



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

February 2023

# Implementation of the Baltic Sea Action Plan (BSAP) and the meeting with HELCOM Heads of Delegation (HOD)

**Updated organisation** of the HELCOM working structure will be discussed for a longer period. The idea with the new organization was working groups with a clear focus directly under Heads of Delegation (HOD), like AGRI, and meetings more often to keep the momentum. Groups like PRESURE collecting information from different groups would disappear. The contracting parties have different opinions about the new organization and alternatives were suggested. This discussion will continue.

The informal consultations without Russia seem to continue without any end date. Every working group meeting is followed by a correspondence procedure, which gives the opportunity for the Russian delegates to approve the documents before they are submitted to the HOD correspondence procedure.

The effects of the war in Ukraine are not fully discussed during HELCOM meetings, but the effects on arable inputs and agricultural production are impossible to avoid both in short and long term. When Best Available Technique and Practice are discussed you can wonder what

that really will mean in the future, just to mention some examples.

Recycling of nutrients are higher on the agenda now, and biogas, if not too expensive, can solve several problems on farm level. Of course there will be a lot of work monitoring hazardous substances and nutrient efficiency for the new products entering the market from now on.

BSAP funding is a major concern for the HOD meetings. Since the budget for HELCOM is very tight and intensively discussed, other funds are of great importance. Also, there can be a possibility of funding from one or a few contracting parties.

From 1 January 2023 Denmark will be the chair of BFFE and the contact details are:



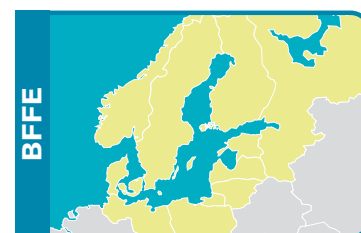
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On [www.mtk.fi/bffe](http://www.mtk.fi/bffe) we keep the BFFE information with [airi.kulmala@mtk.fi](mailto:airi.kulmala@mtk.fi) as editor.

Report by **Kjell Ivarsson**  
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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) send an email to:

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

# The Archipelago hot spot road map

**I**n the spring of 2021, the Finnish government decided to start the Archipelago Sea Program aiming to decrease agricultural runoff to the Archipelago Sea so that by 2027 this last remaining Finnish hot spot site can be removed from the HELCOM's hot spot list of major polluters. The first step of the program was the Archipelago hot spot road map project coordinated by the Centre for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment of southwest Finland (4/2021–6/2022). Agricultural producers (MTK, SLC) have also participated in the project.

The bottlenecks of agricultural water protection were identified in the project. The biggest challenges are the low profitability of agriculture and the limited financial support, as they reduce farmers' motivation and opportunities to implement water protection measures. The other identified bottlenecks were targeting of measures, utilization of manure, soil phosphorus content, targeting of advisory, complexity of the support system, negative media attention, challenges related to projects as well as the slow effectiveness of water protection measures. At the second stage, it was described and scheduled the key tools for the removal of the bottlenecks, agricultural water protection, and the actions of the Archipelago Sea Program until 2027.

Ten agricultural water protection measures have been compiled in the road map. The most effective ways

to reduce the nutrient load in the agriculture are to improve of the drainage and the soil growth conditions, to increase the use of soil amendments (gypsum, structural lime, wood fibers), to promote the transport of manure out of the catchment area, and to increase plant cover of the fields in winter.

## Support to the use of gypsum

The Gypsum project has been offering free gypsum treatment of fields to the farmers in the catchment area of the Archipelago Sea since 2020. The total treated area is over 23 000 hectares now, but more is needed. Since gypsum is not suitable for use in all fields, the farmers hope that they would also receive support for the use of structural lime and fibers.

## On the way to the cleaner sea

Now is the time to implement the measures presented in the road map. Reaching the target requires the commitment of all parties (farmers, research, advisory, companies, and administration). The costs cannot be paid by the farmers alone. At the political level, sufficient and long-term public funding for various measures must be ensured. In addition, private financial instruments are also needed. The cooperation of different actors is essential. ■

### Airi Kulmala

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There is intensive plant production in the catchment area of the Archipelago Sea.

Photo Airi Kulmala

## Seminar on WFD and heavily modified water bodies

■ On the 13th December 2022 the Federation of Swedish Farmers hosted an international webinar on the Water framework directive and the related challenge on designating heavily modified water bodies. Some 60 persons from six countries participated and during three hours experts from Germany, Denmark, UK and Sweden presented their approach on how to combine functioning land drainage and physical measures to achieve good ecological status or good ecological potential. Information about the seminar can be obtained from [markus.hoffman@lrf.se](mailto:markus.hoffman@lrf.se)

## Baltic Stewardship Initiative

■ WWF in Sweden runs the project Baltic Stewardship Initiative (BSI) together with the Federation of Swedish Farmers and Lantmännen. Among other activities a series of webinars were held. One of them were international with the title "The farmers as a nutrient steward – best practices for enabling sustainable agriculture". The webinar was recorded and can be watched in the link <https://www.wwf.baltic.org/newsroom/agriculture/webinar-the-farmer-as-a-nutrient-steward-best-practices-for-enabling-sustainable-agriculture/>