



Document title	Proposal for agri-environmental advisor
Code	4-2
Category	DEC
Agenda Item	4 – Future work
Submission date	25.5.2015
Submitted by	Secretariat
Reference	

Background

The attached document contains an outline for the tasks of an agri-environmental advisor to support the work of the HELCOM Agri group.

Action required

The Meeting is invited to consider, amend as might be needed and agree on the proposed description for the agri-environmental advisor with a view of submitting the proposal to HOD 48-2015 (10-11 June 2015).

Proposal for agri-environmental function in the HELCOM Secretariat

Background

Eutrophication has been a major environmental problem in the Baltic Sea for decades, and much of the HELCOM work – both on regional level and in the Contracting Parties, has been invested to estimating inputs of nutrients and quantifying their sources in the sea and the catchment area.

This knowledge is used to seek effective and cost-efficient measures to reduce the inputs of nitrogen and phosphorus. Within the framework of HELCOM and since 80's, Contracting Parties have agreed to implement various measures in urban wastewater treatment sector, land transport, industries on land, agriculture, shipping, ports, aquaculture. Sources outside HELCOM area are also recognized and efforts are being undertaken to address them. Measures being agreed and taken within other regulatory and policy frameworks make a crucial contribution to these efforts.

Substantial progress has been achieved as in general inputs of nitrogen and phosphorus to the sea have been decreasing, leading to the first signs of improvement in the marine environment. Nevertheless, further reduction of nutrient inputs is needed to achieve the good environmental status of the Baltic Sea with regard to eutrophication.

Implementation of measures varies among the Contracting Parties and there are also differences between the countries in terms of reduction potential. HELCOM nutrient reduction scheme provide a common framework where the countries are free to choose the most cost-effective measures to bring down the inputs to the maximum allowable level, representing a healthy marine environment.

Losses of nutrients from agriculture represent substantial share of overall inputs to the sea. The 2013 Ministerial Meeting acknowledged that sustainability of agricultural production is a key to the success of reaching input reductions for Good Environmental Status.

Further, the Contracting Parties agreed (in the 2013 Ministerial Declaration) to strive for the development and application of sustainable agricultural practices with the least environmental impacts on the Baltic Sea, underpinned by technical, economic and regulatory measures.

The common aim is to develop resource efficient, sustainably productive agricultural production systems. Nutrient recycling is an essential element of this.

To reach the nutrient circulation goals introduction of nutrient accounting on farm level is an essential tool. This leads to an increased awareness of the value of nutrients and their efficient use, improved farm nutrient management and a better targeted manure nutrient recycling. To recycle nutrients in an agronomically efficient manner, information on the nutrient content of manure is essential.

To speed up the contribution of the agricultural sector in joint considerations for improvement of the marine environment, the HELCOM Group on Sustainable Agricultural Practices (Agri group) as part of the HELCOM working structure was established.

The Group has been tasked to look into nutrient recycling as an overall theme, and nutrient accounting on farm level and standards for nutrient content in manure as two specific topics. Lead countries: Germany and Denmark, and Finland have been identified for the latter two topics.

Agri-Environmental Advisor

To support the work of the HELCOM Group of Sustainable Agricultural Practices in implementing its work program and the work of the lead countries in their specific topics as well as to contribute to the overall

theme of nutrient recycling, establishment of the Agri-Environment Advisor function in the HELCOM Secretariat is proposed.

The Advisor will help in substantial preparations for the meetings of the Agri group, including of the necessary documentation.

The Advisor will, as an overall goal, help to establish links between developing production systems to save resources and the benefits this brings to the marine environment, in the context of nutrient recycling. This will start from collecting the information on latest developments regarding nutrient recycling and presenting a concise report in the next Agri group meeting.

The Advisor will be employed for September 2015 – December 2016.

The costs will be covered from the HELCOM budget.

More specific tasks:

The Advisor will support Finland as lead party for the topic of nutrient content in manure, including:

1. Facilitate establishing a network of national experts within the Baltic Sea region dealing with standards for nutrients content in manure ,
2. Complement the Baltic Sea overview of the systems for manure standards based on the information collected within the Finnish project,
3. Discuss with national experts possible scenarios (pre-requisites, obstacles, enabling factors) for establishing national upgraded guidelines or standards for nutrient content in manure
4. Prepare a workshop, as may be decided, to discuss in detail the challenges and possible solutions to establishment of more advanced normative manure systems in the countries,
5. Propose next steps to facilitate national work,
6. Prepare an initial outline for guidelines/recommendation on the use of standards.

Initial timetable:

Tasks 1 and 2: September-October 2015;

Task 3: during 2015

Task 4: November 2015,

Tasks 5: spring 2016,

Task 6: October 2016

The Advisor will support Germany and Denmark as lead parties for the topic of nutrient accounting on farm level including:

1. Analyse material from the HELCOM workshop on nutrient bookkeeping containing country specific information on nutrient accounting,
2. Prepare material demonstrating benefits of nutrient accounting on farm level (both economic and environmental),
3. Review available information on methodologies for calculating nutrient balances and prepare reference list,
4. Develop a proposal for how to arrive at national roadmaps for promoting and advancing towards applying by 2018 annual accounting at farm level and prepare for follow up activities.

Initial timetable:

Task 1: in 2015

Task 2: Jan-May 2016

Task 3: June- September 2016

Task 4: October – December 2016