

A winter scene in a snowy forest. In the foreground, a campfire with bright orange and yellow flames burns in a snow-covered clearing. The ground is covered in a thick layer of white snow, with some logs and rocks visible. In the background, a dense forest of evergreen trees, likely spruce or fir, is covered in snow. The sky is a pale, overcast blue. A large, dark rectangular text box with a white border is centered in the middle of the image.

Christmas tree market in Iceland

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The Iceland forestry Association

Overview

-
- Species
 - Methods
 - Producers
 - Market development



The Icelandic
Christmas
„tree“ in the
late 19th
century



The humble beginning

- In 1968, 292 trees were cut and sold as Christmas trees. This was the first time this happened on Icelandic soil.





Little means a lot to the few

Species

- Lodgepole pine (*Pinus contorta*)
- Norway spruce (*Picea abies*)
- Engelmann spruce (*Picea engelmannii*)
- Sitka spruce (*Picea sitchensis*)
- Subalpine fir (*Abies lasiocarpa*)
- Others (Siberian fir, Swiss stone pine)



Lodgepole pine (*Pinus contorta*)



Pinus contorta subsp. *contorta*

P. contorta subsp. *latifolia*

P. contorta subsp. *murrayana*

https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/9/92/Pinus_contorta_subspecies_range_map_1.png/240px-Pinus_contorta_subspecies_range_map_1.png

Lodgepole pine (*Pinus contorta*)



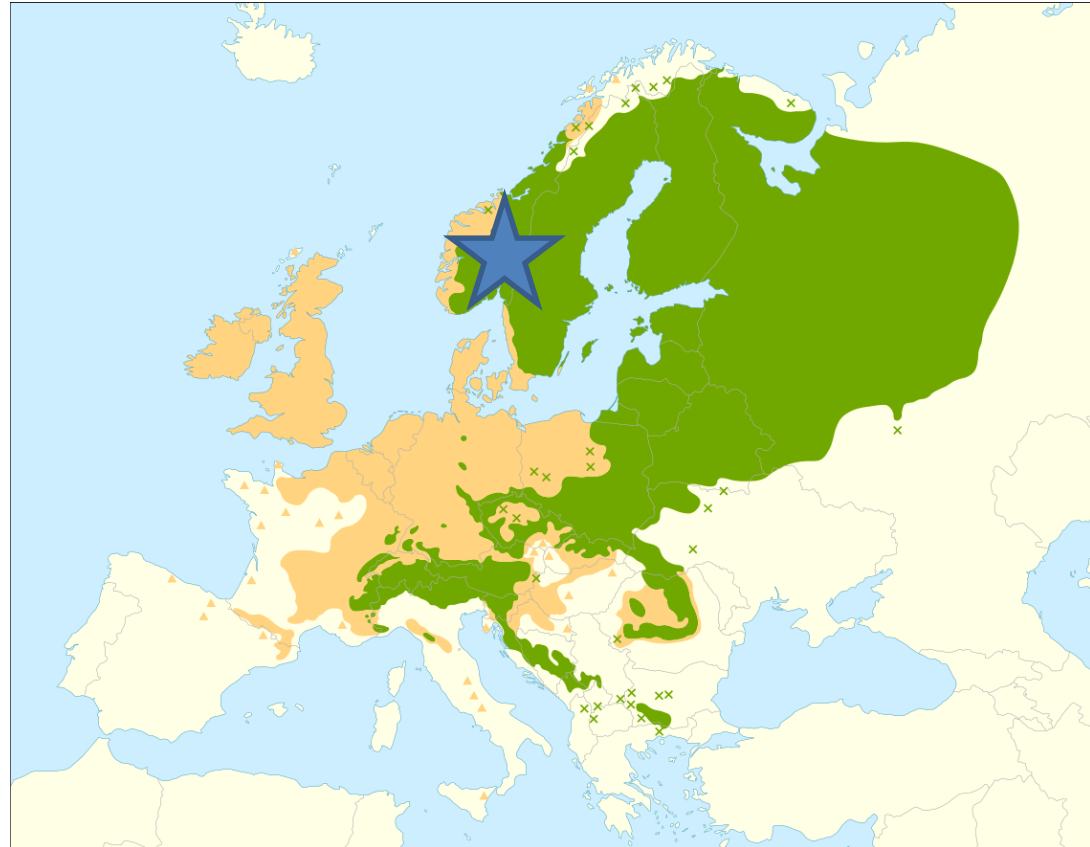
Pros

- + Keeps the needles until easter
- + Smells nice
- + Establishes a new tradition
- + A common forestry tree
- + Better price
- + Can grow under hard conditions (soil, weather)

Cons

- Heavy and stacks poorly
- Low ratio of good trees in normal plantations

Norway spruce (*Picea abies*)



Distribution map. Green: native range. Orange: introduced areas.

