

A Vision for Sustainable Agriculture around the Baltic Sea

13 farmers' organisations* from eight countries within the Baltic Farmers' Forum on the Environment (BFFE) present their contribution for sustainable farming around the Baltic Sea. Farmers are aware of their key role in water management in light of the sensitive Baltic Sea, and as part of the overall sustainable development initiative in the Baltic Sea Region. Significant progress has been made in the agricultural sector in relation to water protection by increasing nutrient use efficiency. Farmers call for a co-operative approach within the existing frames given by agricultural and water policies.

The Baltic Sea Action Plan (BSAP) developed by the Helsinki Commission (HELCOM) aims to improve the water quality of the Baltic Sea. This is also an important element in the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region.

BFFE as a legitimate partner ask that farmers' voices are more heard in the on-going HELCOM process and strengthening of the Baltic Sea Region. Farmers' organisations have strengthened their cooperation among themselves in view of a coherent and cross border approach to find solutions for integrating water protection into productive agriculture. The farmers' organisations can support and advocate environmental considerations and practical measures that also contribute to economic and social sustainability. Experiences from several initiatives and projects like Baltic Deal, Baltic Compass and Baltic Manure significantly contributes to increased knowledge and win-win solutions both for the farmers and the environment.

Farmers will also participate and contribute knowledge and views for the implementation of the EU Water Framework Directive (WFD) and the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD). Both Directives impose challenges for farmers and it is crucial that farmers and farmers' organisations are given the opportunity to take part in dialogue and be consulted on how to implement these Directives in smart ways that also ensure and strengthen sustainable agriculture around the Baltic Sea.

Farmers and farmers' organisations engagements

- Farmers' organisations take an active part in environmental policy making processes.
- Utilise given environmental tools such as free advice and EU agri-environmental support schemes to the greatest possible extent.
- Further advocate practices and efforts that farmers make to improve the efficiency of production, which results in higher productivity and less environmental impact.

Expectations on governments and administration

- Listen to farmers' organisations and BFFE and take farmers' interest in to account in the environmental policy making processes.
- Support economic viability and competitiveness of agriculture as a key sector of the rural areas to ensure the development of the Baltic Sea Region.
- Provide a framework with realistic objectives, leaving sufficient flexibility to the farmers, recognising that regional or even farm specific solutions are often needed.
- Support agricultural research and advisory services to generate and transfer innovative solutions to farmers.

*Danish Agriculture and Food Council (L&F), Estonian Farmers' Federation (ETKL), Central Union of Estonian Farmers (EPK), Central Union of Swedish-speaking Agricultural Producers in Finland (SLC), Central Union of Agricultural Producers and Forest Owners in Finland (MTK), German Farmers' Association (DBV), Latvian Farmers' Parliament (ZSA), Latvian Farmers' Federation (LZF), Lithuanian Farmers' Union (LUS), Lithuanian Association of Agricultural Companies (LZUBA), Independent Self-governmental Trade Union of Individual Farmers "Solidarność" Poland, Trade Union National Centre of Young Farmers Poland, Federation of Swedish Farmers (LRF)