



Newsletter of Baltic Farmers' Forum on Environment (BFFE)

December 2021

Whats the deal with the Green Deal?

On February 15th 1988 environmental ministers around the Baltic sea met and decided that nitrogen and phosphorus emissions to the Baltic sea should be reduced by 50 percent as soon as possible but at the latest until 1995. As a part of Green Deal the EU have decided that nitrogen and phosphorus leaching from food production and cultivation should be reduced by 50 percent until 2030. The history repeats itself.

It will, once again, be difficult to half the emissions. Lessons should have been learned. To farmers who have heard of these targets it causes confusion with similar targets in the Water Framework directive. Surgical local targets and country quotas such as in the WFD and BSAP are more credible.

Anyway, regardless of type of water quality objective, the new period of CAP is coming into force on January 2023 and will hopefully be helpful in achieving different targets for water quality. The practical functioning of the eco-schemes will be important. Another hopeful process is the ongoing expansion of catchment officers in the Baltic sea countries. A new publication from the Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management shows that for every euro spent on a local catchment officer, farmers and others do measures equivalent to four times that.

It clearly demonstrates that it is possible to speed up eutrophication measures. ■

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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. Farmers unions in each of the eleven 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), Poland
9. Bauernverband Schleswig-Holstein (BVSH), Germany
10. Danish Agriculture and Food Council (L&F)
11. The Norwegian Farmers' Union (NFU)
12. Farmers Association of Iceland (Bondi)
13. Farmers Parliament (ZSA), Latvia
14. Estonian Chamber of Agriculture and Commerce

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 markus.hoffman@lrf.se

Statement from BFFE on the Baltic Sea Action Plan (BSAP)

BSAP – aftermath and farmers’ reflections

Fourteen years have passed since the first version of BSAP, during which time no country has achieved the national maximum allowable inputs (MAI) of nitrogen and phosphorus emissions to the Baltic Sea. Moreover, nitrogen and phosphorus leaching from agriculture have not decreased as expected. There are general and country-specific reasons for this failure to meet the targets.

BFFE believes that at present the limiting factor for achieving the MAIs is not lack of scientific knowledge about what farming practices are necessary. Our view is that there are two other main obstacles:

1) *Existing monitoring on Baltic-friendly measures does not recognize the improvements achieved by farmers.*

Communication of existing data needs to be much improved.

2) *Food is too cheap and therefore measures by farmers are not financially viable.* Current food prices do not allow food production and cultivation to be climate-friendly, Baltic Sea-friendly, biological diversity-friendly, and at the same time cheap.

A growing population requires increased food production

In the long time frame in which HELCOM and BSAP operate, it is also necessary to bear in mind that population growth in the Baltic Sea region will influence the scope to achieve the MAIs. Average intake of dietary nitrogen is about 5 kg per

Precision agriculture can be a more effective management tool to avoid effects on the Baltic Sea...



person and year, so every additional million people in the population will require an extra 5000 tonnes of nitrogen annually, mainly as protein. To produce 5000 tonnes of nitrogen in edible plant parts, 10-15,000 tonnes of extra nitrogen will be needed.

Sustainable agriculture

Sustainable agriculture is generally defined as ecologically and economically sustainable. Becoming socially sustainable is an increasing concern around the Baltic Sea and very crucial for farmers’ decision to stay on their farm or move to town. The social situation varies from region to region, but has to be considered when actions are planned close to the farm.

Development of advisory services and the possibility of collaborating with the authorities

There are many good examples of the ability of improved advisory

services to tackle the current challenges facing agriculture, forestry, and aquaculture. There is also published evidence that on-farm advice leads to concrete measures. In some Baltic countries, there is strong collaboration between farmers and authorities through an increasing number of catchment officers. In general, it is the hope of BFFE that implementation of the EU Water Framework Directive will lead to better participation by farmers. Another promising option for EU members is the opportunity to form innovation groups and projects within the EIP-Agri program.

Examples of important farming measures

As part of their management regime, farmers regularly calculate nutrient balance as a farm gate budget. They know that, in the long term, soils must not be left bare during the winter but kept as green as possible at all times, preventing erosion and phosphorus losses. Precision agriculture can be a more effective management tool to avoid effects on the Baltic Sea, since nutrients can be better placed in time and closer to seeds. Further developments in minimum/zero tillage systems and smart machinery can also help farmers retain nutrients in the field. ■

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Winner of Baltic Farmer of the year 2021 award



Sauli Brander and family won the 2021 WWF Baltic Farmers of the Year Award. The competition was from other farmers who were national winners in the countries around the Baltic. The name of the organic farm is Lisko farm and the main crops are oats, rye, peas and grass.

Many of the fields have a slope which means that risk for surface runoff in wet periods causing soil erosion and phosphorus losses. For that reason Sauli Brander have established both bufferzones between the fields and the nearby lake and wetlands and small ponds to catch soil erosion. Sauli Brander wants to ensure that all surface waters that drain from the fields and main ditches close to the farm's centre are run through wetlands and sediment basins before entering the lake.