Norway spruce (*Picea abies*)



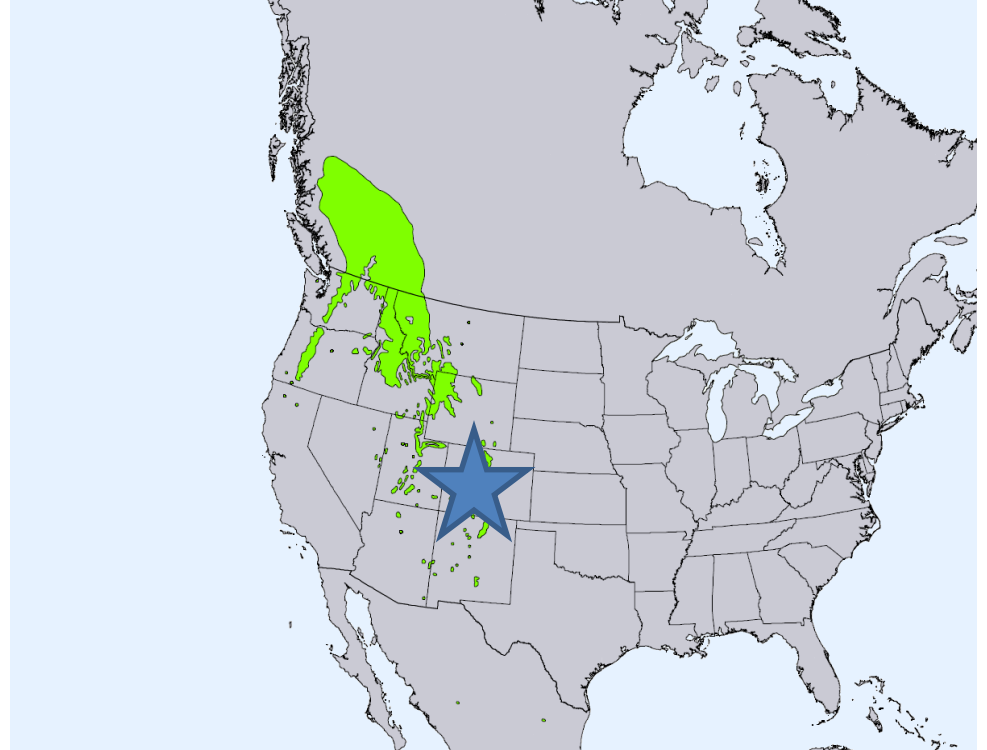
Pros

- +Still holds a nostalgia factor, the „classic Christmas tree“
- +Light and stacks well
- + Higher usable ratio than Lodgepole pine.

Cons

- Sheds needles more easily than other species on the market
- Less demand
- Rare in normal forestry today
- Sometimes loses its green color in the winter, if not fertilized.
- Needs forest shelter

Engelmann spruce (*Picea engelmannii*)



- Rio Grande and San Isobel ,Colorado

Engelmann spruce (*Picea engelmannii*)



Pros

- + Has relatively good needle retention
- + Some people prefer the blue-green color

Cons

- Sitka lice
- Some people feel a „cat urine smell“

Sitka spruce (*Picea sitchensis*)



- Seward, Alaska
- Tumastađir (IS)

Sitka spruce (*Picea sitchensis*)



Pros

- +A common forestry tree
- +Has relatively good needle retention
- +Can grow under hard conditions

Cons

- Sitka lice
 - - The needles sting
- Usually only picked by people out in the forest. The stores don't want it.

