

The larder of the settlement

It is midday at the end of February. The mountains and the ice-covered fiord are crystal-clear in the frozen landscape. The temperature is down to ten degrees below zero, but the sun gives little warmth in the Arctic landscape.

The small town of Narsaq is beautifully in the sunshine at the fiord below the high mountains. The ice covers most of the fiord. It is so thick that it can carry people. Out at the fiord some small dots come into sight. It is locals who are out ice fishing. Men, women and children. A lot of tracks in the snow on the ice show that it is a widespread activity for many.

The catch is mainly cod. Great looking fish cooked with potatoes and other vegetables give pleasure to most homes.

Close to the settlement the natural resources are rich and often within easy reach: Fish, seals, sea birds, ptarmigans and hares. Self-sufficiency in food is widespread. Although

the fish factory and the slaughterhouse is on the quiet side a large part of the year resulting in a high unemployment in the settlement, many people every day are active in providing food to the family and friends.

The subsistence economy remains a noticeably livelihoods, especially for the families of the hunters, but also for the ordinary wage earners in the settlement. The catch is donated or sold to neighbours, friends and acquaintances. Or it is sold in the kalaalialaq. The kalaalialaq is the local open meat and fish market, where the catch is sold in the settlement.

The researcher Rasmus Ole Rasmussen has calculated that the total value of subsistence production in Greenland is in the order of 70 million Danish Kroner. Two-thirds of the catch is consumed by the hunter and his closest relatives, while a third is donated to other members of the family, friends and acquaintances.



The fiord outside Narsaq, South Greenland, February 2015