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Background

Attended by about 400 people in person and several hundred more online, the XXI International Environmental Forum "Baltic Sea Day" was held from 23 to 24 March 2021 in Saint Petersburg, Russia as a hybrid event, with a main focus on the Baltic Sea Action Plan (BSAP), both on its current achievements and updating.

During the forum, other key discussions touched on river basin management, marine spatial planning, adaptation to climate change, implementation of international projects and also environmentally friendly agriculture.

All videos and presentations of the forum (including consolidated final presentation) are available at www.helcom.ru.

Action requested

The Meeting is invited to take note of the results of the round table «Towards environmentally friendly agriculture».

ROUND TABLE RESOLUTION

"TOWARDS ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY AGRICULTURE"

Moderators:

Vladilsav Minin, NGO IPO SASRD, IEEP – BRANCH OF FSAC VIM
Dmitry Maksimov, IEEP – BRANCH OF FSAC VIM
Julia Popkova, Social and business center of the Luga district

Number of participants: 30 (in person) and about than 20 (online)

The round table focused on abatement measures of the negative effect on the environment and water sources from agriculture and other rural activities in rural areas specifically those to be included in the updated Baltic Sea Action Plan.

The round table consisted of two main sessions:

• Organic agriculture and assessment of its environmental impact;

• Agricultural activity near the water bodies: specific features, challenges and required measures to make it environmentally friendly.

Both offline and online presentations addressed the following topics:

• Characteristics and benefits of organic agricultural production;

• Interactive monitoring and logistic patterns of agricultural organic waste use at the regional level (intermediate results of EcoAgRas and WaterDrive projects);

• Findings of sociological research on rural attitudes towards environment protection and the forms of international environmental online training for students (LUGABALT2).

Some presentations underlined the need for closer attention to the soil. The employment of soil resources without further actions to restore soil fertility and organic carbon content and without timely liming results in higher nutrient loss and enhanced soil degradation. The final effect may be the complete loss of soil fertility and dismantling of the food production system and rural environmental services.

After having discussed the proposed issues, the round table participants arrived at the following conclusions:

1. The Russian contact persons in the relevant HELCOM structures need to discuss shortly with the stakeholders a set of agricultural measures to be included in the updated Baltic Sea Action Plan and to communicate the results of the round table discussion concerning the assessment of the relevance of these measures and the ways to implement them.
2. It is important to note that organic agriculture has a significantly lower effect on the environment and greenhouse gas emissions against intensive agriculture. The authorities of the Russian regions located in the Baltic Sea catchment area are recommended to create favourable conditions for the support and further development of organic agriculture.
3. Research and educational institutions are advised to pay more attention to the state-of-the-art scientific support of production and consumption of organic products and the training of relevant specialists. The activities of the All-Russian Research Institute for Plant Protection associated with the development, production and wide distribution of multifunctional bio-fungicides for organic farming also require supporting.

4. The round table participants pointed out that soil is a limited natural resource, the basis for the functioning of ecological systems and the biosphere as a whole. Only fertile, healthy soil ensures long-term efficient agricultural production and recreational activities in rural areas. The authorities should ensure monitoring of agricultural and forest soil status and establish the liability in respect of soil resources users for restoration and maintenance of soil fertility.
5. Two major challenges are addressed by the effective management of agricultural organic waste. Its fertilizing application ensures the conservation and improvement of soil fertility, increasing organic carbon accumulation. At the same time, the environmental pollution with nutrients (primarily, nitrogen) and the greenhouse gas emissions are reduced. The round table participants recommended the regional agricultural managing authorities to get acquainted and introduce into practice the interactive system developed at IEEP – branch of FSAC VIM for environmentally safe distribution of manure between the farms and municipal districts that increases the efficiency of its agricultural application. The environmental monitoring of air and water around the large-scale agricultural enterprises, which pose a threat to the environment, should be organized.
6. The round table participants demonstrated a keen interest in the outcomes of the LUGABALT2 project, especially the ecological education of young people, now in an online form. Educational organizations and relevant authorities should pay more attention to the faster development of environmental education for both young and elder people. The literature on environmental issues using HELCOM information materials needs to be prepared and published for different age groups. The latest reliable environmental information needs to be posted on social networking sites.