Subalpine fir (*Abies lasiocarpa*)



- Arapahoe, Colorado

Subalpine fir (*Abies lasiocarpa*)



Pros

- + Has very good needle retention
- + The needles don't sting
- + Natural symmetry

Cons

- Grows very slowly in Iceland
- Needs forest shelter

Producers



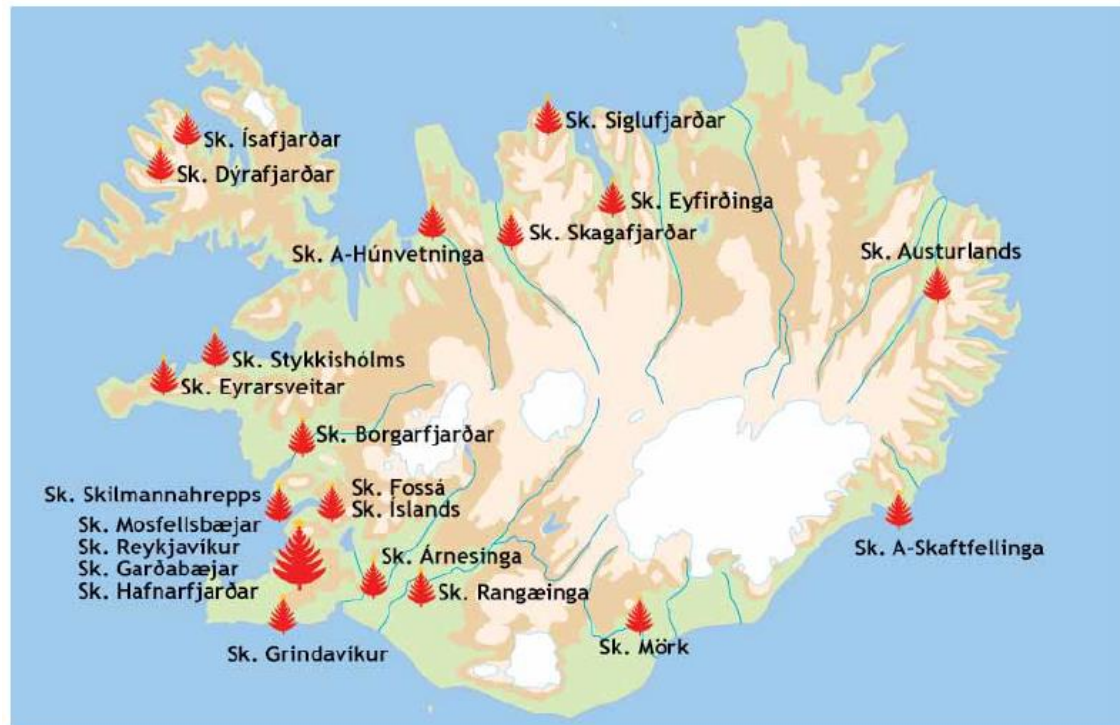
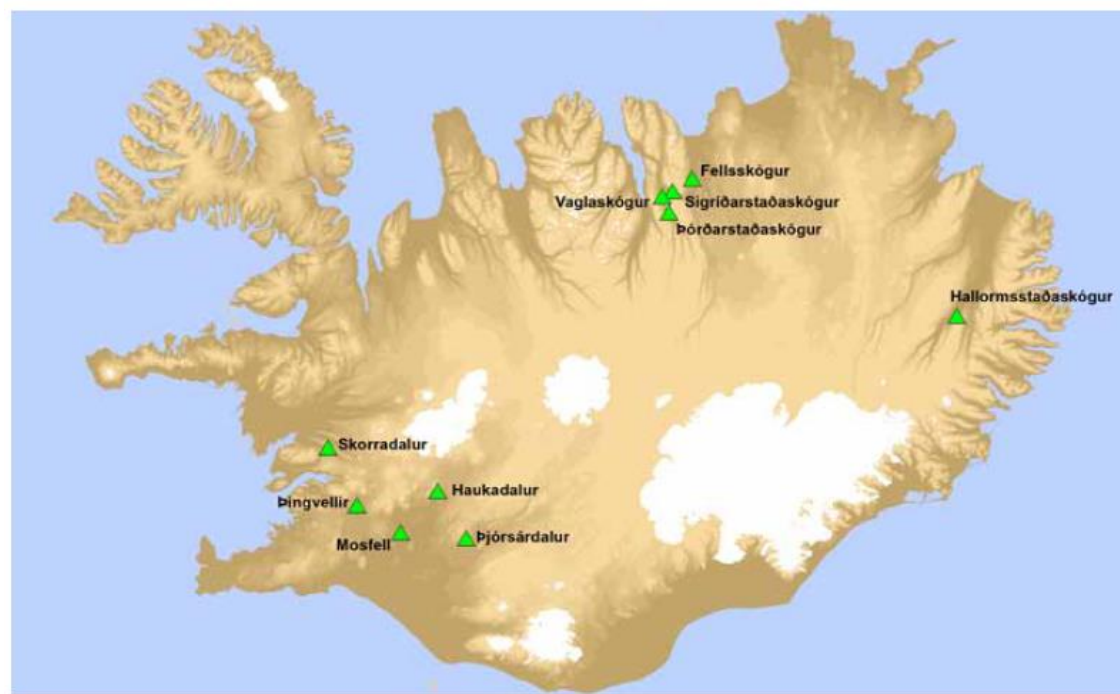
Producers

