4 Ukrainian refugees were given memberships mid-season; 4 late summer shares were accepted by the end of September.

### **2) Shares for board members and employees**

The farmers and general manager have a free share according to their employment contract.

Board members receive a free share, in return for their commitment to follow through with defined work tasks for Dysterjordet, if the finances allow for it. The general manager and treasurer must review the accounts in September and decide on the board's free shares no later than October 15th, 2023. If the finances do not allow for a free share, board members will be asked to pay a reduced share price of 1500 NOK.

### **3) Organization and communication**

Efficient organization and good communication remain the basis for well-functioning cooperative agriculture. Open communication and transparency are crucial for building trust, and an effective organization can help increase the commitment and result of the shareholders' work effort.

To ensure good communication, all members (minimum one per family) must be available by e-mail. The general manager uses the e-mail address [andelslandbruk@dysterjordet.no](mailto:andelslandbruk@dysterjordet.no), the farmer

uses the e-mail address [gartner@dysterjordet.no](mailto:gartner@dysterjordet.no), and the chairman of the board uses [styret@dysterjordet.no](mailto:styret@dysterjordet.no).

We have phased out our membership management system - Rubic - and switched to Spond. Spond will be the main channel of communication for the farm moving forward. Spond allows members, board members, and employees to communicate in one platform. Spond also provides members an overview of all events, dugnads, and organized activities on the field, with a simple solution to click "attending" or "not attending". Members can message the general manager directly and have the option to message other members. Spond also includes a chat option for all members, through which we hope to see more sharing of ideas, photos, recipes, tips, ect. The harvest messages will be uploaded to spond, and all relevant information for members will be stored in Spond.

Documents from past annual meetings are available for members on the website. The constitution is available on the website as well.

Members may choose to participate in the Dysterjordet andelslandbruk members page on Facebook (Dysterjordet andelslandbruk medlem). This group is managed by the daglig leder, who may occasionally post regarding events, updates, or seeking assistance in short notice. However, the member's facebook page is not considered a primary source of information.

In 2022, the daglig leder set a goal to facilitate more frequent updates with the members and increase communication between the board and the members. While monthly updates and weekly harvest messages were delivered, minutes from board meetings were rarely shared. Therefore in 2023, the board will focus on publishing regular summaries after board meetings. The daglig leder will facilitate this process.

#### **4. Building capacity within the membership**

##### Annual orientation for board

In 2023, the elected board will have an orientation prior to their first or between their first and second meeting. This orientation will be facilitated by the manager. Participation by the farmer(s) is(are) optional.

##### Annual orientation for new members

Multiple orientation meetings for new members should be arranged during or in addition to dugnads in the early spring, with additional orientation meetings in the late summer, if late summer shares are purchased.

There will be more focus on the buddy system in 2023 and members will be encouraged to "see one, do one, teach one" for common harvesting – Members are encouraged to see a harvest tour, to do a harvest tour, and to teach a new member how to hold a common harvest tour. In this way, we hope to build up the capacity and knowledge on good harvesting techniques and field etiquette within all members. This will also hopefully allow the general to delegate some field tours/common harvests, allowing the manager to focus on additional tasks for the farm.

#### **5. Working Groups**

We would like to encourage people to become committed shareholders through participating in active working groups. It is desirable that each working group elects a leader from the members,

and each working group has a contact person who is either a member of the board, the general manager, or the farmer. The latter can also, if necessary, participate in the working group. It is desirable that communication with the working groups goes via the leader of the working group to the contact person on the board.

Working groups were evaluated in 2022. There was no spring meeting, or similar event dedicated to organizing the working groups. This could explain a reduction in the organization and commitment to working groups. It was observed that many members participated in regular dugnads, showing interest in being physically involved on the field, many of whom volunteered on the field more than the 6 required hours.

In 2023, Dysterjordet will focus on incorporating needed tasks on the field into working groups. Therefore in 2023, all members interested in participating in any working group will have the ability to join a sub-group in Spond. In this way, members are not asked to commit to a specific working group, but instead can see when any working group is organizing on the field and join as fits their schedule or interest.