– After the first catchment pond was built and the visual effects were seen, we wanted to continue sustainable practices so we could leave the lake and field in even better condition for the next generations,” says Sauli.

Careful fertilization and nutrient cycling

Certified organic since 2010, no chemical fertilizers are used on Lisko Farm. Sauli and his family are

careful to only fertilize with the necessary amount of nutrients every year. Fertilization is based on soil fertility analyses and nutrient balances are used to continuously evaluate the use of nutrients. Green manure, broiler and chicken manure, and meat and bone meal are used as fertilizers and are applied to the fields in the spring and early summer when plants can use the nutrients most efficiently. The farmers also take care to ensure that manure is spread evenly using a field navigator.

Certified forestry and climate action

Biodiversity and climate action are also a priority on Lisko Farm. Although animal husbandry hasn't been practiced on the land since 1983, the farmers have managed to maintain the biodiversity of the traditional biotopes.

Sauli and his family also take action for the climate and have a high degree of energy self-sufficiency

through their use of solar energy and biomass for the farm's heat and electricity needs. About 70 % of the farm's electricity comes from solar energy (about 15.5 kWp). All the buildings on the farm are heated with wood chips made from willows and other wood collected from the field edges and ditches each year.

– Every farm has a unique location. Farmers should seek out the best practices that fit their fields and environment.

What advice do you have for other farmers?

– Every farm has a unique location. Farmers should seek out best practices that fit their fields and environments. By listening to others, you can improve your own understanding of best practices and pick up the most important ones, explains Sauli Brander. ■

Text: Markus Hoffmann and WWF Finland
Photo: Paula Kallio, WWF

Baltic Stewardship Initiative

– how to increase competitiveness for Baltic friendly farming

Baltic Stewardship Initiative (BSI)

is the name of a new project launched by WWF in 2020. It is financed by the Swedish rural development programme and by WWF and is a joint venture with the Federation of Swedish Farmers (LRF) and the agricultural cooperative Lantmännen. The purpose is to investigate how more eutrophication measures can be done and at the same time increase competitiveness for Baltic friendly farmers. For that purpose the project have established a unique network of farmers and food industries and food retailers. Among



Kristina Atkisson, WWF leads the Baltic Stewardship Initiative.

others, the everyday project life includes hosting webinars for farmers, developing criteria for

possible additional payment from food industries for Baltic friendly farming and writing reports on potentials for increased circulation of nitrogen and phosphorus. At present much of the consumer communication on sustainable food is concentrated on food with low climate impact, why extra communication skills are necessary to remind about the aspect of healthy waters and healthy Baltic sea. ■

Read more:

<https://www.wwf.se/hav-och-fiske/baltic-stewardship/>

Useful new research



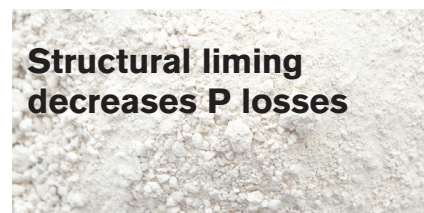
Application of biochar increased P-uptake

■ A group of scientists compiled 86 studies from other scientists where the effect of biochar application on P-uptake was measured. In general application of biochar increased P-availability in soil by 65 percent and P-uptake by 55 percent. Biochar had a more pronounced effect on P-uptake on soils poor in P. Also the temperature for pyrolysis was important where temperatures less than 300 degrees C increased P-availability more than if temperatures above 600 degrees was used. Also the kind of ingredients was important. Biochar made from manure increased P-availability more than if cropresidues was used.

Generous climate offer to all Danish farmers

■ In the beginning of 2022 all Danish farmers will be offered to participate in climate training courses. It is a joint venture between Nykredit and Seges. Nykredit is a cooperative bank and Seges is HQ for agrosience and advisory-service. The courses will be both as field- and farm visit but also digital. There will also be a catalogue of climate measures that could be used by farmadvisors. Maybe even more important, a tool to make a climate-calculation on farms are offered. In this way farmers can calculate the specific climate impact on their farm and simulate how different measures could reduce emissions.

Read more: <https://www.seges.dk/da-dk/nyheder/klimainsats>



Structural liming decreases P losses

■ Jens Blomquist at the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU) presented his doctoral thesis where he had investigated under what circumstances structural liming effects claysoil-structure and losses of soil particles. Structure lime is often 80-85 percent ground limestone (CaCO₃) and 15-20 percent slaked lime (Ca(OH)₂). About 70 fieldtrials were made and when 8 tonnes of lime was applied per hectare aggregate stability increased by 15-35 percent. It means that less clay particles leaches and ends up in ditches and streams. Structural liming is considered as one of the most important in the Swedish implementation of the EU Water Framework-directive.

Read more: <https://pub.epsilon.slu.se/26129/>