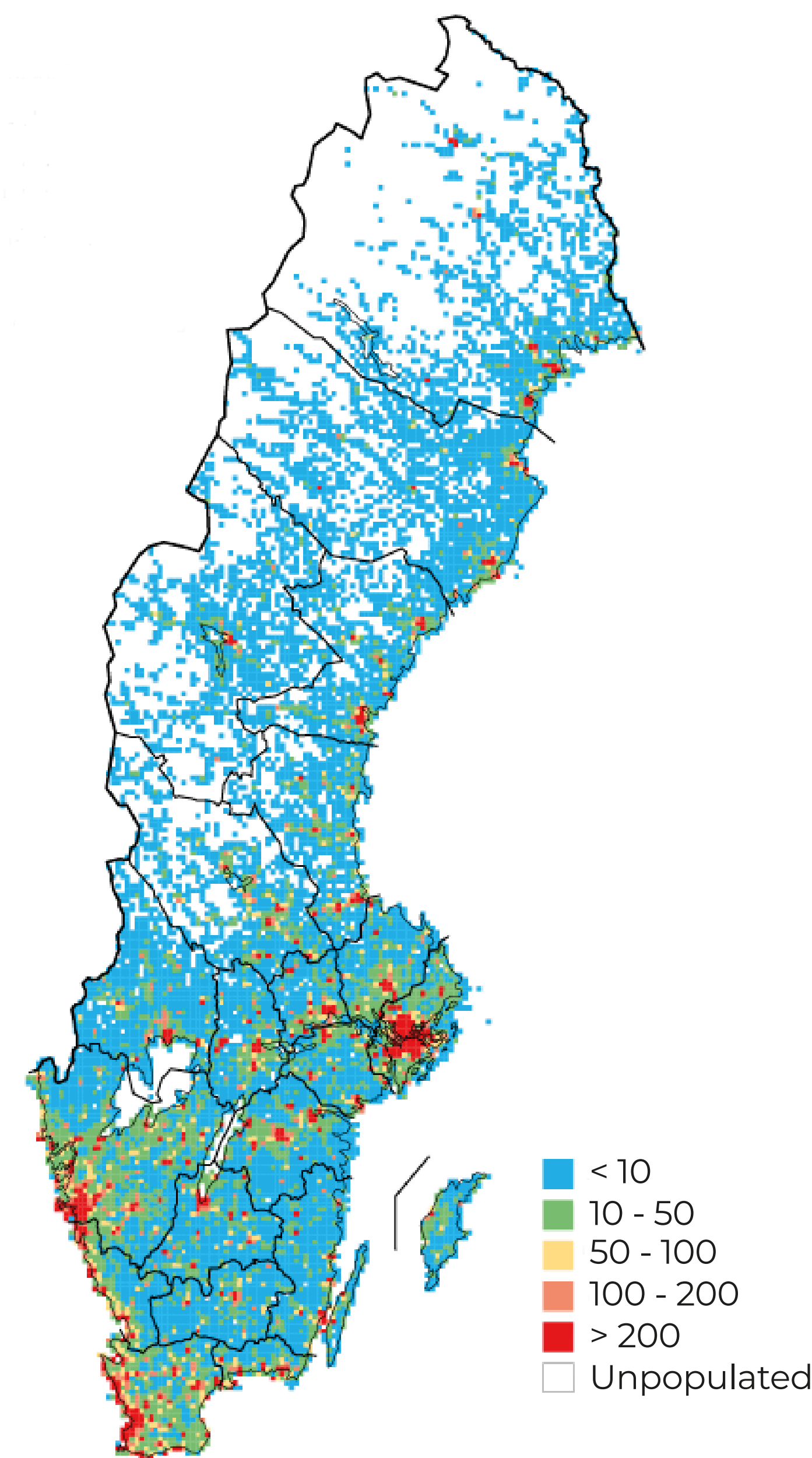


LIVING LAB SWEDEN



Sweden is an industrialised and urbanised country with a population of 10 million inhabitants, and covering 450 000 km², with large, sparsely populated rural areas. About one third of the population live in rural areas, and many rural regions in Sweden experience out-migration particularly young women, moving to major towns or the capital Stockholm (Rauhut and Littke, 2016). A strong feature of the Swedish context is the publicly-funded child care, health care, elderly care and social care. Parents can take 18 months paid parental leave financed through the tax system. The Living Lab is focusing on Jönköping County, characterised as a region having a 'traditional gender contract' (Forsberg, 1998), and close to the bottom of 'gender equality lists' in Sweden (SALAR, 2016). It has a comparatively low share of women in municipal political bodies, a large degree of gender segregation in the labour market, and a large gender pay gap (Länsstyrelsen, 2017). Men own four out of five farms, while forestry is more evenly distributed among women and men, and around 9 per cent of women and 18 per cent of men in rural areas are self-employed, corresponding to the national numbers (Sköld et al., 2018).



Population density (2022)
Source: Statistics Sweden (SCB)

The focus of the Swedish Living Lab are women active in farming, forestry and related activities. The main objectives for our Living Lab, in line with the GRASS CEILING project, are for the participants to develop themselves and their businesses – and work with new ideas. The women also have a chance to develop ideas and innovations that can meet societal and environmental challenges to contribute to a sustainable, equal and vibrant countryside.

For the first Living Lab workshop the objective was to get to know each other and our activities, to understand the context of our Living Lab within the GRASS CEILING project and to begin exploring the goals of GRASS CEILING: a sustainable, equal and living countryside and new thinking and innovation. As the Living Lab follows a participatory method, the more specific objectives will be developed and deepened over the course of the project.



The Living Lab organises **specific sessions** where women innovators discuss their innovative initiatives, the barriers encountered and the support needed, with relevant multi-actors to co-design changes in the agriculture knowledge innovation system (AKIS) to meet the needs of women.

The participants and co-leads have so far initiated discussions on gender equality, innovation, sustainability and rural development. The participants share a strong commitment for contributing to sustainable rural development – and the importance of women's entrepreneurship for such a development. At the first Living Lab workshop, during an exercise called 'The headlines', the women were encouraged to make visions for the future – imagining what they and the Lab will have achieved during the course of the GRASS CEILING project, and beyond. Thoughts on the Lab's achievements comprised of having contributed to the creation conditions for thriving rural areas – including well-functioning social and child care services – more rural women pursuing rural businesses and a larger degree of self-sufficiency in food production. The upcoming Living Lab workshop will be focusing on learning more about the women's businesses and innovative ideas.



The LL involves a total of **eight women** working on beef production, horse stables, pig and sausage production, ecological beef production, a farm café, artisanal cheese production and forestry, tourism and small-scale pig production.

Regarding the group of **external agents**, one central stakeholder is the County Administrative Board in Jönköping. Other stakeholders will be engaged throughout the project.

