

December 2014

# Newsletter of Baltic Farmers' Forum on Environment (BFFE)

## What is BFFE?

Baltic Farmers' Forum on Environment (BFFE) was launched in April 1998 as an initiative from the Nordic Farmers Council (NBC). Presidents of the farmers' unions met in Gotland and signed a declaration "Farmers for a Sustainable Future in the Baltic Sea Region". The BFFE network was launched as a part of this process.

### The declaration was signed by

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 (BVSH)
10. Danish Agriculture and Food Council (L&F)
11. The Norwegian Farmers' Union (NFU)
12. Farmers Association of Iceland (Bondi)

The aim of BFFE is to strengthen the agri-environmental work among the farmer organizations. It also represents farmers around the Baltic Sea as an observer in HELCOM.

NBC (Nordiska Bondeorganisationers Centralråd) manages and monitors the activities of BFFE together with the farmers unions in the area. The chairmanship follows the NBC chairmanship and rotates between Denmark, Finland and Sweden. Currently MTK holds the coordinating role. ♦

## Secretariat of BFFE

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More information about BFFE can be found [www.mtk.fi/bffe](http://www.mtk.fi/bffe).





# Dear reader,

**BFFE is already over sixteen years old**, but our work has been quite invisible to the general public. We have been doing the background work for farmers in agri-environmental issues. The agricultural sector has been set a number of targets to reduce harmful environmental effects, on both international and national levels. It is clear that agriculture must do their part, for example, to reduce nutrient load into the waters. However, action required cannot be anything but keeping in mind cost and resource efficiency, as well as the suitability of concrete measures for farmers' everyday life.

**We want to tell about BFFE** and share information more widely. BFFE will restart publishing newsletter again after a long break. This newsletter is the first one. We hope that it is useful for you. In addition, we have created a website where we tell you about our activities. Please visit [www.mtk.fi/bffe](http://www.mtk.fi/bffe).

**We also want to hear your thoughts** on how our work should be developed and stressed. You can contact the Secretariat, whose contact information can be found in this newsletter.

**We hope to hear from you** and that you will continue following our work in year 2015.

*With all good wishes for Christmas and New Year!*

*Best regards,*

Liisa Pietola  
BFFE Secretariat



Photo Jaana Kankaanpää



Photo Airi Kulmala

## Upcoming Events

BFFE will organize a Conference on Agricultural Water Protection and Sustainable Food Production in Espoo on 25 - 26 February 2015. The conference will be by invitation only.

We have collected a wide range

of presentations on current agri-environmental issues, and we hope to share them with a wide group of participants invited from all countries around the Baltic Sea.

The theme of the conference is agricultural water protection, na-

turally. There will be presentations e.g. on reduction of nutrient load, internal nutrient load, implementation of water framework directive, as well as resource efficiency.

More information: [airi.kulmala@mtk.fi](mailto:airi.kulmala@mtk.fi)

## Subscribe newsletter

The newsletter is sent to a variety of organizations in all countries in the Baltic Sea region. Since our distribution list is limited, please feel free to forward this newsletter. If you do not wish to receive the newsletter or if you want to subscribe it, please send an e-mail to [airi.kulmala@mtk.fi](mailto:airi.kulmala@mtk.fi).



# BFFE News

## BFFE Baltic Farmers Forum on Environment – good initiative for Baltic Sea – The contributions of farmers’ organizations

Text Seppo Kallio, Photo Airi Kulmala

**T**he Baltic Sea is and has been the very significant heart of Northern Europe. The ecological situation of Baltic Sea has been a big challenge for many years. In this development the governments and civil society organizations have had a lot of different cooperation and the goal is to protect the Baltic Sea.

The collapse of Soviet Union was naturally a big point looking at the cooperation around the Baltic Sea. The Nordic Farmers’ Council NBC made a historical initiative and decision in its board meeting in April 1998 in Visby. The Swedish Farmers’ Union LRF played an active role at the starting point of

this work. The Nordic governments supported also this network process. The BFFE agreement signed by all the farmers’ organizations around Baltic Sea and NBC members altogether 11 countries. It was extremely important that all the Baltic Sea countries were involved.

NBC has taken care of coordination and leadership in BFFE network. Practically three NBC countries, Denmark, Finland and Sweden have managed a secretariat work for this twenty years’ period. BFFE has participated in different policy processes of Baltic Sea and given the views of agriculture sector to Baltic Sea policy



Photo Jaana Kankaanpää

measures and activities. The role of HELCOM has been the most important body in this cooperation.

BFFE and NBC have underlined that it is essential to participate in the policy works of the protection of Baltic Sea. The cleaner Baltic Sea and the new and fair environmental measures are naturally in the interest of farmers. Therefore we need more committed BFFE cooperation in the future. ♦

# HELCOM Heads of Delegates discussed on proposals of new groups and nutrient reduction

The Heads of Delegates (HOD) 47 was held 9.-12.2014 in Helsinki at HELCOM headquarters. The main topics were matters arising from the HELCOM updated groups:

1. "Maritime" - nitrogen oxide emission of sea traffic and sewage discharge by passenger ships
2. "Response" - information system on pollution threats, oil spill response vessels
3. "Fish" - ecosystem based sustainable fisheries
4. "Agri" - sustainable agricultural practices on nutrient accounting for balanced fertilization
5. "Pressure" - nutrient and hazardous substance inputs, marine litter and underwater noise

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Text Liisa Pietola

**Maritime** discussions revealed current situation of sewage discharge from passenger ships. Since 2005 the sewage release from ships has been on HELCOM's agenda but no implementation date for the "special area status for the Baltic Sea" has yet been set to control sewage discharge to the sea.

**Response** discussions showed the common concern of oil accidents and needs for actions to build an information system.