- Icelandic forest service
- The forestry associations
- Private owners (latecomers)



Production locations

- The Icelandic forest service
- The forestry associations



Methods

- Almost no field plantation
- Shelter/screen planting -IFS
- Mostly harvesting from young forests
- Continous multilayer forest



Methods

- Most Christmas trees in Iceland are cut from young forests, without being treated (trimmed, pesticides, growth control etc.) specifically for that purpose.
- We are limited by the weather conditions. Norway spruce and sub-alpine fir struggle with out forest shelter.







Primitive Christmas tree hunting?

Product

- Trees from 0,7-3 m
- Christmas tree standards have been set in place:
 - A-class (Excellent)
 - B-class(Acceptable)



Other products



Product Development

- Better genetic material being developed
 - Green and blue varieties of Subalpine fir (New Mexico, Arizona)
- Promising individuals from Iceland being chosen for a Lodgepole Pine seed orchard



Improved selected material of Sub-alpine fir in the greenhouse in Vaglir, Fnjóska-valley

The market

- Buyers and sellers
- Amount by producers and species
- Market development



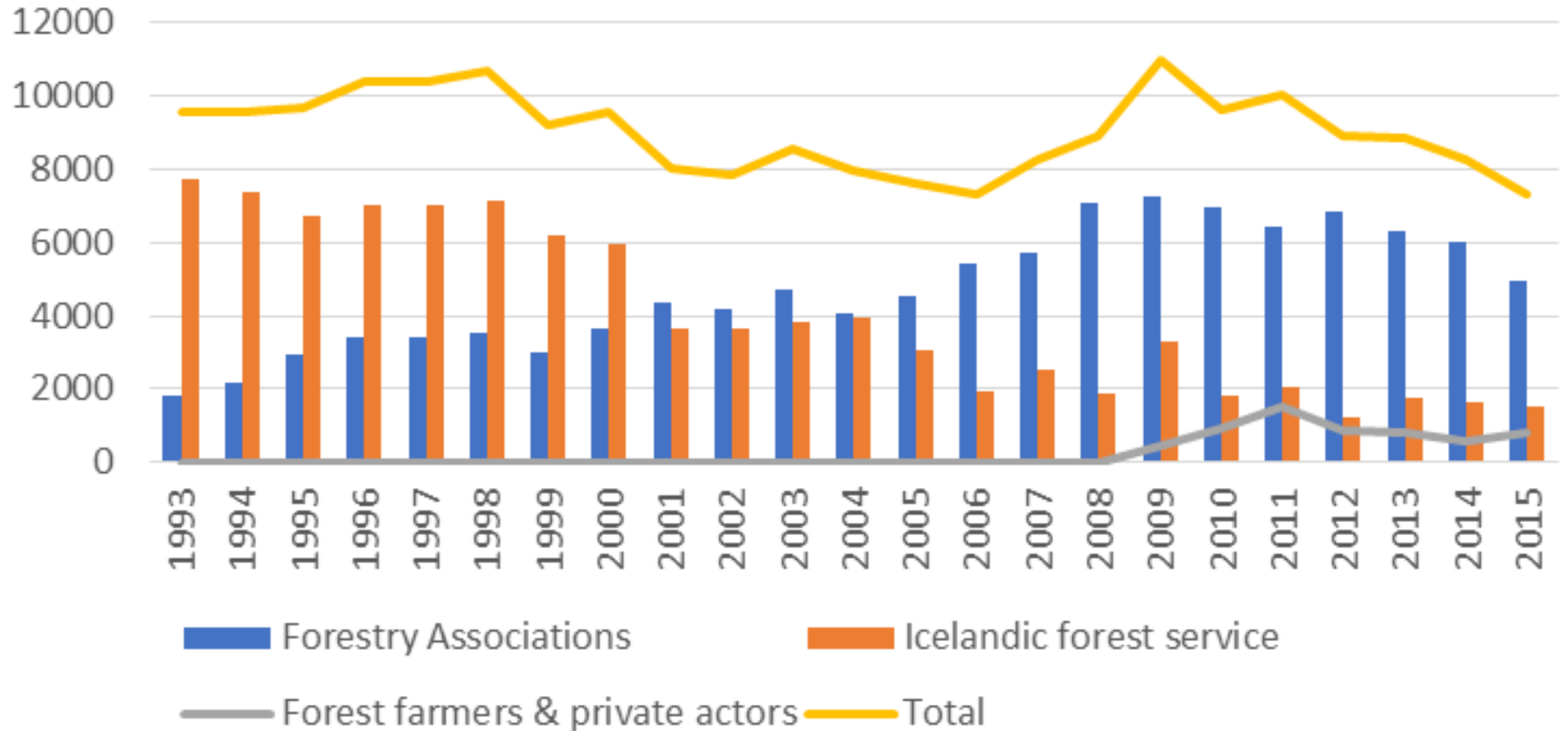
Buyers and sellers

- Garden equipment stores
-Blómaval, Garðheimar  
- Hardware stores
-Bauhaus, Byko, 
- Rescue teams and clubs/associations  
- Straight from the producers
-Christmas tree forests 

