Newsletter of Baltic Farmers Forum on Environment (BFFE)

December 2008

Global and local work counteract,

It is no exaggeration to say that at present a lot of important things are happening which will influate farming and thereby also the Baltic Sea. The Baltic Sea Action Plan (BSAP), The Baltic Sea Regional Strategy, the EU Marine Directive, the EU health check of CAP and the implementation of Water Framework directive and Nitrates directive. But what most of all influences the Baltic Sea is the change in world market prices of food products which changes cultivation patterns. Market prices of crops influences farmers choice of crops to cultivate. That affects leaching of nitrogen and possible also phosphorus more than how they are cultivated. That´s how changes in food consumption patterns in China and India eventually affects load to the Baltic Sea.

On the other side of this global trend in food prices is all the previous mentioned Baltic and EU 'local' work aiming at cutting back on nutrient leaching. What will be the net outcome of these counteracting forces? The years to come will show.

Roughly there are about 2 million farmers around the Baltic Sea. Most of them in Poland of course. A joint venture for farmers around the Baltic Sea this autumn has been to launch a common proposal to the Baltic Sea Regional Strategy. Last autumn (2007) we participated in the negotiations of the BSAP. It is my impression that Baltic Farmers are important and also well accepted at all these different arenas. There is also a curiosity for and expectance of farmers to contribute with own ideas to the Baltic environmental work. Involvement of farmers and farmers organisation is crucial both for the Baltic sea work and for combating the climate effect where agriculture also can contribute. ■

Dr Markus Hoffmann
Secretary of BFFE
c/o Federation of Swedish Farmers
markus.hoffman@lrf.se

What is BFFE?

Baltic Farmers Forum on Environment (BFFE) was launched in 1999 as an initiative from the Nordic Farmers Council. Presidents of farmers unions met in the island of Gotland, Sweden and signed a declaration under the auspices of the Swedish Environmental minister. The purpose is to strengthen the environmental work among farmers organisations and to represent farmers around the Baltic Sea as observers in Helcom. Farmersunions in each of the eight countries are members of BFFE.

Members of BFFE

1. Federation of Swedish Farmers (LRF)
2. Central Union of Agricultural Producers and Forest Owners in Finland (MTK)
3. The central union of Swedish-speaking agricultural producers in Finland (SLC)
4. Association of private family farmers and agricultural cooperatives of Russia (AKKOR)
5. Estonian Farmers Federation (ETKL)
6. Latvian Farmers Federation (LZF)
7. Lithuanian Farmers Union (LUS)
8. National Union of Farmers and Agricultural Clubs and Organisations (KRZKIOR)
9. Bauernverband Schleswig-Holstein
10. Danish Agriculture
11. The Norwegian Farmers Union

Who gets this newsletter?

The newsletter is distributed electronically to a variety of organisations in all countries around the Baltic Sea. Ministries, authorities, environmental organisations and farmers organisations are the main target group. If you do not wish to receive this newsletter or if you want to subscribe (for free) please send an email to **registrator@lrf.se**

Representatives from Baltic and Nordic farmers organisations handed over farmers contribution BSR-strategy to Director General in Dg Regio, Mr. Dirk Ahner on Thursday, 4 December.

Farmers' environmental input to the EU Baltic Sea Region Strategy

The EU Commission is currently energetically working on its Strategy for the Baltic Sea region together with the countries and stakeholders in the region. The Strategy will be presented in June 2009, and exposed to a consultation period during Swedish EU Presidency period of autumn 2009. The final Strategy will then be decided in December 2009 together with a rolling Program of action. A key purpose of the Strategy is to a larger extent guide the Structural Funds spent in the region.

Besides a series of stakeholder meetings held this autumn, countries, regions, municipalities and organisations have prepared 'position statements' and 'input papers'. Also the various farmer organisations around the Baltic Sea have engaged in the process. Upon the request of the Commission, the input document from the farmer organisations became a 'down-to-earth' type, with quite tangible proposals in the three first priority areas of the strategy, Environment, Economy and Attractiveness. Five proposals have been offered:

Putting best practices in agriculture into work
This proposal aims for a massive, long-term and region-wide campaign or program for increased and improved voluntary agri-environmental extension services and related information efforts, in particularly aimed to minimise the impact upon waters.

Regional Center for Inventive and Sustainable Manure Processing
This proposal aims to develop regional facilities that can transform manure to commercial end products through targeted RTD and associated funding mechanisms.

Climate package to combat climate change in agriculture
This proposal calls for development in collaboration with the farming organizations measures to decrease dependency on fossil energy by boosting bioenergy production. Further, it also suggests to create synergy between food and bio-energy production. Additionally, there is a need to increase awareness of farmers on the need to implement mitigation measures.

Strengthening the Baltic Farmers Forum on the Environment (BFFE)
This proposal takes as its point of departure the significant role of the agricultural sector in the HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Program. Thus, there is a considerable need for the environmental community to have a well-organised and strong counterpart to discuss and interact with.

Implementing real-time nutrient measurements within water management and agriculture
This proposal suggests a Baltic wide program focusing upon real-time nutrient measurements. The proposal includes establishment of a network of already ongoing research projects where real-time nutrient loss measurements are made/would contribute notably to our knowledge of hot spot areas from geographical area to field level.