Working groups from previous seasons:

| Name                     | Focus  |
|--------------------------|--|
| Construction Group       | This group helps to set up and maintain irrigation systems, the tool shed, storage solutions, an outdoor kitchen etc.  |
| Courses and Social Group | This group arranges social events, picnics, courses, thanksgiving and helps the manager with festivals and stands off the field etc.   |
| Kids Group               | This groups can cultivate in the kid's field and organize activities for children. In 2021, the kid's group facilitated common harvests for kids and families on Sunday afternoons which was successful.                 |
| The SOS Group            | This group assists the farmers and/or general manager on short notice in case of emergencies with for example, the tunnel, ect.  |
| Web/Admin Group          | This groups assists the general manager and helps to translate texts for the field between Norwegian and English. This group can also help to take photos, write text for the media, and create social media posts, etc. |
| Farmer Group             | This group assists the farmers with necessary tasks on the field outside of organized dugnads.   |
| Herb Group               | This group focuses on herb production on the field and maintenance of the herb spiral  |
| Thistel Group            | This group focuses on removing thistle from the field (and eventually other weeds)   |
| Tunnel Group             | This group can be responsible for planning, cultivating, and maintaining the tunnel with the farmer  |
| Organic Matters Group    | This group researches sources for organic materials for the field and maintains compost with the farmer throughout the season  |

New working groups can be established if there is a need and commitment for it.

## 6) Draft activity plan 2023

The following activities for members will be prioritized, but the implementation will depend on the members' commitment, interest, and possible financing.

- Training for new members
- Joint work (dugnads)
- Joint harvesting and tours of the field
- Joint events on the ground, both for members and open to the public/outside organizations
- Open organic farm day or similar
- Thanksgiving
- Storage of surplus vegetables
- Limited offer of harvest assistance

For follow-up of the activity plan etc. a spring meeting will be arranged. The spring meeting is an arena where members can share and discuss ideas and make concrete contributions to the work plan, working groups, etc.

In 2022, the season started with a spring round (vårronna). The spring round was successful, with approximately 40 - 45 people in attendance. However, the spring round in 2022 did not include an overview of the crop plan. Without a spring meeting, feedback from members on crops was limited to the members survey in 2021.

In 2023, we will continue with the spring round, which combines a joint start-up and activities with relevant working groups. Vårronna should be held after or simultaneously with the spring meeting.

## **7) Alternatives to ordinary membership**

### Work shares

In 2022, 7 work shares were accepted. Previous years with work shares have been successful. Therefore, we will continue to offer 10 work shares at NOK 1,500 per share + 26 hours of help on the farm, application-based. The farmer manages the work share members, with assistance from the general manager as needed.

In 2023, we will encourage the workshare members to help facilitate dugnads after or with instruction from the farmers.

### Offers for schools and kindergartens in the local community

Dysterjordet cooperative agriculture had school shares in 2018 and 2019. Due to Covid, we could not continue with school shares in 2020 and 2021. We hoped to continue with this scheme in 2022, however this was not accomplished. The process of hiring a new farmer took precedence, due to the farmer's essential role in Dysterjordet's ability to offer school shares. With a new head farmer hired in November 2022, school shares will again be considered in 2023 if time allows.

If other organizations inquire about shares/memberships, the general manager / farmer / board will consider the feasibility and details on a case-by-case basis.

## **8) Draft growth plan**

## Admin

### *Economy:*

In 2022, the previous volunteer treasurer stepped down and co-treasurers were elected from the board. In 2023, one treasurer will continue. The treasurer and general manager will finish the transition to Fiken, the accounting software which has been used to pay the employees since 2016. There is a desire to evaluate how the farm manages its finances and assess opportunities to bolster the investment pot again as needed.