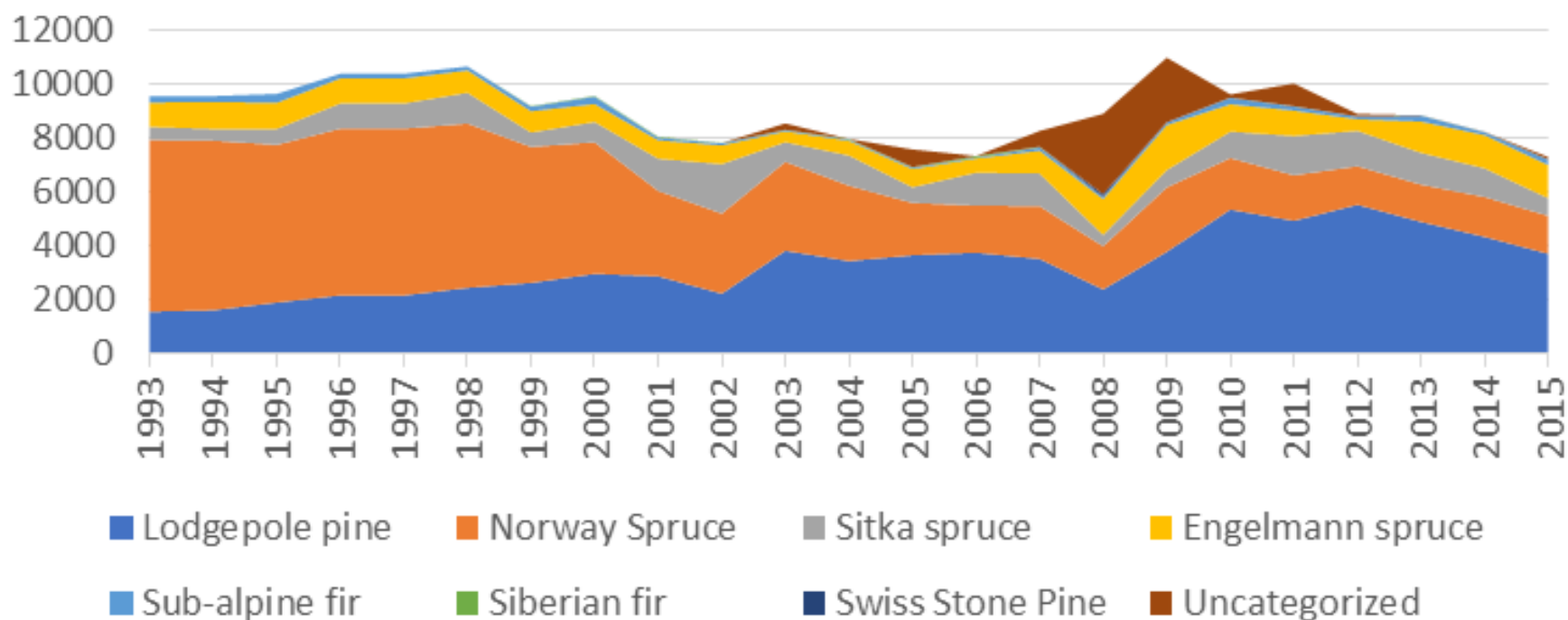
„Take away“



Icelandic Christmas trees sold between 1993-2015 - by producers

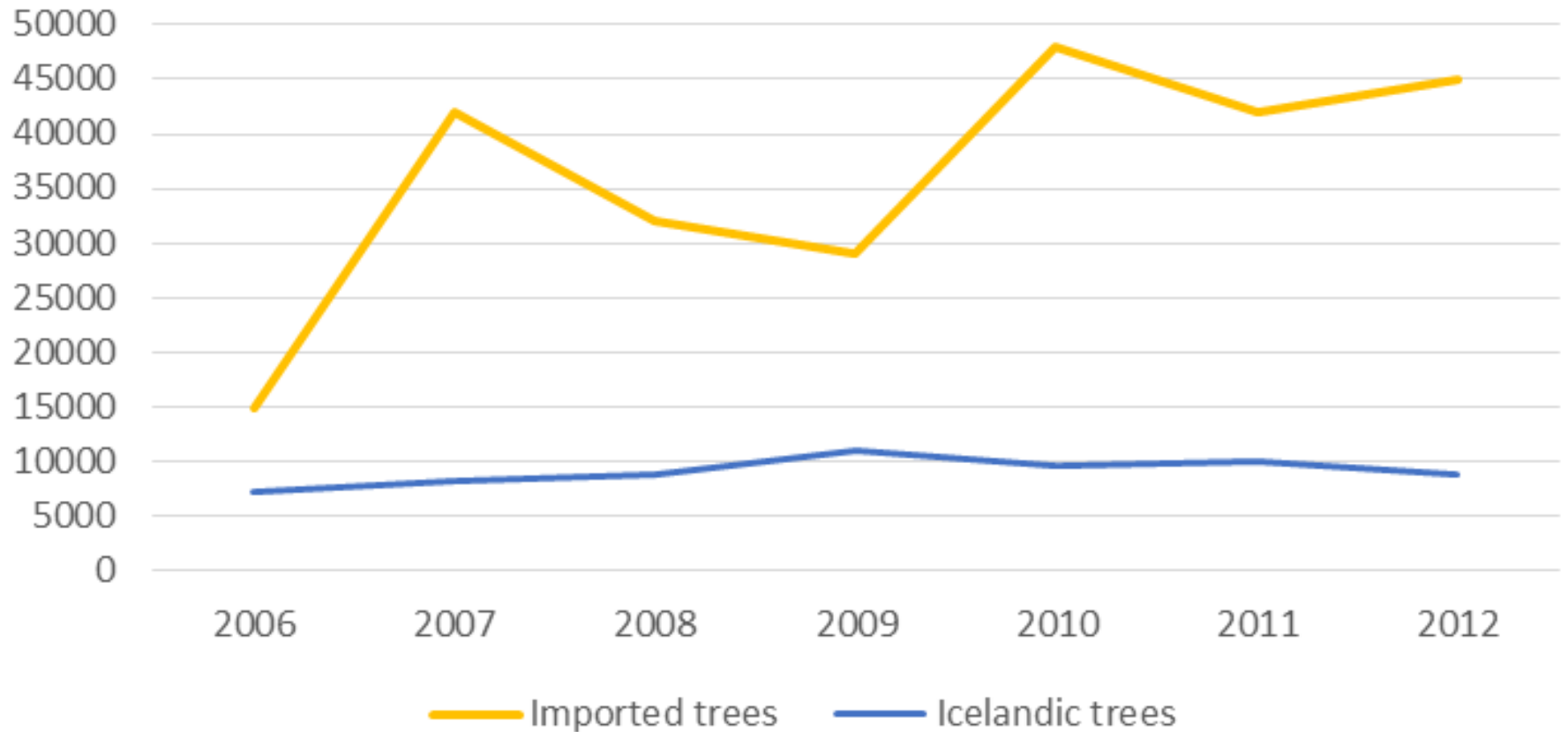


Icelandic Christmas trees sold between 1993- 2015 - by species

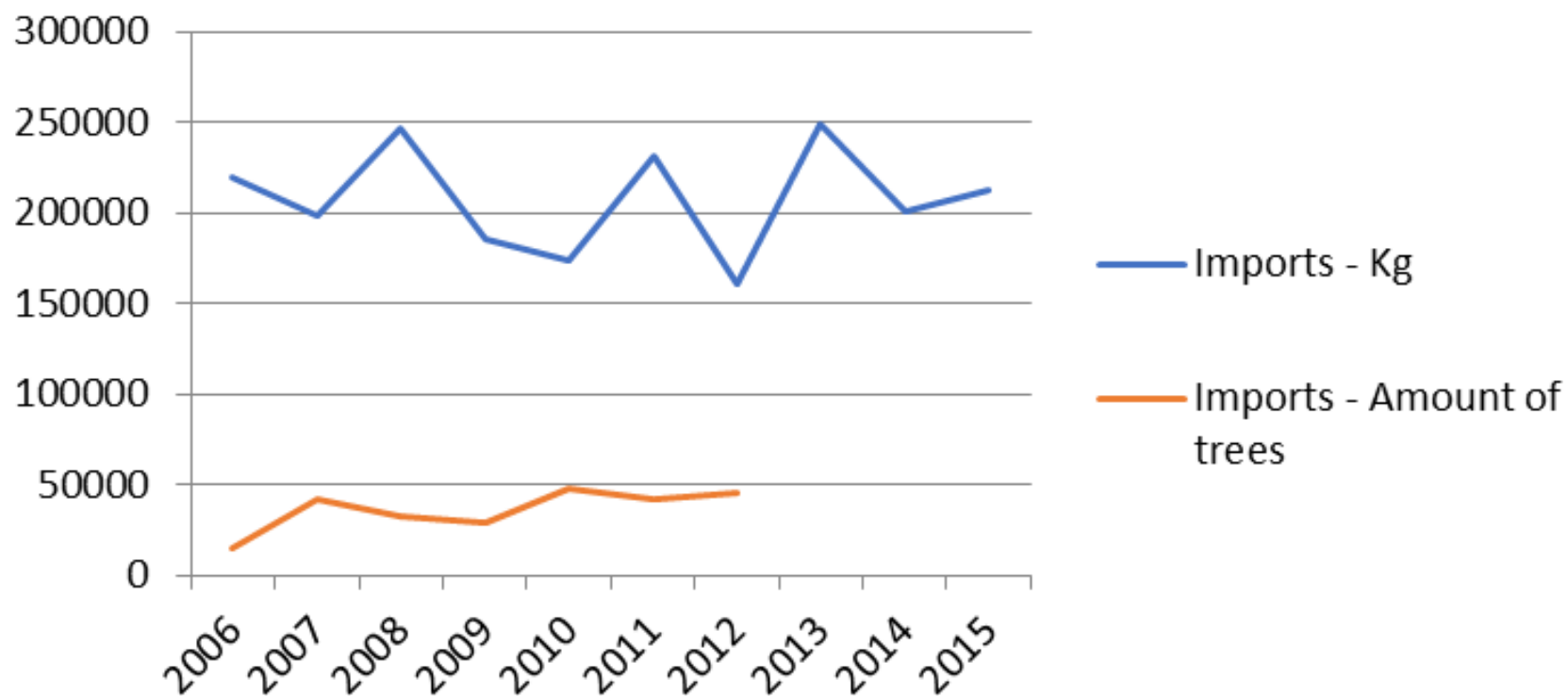


- Skógræktarritið 1994-2016

Amount of imported and domestically grown Christmas trees sold in Iceland 2006-2012



Amount of imported Christmas trees from Denmark 2006-2015



Current market

- Price for Icelandic Christmas trees is around 20% higher in stores than those imported.
- Some stores use Christmas trees as a carrot product: 2990 kr for a Nordmannfir (1,5-2 m).
- $50.000 \times 6.000 \text{ kr} = 300 \text{ million ISK}$
 $= 2.400.000 \text{ Euros}$.
- Currently higher demand than supply of Lodgepole pines
- On the whole, demand seems to be slowly going down.

