

Seminar outcomes

The seminar *Common Agricultural Policy for 2014-2020: challenges and perspectives in implementing environmental commitments* was held in Vilnius, Lithuania, on 11 November 2013.

The seminar was arranged under the Lithuanian EU presidency and brought together 60 members of governments, national agencies, regional organizations, academia, farmers’ organizations and advisory services, non- governmental organizations and industry representatives from the whole region. 20 speakers representing a wide range of stakeholders presented their views.

The EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR) is now set up to address three challenges: saving the sea, connecting the region and increasing prosperity. In order to respond to the challenge of saving the sea, the HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan (BSAP) is instrumental to the implementation of the EUSBSR. Due to its unique way of addressing challenges for an entire region, the EUSBSR has now served as a model for similar initiatives in the Danube and Black Sea regions.

Speakers stressed the sensitive nature of the Baltic Sea and the need to use agri-environmental measures to meet the challenges.

Several Flagship Projects and Horizontal Actions, set up under the strategy, have explored increased regional cooperation on agri-environment measures as a way to reduce runoff of nutrients from farming and thereby contribute to the restoration of a healthy Baltic Sea. Several projects with focus to reduce agricultural runoff to the Baltic Sea have engaged farmers, advisors, agencies and ministries around the sea. Other initiatives, outside of the Strategy, have served to increase cooperation between the agricultural sector and environmental NGOs.

In a break-out group, participants shared the successful outcomes of projects like Baltic Compass and Baltic Deal, which have included different actors within the agricultural sector while other projects, such as Snowbal and Meatbal as well as the Baltic Farmer of the Year Award, were initiated by WWF and its partners, such as the Lithuanian Fund for Nature.

Many of these projects have now been concluded, or are about to conclude. Participants discussed the need for, and potential organization of, a platform for continued dialogue and exchange of experiences across sectors and across borders in the region.

In a parallel group, participants shared experiences from the development of agri-environment measures in their respective countries. Many participants expressed frustration over diminishing resources for agri-environment measures and over ambiguity in the application of the greening component.

A list of priority measures emerged from the discussion:

1. The use of nutrient balances in application of fertilizers
2. Organic farming
3. Buffer zones
4. Restoration and management of wetlands
5. Winter green cover

A concluding session to discuss the need for increased cooperation agreed on a recommendation from the seminar:

- That stakeholders work together to create a cross-sectorial, cross-border platform to act as a democratic forum for stakeholders from the environmental and agricultural sectors in the Baltic Sea Region to share and discuss experiences and best environmental practices with the aim to reduce nutrient runoff from agriculture and to strengthen cooperation between agricultural and environmental sectors in the region through dialogue.