### *Website:*

In 2022, it was desired that the Dysterjordet website be upgraded. The defined tasks were to upgrade the site and better organize the information available. The main goal was to clearly define information for members and for non-members and to condense the information available on the site, making it easier for those interested in joining the farm to find relevant information. This task is currently underway and included purchasing a software upgrade for a one-time fee of 600 NOK. The main priority for the website is to share our story, as the website hasn't been used so heavily to communicate with members in previous years. Important documents, including the constitution and the documents from previous annual meetings will remain on the website.

### *Social Media:*

In 2022, Dysterjordet engaged with social media predominately through Instagram and also through Facebook. Fewer blog posts were added to the website due to time constraints and the desire to upgrade the website. In 2023, the general manager will use the integrated app platform (Media Business Suit) to publish media on both Facebook and Instagram. The use of blog posts on the website will be evaluated based on target audiences.

### *Videos:*

In 2022, members responded positively to a video explaining how to harvest potatoes. In 2023, there is a desire to explore creating harvesting videos as a resource for members to learn and harvest independently. Not all members can join common harvests at a scheduled time. While the creation of videos requires time and energy, harvesting videos may enhance the flow of information regarding the expected behavior on the field and help to create a common understanding and best treatment of specific crops.

## **Plan for execution**

This year we want to split the field in two: the upper part and the lower part. These will have different rotation of crops.

The upper part will be divided into 8 slots, dedicated to particular plant families. This will be where we grow the plants with the shorter growing time (with some exceptions), who are in need of the most care and work. The reasoning behind is that this part of the field is closer to the center of activity – the common area and tunnel – and that means less walking and time saved for other tasks.

The lower part will be divided into 4 slots, dedicated plant families with excellent staple crops: the nightshade family (potatoes), the brassicas (kale, cabbage, etc.) and the cucurbits

(pumpkins). We will grow these in big amounts, because they supply a lot of food and most of them store well – that makes them great for the Norwegian climate.

We also intend to do more interplanting of different vegetables and flowers; this is because different plants make different use of the space (both above and below ground) and nutrients in the soil. Therefore, it can be beneficial to plant different species next to each other, but this is very specific and needs to be researched and tried out to see if it works as intended.

Interplanting of flowers also attract beneficial insects (for example pollinators and insects who prey upon other insects).

The detailed plan for each garden bed is still a work in progress and will be presented in the spring meeting.

In 2022, we were pretty late getting most plants in the soil, because of the unresolved issue of hiring a gardener. This year we want to get started earlier, and with a new gardener in place we're in the position to make this happen. This also makes it easier to work closer with the workshare members.

A calendar / season overview (årshjul) has been prepared with more detailed planning of which tasks are done when. This was prepared based on experience from previous years. We base our operations largely on our own efforts, so streamlining / optimizing the volunteer efforts is therefore desirable. The season overview continues to be a draft/working document and throughout 2023, this document will be expanded to include links and tips for best practice. The season overview may be presented at the spring meeting to help orient new and returning members to the processes of the farm.

### **Resilience on the field**

In 2023 there will be a focus on the fundamental activities for vegetable production including, but not limited to, water, soil, seeds, and weeds. Plans will be extended to evaluate, test, and incorporate resiliency for:

#### *Water:*

We have an irrigation system that's been more or less out of use in later years. There's been periods of drought some seasons, and then crops suffer – even last year the celeriac suffered in particular from a lack of water. If a more severe drought should hit, then we're vulnerable. Therefore, we want to make it a priority to set up the irrigation system this year; first and foremost in the poly tunnel, and second, the high ground on the field. These are the areas which suffer the most in case of a drought.

Also, keeping the soil covered – preferably with plants, but also with mulch or even fabric – will minimize water loss through evaporation. We intend to expand the use of cover crops when garden beds are not planted in crops. This has several benefits other than just minimizing evaporation; when there's plants growing, they feed the soil life with sugars through photosynthesis and take up nutrients, that otherwise might be washed away during the off season.