„Fake trees“ a problem

- 38% of homes in Akureyri and 34% in Reykjavík used plastic trees in 1994

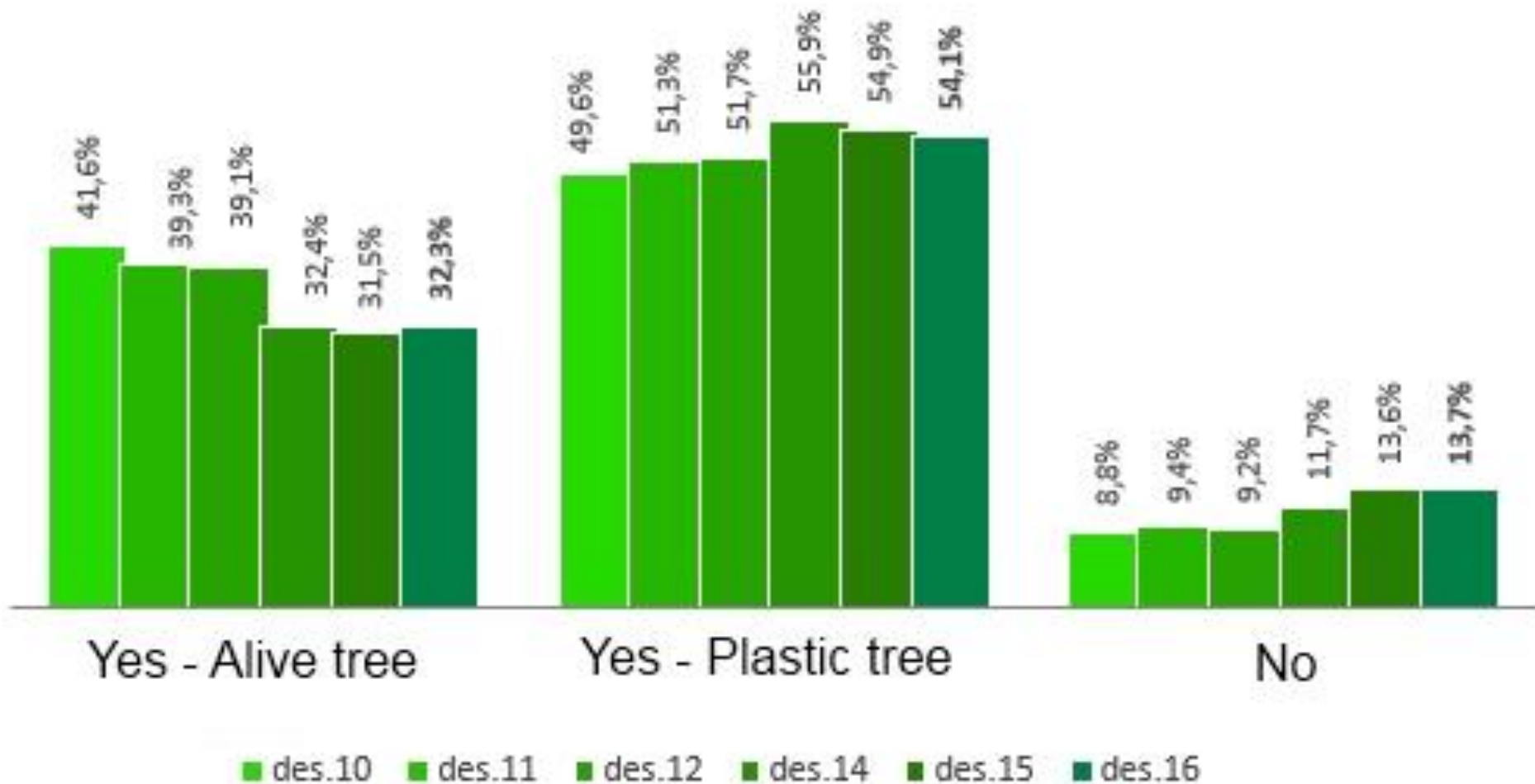


Hraðrækt jólatrjáa á ökrum, lifun ungplantna og áhrif mismunandi áburðarmeðferðar- 2010, Else Møller (Kristinn Einarsson, framkvæmdastjóri Blómavals pers. uppl. mars 2010)



Hrefna Hjálmarsdóttir, 1994

Will there be a Christmas tree in your home this year?



Future production options

- Options:

1. Stay as a niche product; unique, low impact, „green“ but more expensive to buyers. Involves constant marketing, but low maintenance costs- though in total high production cost (harvest cost).

2. Lower the production cost with better material, systematic plantations and patient investment. Increase the supply and make it constant and sustainable.

Production predicition

- Private producers showing more interest, will become stronger in their local market with time
- A few forestry associations can increase their input in the next years (if the market will take the trees)
- With increasing forests, it will be easier to provide good growing conditions
- IFS – side product

Future marketing challenges

- Keep the tradition strong
- Try to compete on the retail market
- Imports will have a price advantage for decades to come
- Constant marketing is needed to keep a image of „green and local” Christmas trees.
- Get people hooked on pine!
- Hope for another economic crisis! A strong Icelandic crown can be problematic

Thank you very much for listening!

