

INTO THE W-AI-LD

December 28, 2023

The FEROX project presents "The Tech + Wild Journey", a docufilm produced by FBK and directed by Andrea Franceschini which tells the story of the development of an advanced technological solution to support pickers of small wild berries in Finland.

In Scandinavian countries, wild berries are considered a national treasure. These products do not require resources to cultivate, because they grow naturally in forests. It is estimated that fewer than 10% are collected each year. The reason lies in the difficulty linked to manually harvesting them and the sometimes difficult working conditions which the pickers have to operate in. Due to the short season, most of the work is carried out by foreigners with limited knowledge of the language, culture and territory. This increases the risk of not only sustaining injuries, but also of getting lost in the forests.

Furthermore, the optimal and most suitable areas for collecting them are uncertain and change from year to year based on the changing climate, which puts additional pressure on workers, since their pay depends entirely on the quantity of wild berries harvested daily.

These are some of the reasons that motivated the partners to present a project to respond to these challenges.

[FEROX](#) aims to develop **semi-autonomous drones** within forests to collect data and exploit Artificial Intelligence (AI) advancements to build up-to-date maps in berry regions. This innovation will both improve the working conditions of collectors and optimise their operations in the forest environments.

In light of this large-scale challenge, the 9 partner EU team decided to make a documentary film, which by the end of the three-year project, would describe the project's major questions, challenges and answers.

The resulting **"The Tech + Wild Journey"** is the inspiration of FBK's film director **Andrea Franceschini** and project coordinator **Paul Chippendale**. They felt that the use of aerial video-photographic tools, i.e. aerial drones, for both the scientific research and also the dissemination would generate substantial impact in the EU public in general and more specifically in the local communities in Finland who would use this new technology.

The research is not limiting itself to collecting drone data to build artificial intelligence forest/berry-yield models to help pickers locate wild berries and optimise their operations, it is also trying to generate awareness of how AI and robotics could help local communities to create new business opportunities and still support traditional values

As Paul points out, “[FEROX](#) could open up new scientific, social and economic possibilities for not only wild berry harvesting but also in supporting other woodland industries, such as mushroom picking, timber management and fire prevention. In fact, the project is exploring the benefits of using AI and drones in wilderness applications, helping to instil trust in new technologies which will lead to new local business opportunities for SMEs and citizens alike”.

We have created a short [trailer](#) and also the first part of the [docufilm](#) in 2024. In 2025 further footage will be shot in the forests of northern Finland to provide updates on progress and to illustrate how the project’s visions, perspectives and answers to challenges have evolved.

PERMALINK

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