*(The concept of cover crops: This is usually a mixture of several plants which are sowed into garden beds after crop harvest, just before harvest or even in between crops. They're*

*chosen on basis of certain qualities, like: nitrogen fixation, creating a lot of biomass, loosening the soil, mineral assimilation, etc. Some cover crops die during the winter, while others survive and continue growing next season, and need to be killed before planting new crops in place. Cover crops can also be sowed in springtime, in garden beds we intend to rest for the season (sometimes also referred to as «green manure»). We're going to touch upon more benefits of using cover crops further down.)*

There's also been talk behind the scenes of other ways to improve the water situation on the field, for example: integrated passive water retention through swales, dams, and ponds. These would fill up during periods of heavy rain, and slowly trickle through the system/soil over long periods of time. Elements like this would also greatly benefit plant and animal life. Swales, dams, and ponds probably won't happen this year (or maybe at all), but it's an option we could explore if we wanted.

#### *Soil:*

It's our intention to continue composting weeds and other compostable materials to improve the soil fertility. The process of composting speeds up the conversion of compost materials to humus (organic matter), and humus has an extraordinary capability of holding onto water and nutrients, then slowly releasing them, to the benefit of soil life and plants. Humus also neutralizes pH and helps create a favorable soil structure for plant roots. Considering this, we also want to explore options of bringing in mulch from the outside, like hay, leaves, straw or more wood chips. This also helps us replace the nutrients which disappear from the field through the crops we harvest.

Another way of improving soil conditions is to make broader use of cover crops (as mentioned above in relation to water retention). Having plants in place year-round helps keep the soil microorganisms happy and alive, and also makes for more organic matter – both above and below ground – which also helps with soil structure.

#### *Seeds:*

There's an idea and interest to begin saving our own seeds to make us a little more independent. Also, when we save seeds from our field, we will choose the plants who are best adapted to the local conditions. We need to investigate which plants are the easiest to save seeds from to start with and find out what is needed to store the seeds for next year. Seed saving is not a priority this year, but it's something we intend to grow into with time and dependent on interest from committed members.

#### *Weeds:*

Weeds are always a challenge when growing organic vegetables. We've had some perennial weeds, like quack grass and thistle, who've been a nuisance in certain places. There's also a wide variety of annual weeds, like lambs quarters, chickweed, false mayweed, who make for a lot of work. Our routine for handling weeds needs to be consistent and extend beyond a one-year horizon.

Once again, the concept of cover crops comes into use; by consistently making use of the appropriate mixture of cover crops we can outcompete most of the weeds. Some cover crops can also help decompact the soil (compaction usually favors plants like thistles and dandelions).

Secondly, we also intend to keep using landscape fabric on certain garden beds; this suppresses weeds, lightens the workload, and helps reducing evaporation of water, but the downside is that it doesn't feed the soil life or create any organic matter. Thirdly, we intend to take better care timing the removal of weeds; thistles, for example, are at their weakest when they have 8-10 leaves, and that's when we want to strike! With most of the annual weeds it's different; it's usually better the earlier they're removed.

### **Extra help on the ground**

A farm assistant who can assist the farmer when needed, especially during the most active months is desirable. It has been routine for Dysterjordet to hire a seasonal farming assistant. This is an option again in 2023.

### **9) Establishment of electricity on the ground, if possible**

In 2019, we drilled for water and put in place a water supply on the ground. We currently have a diesel generator that drives the pump, and we will consider adding electricity if this is possible without too much investment. This will be assessed by the construction group.

### **10) The shareholders' rights and obligations**

The members are entitled to a share of the production. Membership is personal. The members harvest vegetables for their own consumption. In case of special needs, it can be arranged for appropriate agreements. Household members can participate on the field and attend events, but do not receive vegetables.

The members' efforts are essential for a well-functioning cooperative agriculture. The budget is tight, and successful production depends on the members' work effort. Article 4 of the articles of association states that "All members are obliged to contribute a number of working hours per year. The number of hours is proposed by the board and approved by the annual meeting". The board proposes to continue the voluntary service (dugnad) from previous years with a minimum of 6 hours per adult member for 2023.

Organized volunteer work, board positions, auditing tasks or other tasks agreed with the general manager or farmer (eg taking responsibility for a working group or activity) count towards the voluntary service (dugnad). It is possible to discuss ways to contribute with the general manager.