**Fish** discussions raised comments on the draft HELCOM recommendation on sustainable aquaculture in the Baltic Sea Region. The Contracting Parties agreed to finalize the draft for the next HELCOM meeting in March 2015. The parties highlighted that the document should have more neutral tone, being currently too

negative.

**Agri** issues were found important but there were reservations relating to revision of Annex containing items in the international Helsinki Convention which address prevention of pollution from agriculture in the Baltic Sea Region. The word "review" was proposed instead of "revision". HELCOM Contracting Parties should later decide the revision needs after the group proposals. Nutrient balance approach was supported by BFFE.

**Pressure** group work was acknowledged. Work for underwater noise was supported despite of so few experts on this area. Hazardous substances and pharmaceuticals were raised; although the issue is currently under discussions by other parties, too. The group is dealing with very challenging is-

sues like CART (Country Allocated Reduction Targets) follow-up.

Finally, **CART follow-up system** was presented with principles on Maximum Allowable Inputs (MAIs, for 7 basins) and Country-Allocated Reduction Targets (CARTs for basins and countries). Core pressure indicators on nutrient inputs include air- and waterborne nutrients, but the current model excludes coastal parts and rivers. These should be in although by much more complicated model. Currently, CART follow-up assessment for visualization purposes for key messages is in progress without coastal and river base approach. There were doubts concerning the publication of the key messages in HELCOM website in new future because of several open questions still remaining. ♦

## About HELCOM

The Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission (HELCOM) is an intergovernmental organization of the nine Baltic Sea coastal countries and the European Union working to protect the marine environment of the Baltic Sea from all sources of pollution and to ensure safety of navigation in the region. Since 1974, HELCOM has been the governing body of the Helsinki Convention. BFFE has an observer status in HELCOM meetings.



# New HELCOM groups – BFFE as observer

## PRESSURE group held its first meeting

Text Rikard Korkman

**A**s a part of the HELCOM modernization process a new working group PRESSURE dealing with pressures from land to the Baltic Sea environment held its first meeting in Helsinki on 30 October 2014. BFFE was represented by Rikard Korkman (SLC, Finland) in the meeting.

The task of the group is to plan for the detailed work on mitigating nutrient and hazardous substance inputs as well as marine litter and underwater noise. Another key task is to improve follow-up on the HELCOM nutrient reduction scheme, first adopted in 2007, with clear targets per country for less nutrient inputs to the sea. The aim is to increase transparency in monitoring progress achieved by each HELCOM member. The work has continued since the update of the nutrient reduction scheme, jointly

approved in the 2013 HELCOM Ministerial Meeting as a result from a highly complex calculation process. The group's task is to organize the further development and implementation of the MAI-, CART-system and to guide the PLCs (Pollution Load Compilations).

One issue in need of further development for the group are core pressure indicators to complement the ongoing work to develop and agree on a common set of core indicators to describe Good Environmental Status and pressures on the marine environment. Such pressure indicators should link to human activities causing the releases of hazardous substances, and thus helping to scope which hazardous substances should be given priority and where exactly HELCOM can create added value



comparing to existing regulations. Accordingly, the group will discuss where further joint or coordinated measures might be needed. ♦



Photo Airi Kulmala

# Sustainable Agricultural Practices (AGRI)

Text & Photo Airi Kulmala

**T**he AGRI group is one of the new groups of HELCOM. The group will e.g. respond to the need to find solutions how the agricultural sector could further contribute to reaching good environmental status of the Baltic Sea by 2021.



Photo Jaana Kankaanpää

The group involves representatives from agricultural and environmental authorities of the Baltic Sea countries, EU, and HELCOM Observers. All countries except Latvia and Poland were present at the first meeting held in Copenhagen on 20-21 November 2014. BFFE, represented by Airi Kulmala (MTK) was one of the observers together with WWF and CCB (Coalition Clean Baltic). Mr. Dietrich Schulz (Federal Environmental Agency, Germany) was elected as the chair for the AGRI group for the next

two-year period. The group will meet once per year or three times per two years.

## The duties of the AGRI group

The major task of the group is to identify and revise the outdated items in the international Helsinki Convention, which address prevention of pollution from agriculture in the Baltic Sea Region. It will also provide support and make proposals for the implementation of the HELCOM BSAP, Ministerial Declarations and HELCOM Recommendations according to the existing priorities as well as request by the Heads of Delegations and subsidiary bodies. This may include proposals for strategies, guidelines and recommendations.

The group will produce and contribute to relevant deliverables and milestones of the roadmap of HELCOM activities on ecosystem approach. It will cooperate with other subsidiary bodies. The group should create added value in relation to the work on implementation of EU legislation taking into account the specific needs of the Baltic Sea.

To fulfill duties, the AGRI group will review and update the Part 2 of the Annex III of the Helsinki Convention. This includes identifying of areas critical to N and P losses to enable directing targeted and cost-effective measures where they can bring the greatest envi-

ronmental effect.

The group will investigate measures to reduce nutrient surplus in fertilization to reach nutrient balanced fertilization with the objective to come to an agreement on national level by 2018. Annual nutrient accounting at the farm level will be a part of the task. It will also support development by 2016 of national guidelines or standards for nutrient content in manure, and develop by 2018 guidelines on the use of such standards.

To promote development of methodology for P recycling, as well as to enhance transfer of knowledge and technology and exchange of good examples are also tasks of the group. The group will exchange experiences and ideas for potential policy instruments (voluntary/mandatory) and measures for improved farm nutrient management.

## Cost-effective and targeted measures

BFFE will follow the work of the AGRI group. It is important that the agricultural sector puts in practice targeted measures that reduce nutrient load into the Baltic Sea. At the same time measures need to be cost-effective to maintain production and competitiveness of the farms. ♦



## BFFE contacts

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