For further information on the Contribution from Baltic Region Farmers and Food Producers to the EU Baltic Sea Region Strategy, please contact: sindre.langaas@lrf.se

Swedish – Russian cooperation on the Gulf of Finland

The Gulf of Finland is one of the most eutrophicated parts of the Baltic sea. Besides the city of St Petersburg the share of nitrogen and phosphorus from agriculture is in focus. A new Swedish-Russian long-term cooperation have started in the county of Leningrad. The name of the project is Agriculture, Environment and Ecosystem Health and it is a cooperation between many Swedish and Russian authorities and organisations. The project is divided into five projects dealing with:

1. Grazing project in Olonets (Karelia)
2. Sustainable Agriculture in higher education
3. Sustainable farming practices
4. Monitoring and Modelling
5. Pest management

One of the activities is to start monitoring agricultural impact on waters. These measurements will form a better basis for source apportionment but also for advice on counteractions to eutrophication of the Gulf of Finland. The first year of measurements indicated that leaching of nitrogen from agricultural land was moderate. It largely depends on the large areas of extensive grasslands. However, measurements also indicate that present manure handling in some cases influences surface- and groundwater in the vicinity of farm-centers.

The Swedish part of financing comes from Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA). For more information about the project and to find contact persons please visit the project website at www.eagri.org

Newly constructed monitoringstation 25 km southwest of St Petersburg.

Example of Agri Environmental payments to reduce eutrophication

Helena Andersson at the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU) has made the thesis 'Agricultural impact on the Baltic Sea – a comparison of indicators for eutrophication'. In the report Helena Andersson studies the indicators that are used to describe leakage of nitrogen and phosphorus from agriculture to the Baltic Sea. The report also briefly describes the present agri-environment schemes.

The table gives an overview of the agri-environment payments for catch-crops, bufferzones, wetlands and spring ploughing.

Agri-environment payments for catch crop, buffer zone, wetland and spring ploughing in the rural development programmes in the Baltic region.
(Andersson, 2008). The unit is euro/ha.

Country/ part of country	Catch crop	Bufferzone	Wetland	Spring ploughing
Sweden	89	111	100/333/111[a]	33
Finland	13[b]	450/350[c]	≤ 450[c]	-
Estonia	-	-	-	-
Latvia	-	-	-	-
Lithuania	-	100	168/229	-
Poland	85/108/103[d]	168-467[e]	-	-
Schleswig-Holstein	45/70	372	-	-
Mecklenburg-Vorpommern	-	-	-	-
Denmark	110	161	27-470	-

a. Construct and restore/on farmland/on pastureland and other land
b. Additional measure
c. Special support
d. Directdrilling/sowing after late harvest/ early harvest
e. Payment of 10-28 euro/100 meters. Calculation for 6 meter width

Focus on nutrients in Baltic AGREEMENT

During the Swedish Presidency of the Council of Baltic Sea States 2006-2007 a meeting for state secretaries from Ministries of Environment and Agriculture around the Baltic Sea provided the first regional high-level discussion forum for agriculturalists and environmentalists on views and perspectives on water management. While the motivation for the meeting was a concern for the Baltic Sea eutrophication, the meeting also gave the agriculturalist the opportunity to explain that the main water management issue for farmers is on management of water quantity, not quality. In conrete terms to optimise soil moisture for highest possible production. Irrespective, as a follow-up to the meeting Sweden offered to take a lead in raising the Baltic wide interest in voluntary agri-environmental extension services. In close cooperation with Latvian colleagues, an expert and policy-maker seminar was held in Riga late 2007 in which state of the art with respect to agri-environmental extension services was assessed, and future needs and prospects were discussed. The future needs and prospects has during 2008 resulted in a 2 year and 300 000 euro project funded by the Swedish government. The project has been named Baltic Agri-environmental Extension Services for impoving the water environment, in short Baltic AGREEMENT. The Swedish Federation of Farmers are project managers and a steering body with representatives from four Baltic Sea countries is currently being established. The project will focus om network establishment, transfer of experience, joint tools and materials, and awareness raising. For further details, please contact contact sindre.langaas@lrf.se

New findings to reduce eutrophication

Photo Erik Karlsson

Sediment traps

New studies from Bioforsk in Norway indicate good effect of sediment-traps. Small special designed ponds for sedimentation and filtration constructed within ditches and placed in areas with high losses of soil can be useful. Measurements indicate that a sediment trap with a size of 0,1-0,4 percent of the catchment area can be expected to have a cleaning effect of 45-75 % on soil particles, 21-44 % on phosphorus and 3-15 % on nitrogen.

Anaerobic digestion

Slurry that are mixed with plantmaterial as catchcrops (grass) becomes a highly effective fertilizer according to German field trials. When plant residues from catchcrops was added to the process of anaerobic digestion wheat used more of this nitrogen compared to the amount of utilized nitrogen from ploughing the catchcrop in spring.

Photo Erik Karlsson

Photo Henrik Andersson

Less phosphorus losses from claysoil

when manure is incorporated

Incorporation of manure decreases the risk of losses of phosphorus through cracks and macropores according to Danish field experiments. The transport of P through the soil profile was as much as halved when the manure was placed in the soil compared to on the soil surface. In the experiment manure from cattle was used and applied at the rate of 30 tonnes per hectare and application on the surface was compared to application 8 cm in the topsoil.

This newsletter is published twice a year from Baltic farmers Forum on Environment – BFFE. Editor is markus.hoffman@lrf.se