



Newsletter of Baltic Farmers' Forum on Environment (BFFE)

December 2020

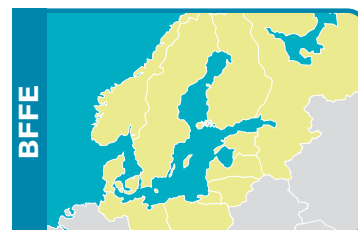
Dear child has many names

Catchment officers, Oplandskonsulte och Åtgärdssamordnare are english, danish and swedish names of local persons assigned to increase the pace of water quality measures in agricultural areas. An increasing number of EU-countries are adopting a new more systematic and local method for public participation. In Sweden the number of catchment officers have increased from 20 to 30, in Denmark there are about 25 persons and in the UK about 30.

BSAP and WFD requires hundreds of million euros to be spend on measures until 2030 in the countries around the Baltic. No one knows exactly how corona will affect the possibility for governments to be generous with future public funding of eutrophication measures in farming. Anyway, its safe to say that measures even more must be the right ones on the right place. One of the lessons learned are from Sweden where farmers have about 11 000 hectares of six meter wide bufferzones of grass along ditches and streams in the RDP. New knowledge show that most of them are in the wrong place to prevent soil erosion and P-leaching. Smaller adapted bufferzones on hotspots in the fields are more effective and consumes less land for food production. We did not understand that 20 years ago when we launched general bufferzones.

The presence of a catchment officer improves the chances of measures being done in the right place within a catchment. Furthermore they can provide farmers with help of the administrative burden of applying for agri-environmental payments. ■

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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

Swedish proposed action plan in Water



In Sweden the public consultation period for the third cycle of the EU Water Framework Directive was launched 1 November.

In Sweden about 27 000 lakes, streams, coastal areas and groundwaters are included in the action programme and eutrophication is one of the problems. Eight measures are proposed to decrease nutrient leaching from farmland. If they are delivered in the scale proposed (see table) they are expected to decrease P leaching with about 400 tonnes and N leaching to coastal waters with about 2 000 tonnes. That is equivalent to a reduction with about 30 percent of present P losses from farmland and about 10 percent for N.

One important new item in the third cycle is the inclusion of nitrogen to decrease eutrophication in coastal waters. For that reason cultivation of catchcrops and spring ploughing are included in the action programme.

Two cycles instead of one?

One of the ideas from the five Swedish regional water authorities is to implement the measures in two cycles instead of one. Meaning until 2033 instead of until 2027. The total cost for the farming-eutrophication programme are about 6,8 billion Swedish kronor. Hopefully many farmers and others will be interested in the classification of their local stream and lake and participate in the ongoing consultation and provide comments. However, the Water Framework directive is a very technical directive making it difficult for non-expert to understand and comment. Therefore experts such as limnologist and other must make special arrangements to make actual participation and involvement possible. ■

Proposed measures to reduce N and P leaching to achieve WFD Good Status

- **Bufferzones** 3 900 hectares
- **Adapted bufferzones** 5 400 hectares
- **Structural liming** 460 000 hectares
- **Two step ditches** 720 kilometer
- **Wetlands** 4 100 hectares
- **Lime refill when draining** 28 000 hectares
- **Catchcrops** 120 000 hectares
- **Spring ploughing** 130 000 hectares

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MTK's and SLC's Water Programme

– Towards a good status of waters

Water protection is an integral part of responsible and sustainable Finnish agriculture and forestry. According to MTK's environmental survey conducted in early 2020, more than nine out of ten farmers and forest owners identified water protection as an important part of their activities. The water program published by MTK and SLC describes what farmers and forest owners are already doing to protect waters and presents possibilities for further development.

Agricultural and forestry producers have a genuine desire to promote water protection, and to achieve a good water status. Many water protection measures are implemented as a part of good agricultural and forestry practices. Unfortunately, their positive impact on watercourses is often slow. In the future, reducing the nutrient load to waters will be even more challenging, as rainfall outside the growing season is likely to increase due to climate change.

As much has already been done, there are few actual completely new openings in the program. The program emphasizes a better targeting and cost-effectiveness of measures. It is important that measures can be well integrated with other activities

on farms as well as that the measures do not reduce the productive capacity of the fields and forests.

From parcel level towards catchment area level

In addition to individual parcel or forest level projects, there is an increasing need to promote voluntary water management practices at a catchment scale. On a larger scale it is easier to identify the most high-risk areas, to assess the overall impact of water management projects, to control better changes in runoff and nutrient leaching, as well as to be prepared for the flood and drought risks, associated with climate change. ■



Photo Katarina Latva

More information:

www.mtk.fi/vesiohjelmalla and slc.fi/vattenprogram (also in English)

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The possibility of changing Baltic Sea Action Plan

Several meetings have been organised in many HELCOM subgroups where new and old facts have been discussed for a revised Baltic Sea Action Plan (BSAP). In 2021 the plan is a new BSAP decided in consensus, which means that all states around the Baltic must have the same vision for the future of the Baltic.

During the autumn 2020 there have been several issues to clarify before the Heads of Delegation, HOD, meeting in December where BFFE is one of the observers among the contracting parties. Some of the issues are close to our farmers:

- Levies on mineral N and P have been proposed by a smaller minority that mention Sweden as an example, but these levies are abolished.
- Manure application in autumn is a hot topic, but must be evaluated according to the C/N ratio and cropping system.
- Farming Advisory Services are sometimes considered to be a too weak instrument and not so well developed around the total Baltic area. Nevertheless that is an important step forward.
- As an advisory tool the use of Best Available Techniques (BAT) can have a more extended use, but they need more development and acceptance.
- There are suggestions to increase the recycling of nutrients and they have a broad acceptance, but will be expensive to implement.

After the HOD meeting 7-8 December there will be a continuation of the work until the HOD meeting in June 2021 and the Ministerial meeting in October 2021. ■

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Photo Elina Nurmi

Optimizing agricultural land use to mitigate climate change

According to large Finnish survey 97 % of farmers believe in climate change (n=4401 in 2018) but the opinion about its anthropogenic and natural impact vary depending on farmer's background. Farmers see climate change globally more as a threat and locally as an opportunity. They are ready to do their part in reducing emissions. Especially there is widespread support for measures that improve soil health.



Soil health study trip. Photo Elina Nurmi.

The most effective means to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in agriculture is through changes in land use and management. In OPAL-Life project multidisciplinary group ensures that versatile aspects to land use optimization are being considered. Proposed actions become more easily implemented when they are both economically reasonable and socially acceptable.

The farmers have played important part in the project since its beginning in 2015. The pilot farm network consists of 20 farmers from four different regions in Finland. Soil, drone, farmland bird and greenhouse gas monitoring has been carried out in some of these pilot farms. Economic calculations have focused on the profitability of soil improvement. Annual interviews and meetings with researchers and advisors have enhanced communication and understanding of diverse views. Field days in pilot farms have also attracted wider public to discuss topics like biodiversity, peatlands and soils structure.

One of the project outcomes is Land Use Optimization tool which classifies Finnish field parcels in sustainable intensification, extensification or afforestation based on their characteristics and production capacity. The tool utilizes up-to-date information and supports climate change mitigation and adaptation goals. The feedback from farmers has been taken into consideration when developing the tool. The land use optimization results in higher yields, better economic returns as well as environmental benefits which, additionally, has been stressed to policy makers.

If you are interested to find out more visit our website or contact research scientist Elina Nurmi (see below). ■

More information OPAL-Life project:
<https://www.opal.fi/en/>

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