

NATIONAL PRIORITIES FOR HELCOM COUNTRIES

A set of environmental sustainability demands for a healthy Baltic Sea for each country in the region, dependent upon their particular situation

At the upcoming HELCOM Ministerial Meeting on 3 October 2013 in Copenhagen, the region's Environment Ministers will agree on further actions in order to reach the objectives of the HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan (BSAP) from 2007. Many of the actions set out in the BSAP in 2007 have still not been implemented – overall implementation has been slow and patchy. The following document presents a set of proposals for national actions to be taken in order to fulfill the objectives agreed upon by HELCOM countries in 2007.

PRIORITIES RELEVANT FOR ALL HELCOM COUNTRIES

Eutrophication

We foresee that HELCOM countries will adopt the National Nutrient reduction quotas (Country Allocation Reduction Targets) presented at the HELCOM HOD meeting on 23–24 September 2013.

Country	Nitrogen	Phosphorus
Denmark	2 890	38
Estonia	1 800	320
Finland	2 430 + 600*	330 + 30*
Germany	7 170 + 500*	110 + 60*
Latvia	1 670	220
Lithuania	8 970	1 470
Poland	43 610	7 480
Russia	10 380*	3 790*
Sweden	9 240	530

To set up national goals for expansion and development of Organic Farming practices in order to limit over-fertilisation, as organic farming has approximately half of the nitrogen and phosphorus surplus per hectare compared with conventional agriculture.

Fisheries

The HELCOM target for “urgent adoption of measures to minimise bycatch of undersized fish and non-target species by 2012” has not been met by any of the contracting countries. In fact, bycatch of small cod in the trawl fisheries has increased since the plan was adopted.

To take urgent action to improve selectivity in the cod fisheries and phase-out cod bottom-trawling practices with poor selectivity, as well as promote a shift to more selective fishing gear such as bottom-set gillnets and cod-pots.

Sustainable Aquaculture

With the likely expansion of aquaculture under the new EU Common Fisheries Policy (CFP), the Baltic EU governments should provide appropriate guidance on how to manage marine aquaculture in the catchment area in an environmentally friendly way, ensuring that aquaculture will not further contribute to the deterioration of the state of the Baltic Sea, but will allow countries to achieve Good Environmental Status (GES) in line with the Marine Strategy Framework Directive without further delays.

SPECIFIC NATIONAL PRIORITIES FOR EACH HELCOM COUNTRIES

SWEDEN

Marine Protected Areas (MPAs)

- Expand its coverage of marine MPAs from only 6 % to 20 % of its national waters to create an ecologically coherent network. The network should include offshore sites like the central part of the Bothnian Sea, the Bothnian Bay deep, Klints Bank and the north east of Gotland, Middle Bank, and central parts of Kattegat. Also larger coastal areas should be protected, like the northern part of the Sound and the water west of Gothenburg.
- Introduce modern MPA management plans, including measures to prevent negative impacts of fisheries on the ecological values, that the areas are created to protect.

Fisheries

- *Stop catching baby cod!* Take urgent action to improve selectivity in the cod fisheries and phase-out cod bottom-trawling practices with poor selectivity (when more than 3 % of the catch are below minimum landing size), as well as promote a shift to more selective fishing gear such as bottom-set gillnets and cod-pots. Measures to mitigate unwanted species should also include flatfish.
- *End eel fishing!* The European eel is close to extinction and the ICES advises that fisheries should be reduced to zero. Sweden has one of the highest eel fishing mortalities in Europe. This is especially severe, as the eels caught are mainly silver eels on their way to the Sargasso Sea. Many of these eels are also escapees from other Baltic Sea countries which have taken greater measures to protect them.
- *Active protection of weak salmon populations!* Develop a comprehensive Salmon River Management Plan for at least one weak wild salmon river by 2014, to reach active protection in 2015, in accordance with HELCOM BSAP decisions from 2007.

Eutrophication

- Transpose the requirements of the legally binding Annex III - Prevention of pollution from agriculture – to the Helsinki Convention (HELCOM), into national Swedish legislation.
- Introduce mandatory nutrient bookkeeping and nutrient surplus calculation on all farmland to reach nutrient-balanced fertilization practices on farmland by 2014. Reintroduce the tax for Artificial fertilizers to limit overfertilization and develop requirements (for both manure and artificial fertilizers) for low surplus limits of nitrogen and phosphorus per hectare (maximum 50 kg N/ha, year and max. 8 kg P/ha, year). Nutrient-balanced fertilization practices have already been agreed upon within the Intergovernmental Baltic Sea environmental cooperation- HELCOM Convention Annex III- adopted already in 2007, but not implemented.
- List Industrial Animal Farms not fulfilling the HELCOM Annex III, as Hot Spots, in accordance with HELCOM BSAP decision.

FINLAND:

Marine Protected Areas (MPAs)

- Finland 8% protection rate is made less effective both in conservation and management terms by their current MPA's being small and scattered patches of water. In order to meet their obligations under HELCOM on fisheries management, Finland needs to implement offshore MPA's in like Ulkokrunni & Merikalla in the Bothnian Bay and Bogskär in the northern Baltic Proper, but also establish larger coastal sites, like south of Hanko Peninsula, the Quark and south of Aaland Islands, which binds together an number of smaller existing MPAs. Management measures of the new and existing MPAs should rule out destructive practices like bottom-trawling, dredging and sand extraction.
- Finland should develop marine national park network especially in the Gulf of Finland in 2014.

Fisheries

- Establish a project for reintroduction of naturally spawning salmon in former salmon rivers especially for Finnish Gulf of Finland, and develop a comprehensive national salmon management plan, by 2014, to secure the re-establishment of naturally spawning salmon populations, in order to fulfil HELCOM agreements for reintroduction of salmon to Baltic Sea rivers.
- Revise the national Water Act in order to include requirements on obligatory fishways and environmental flows in environmental permits for all new as well as existing dams (e.g. for hydropower plants).
- Strengthen the national regulations on fishing nets (e.g. mesh size) for coastal fisheries in order to secure a sustainable harvest of fish stocks (nowadays fish, e.g. pikeperch, sea-trout, is caught before reproduction).

Eutrophication

- Introduce mandatory nutrient bookkeeping and nutrient surplus calculation on farmland to reach nutrient-balanced fertilisation practices on farmland by 2014. Develop requirements with low surplus limits of nitrogen per hectare (always below 50 kg N/ha, year and maximum 8 kg P/ha, year). The environmental dimension of the new CAP-programme should support low-nutrient-surplus agricultural practices. Nutrient-balanced fertilisation practices have already been agreed upon within the Intergovernmental Baltic Sea environmental cooperation - HELCOM in 2007 - but is not fully implemented.
- List Industrial Animal Farms not fulfilling the HELCOM Annex III, as Hot Spots, in accordance with HELCOM BSAP decision.

RUSSIA:

Marine Protected Areas (MPAs)

Russia has about 5% of its waters protected, including both coastal and offshore waters. The main ask for the Russian government is to finally finalize the designation of the Ingermandlandsky Nature Reserve in Russian part of the Gulf of Finland including management plans to secure the protection of marine biodiversity values. This reserve has been on table already for at least 10 years and in the previous HELCOM Ministerial Meeting the aim was to finally officially designate the area. Also there is a need for more and better managed coastal protected areas taking into account HELCOM recommendations and including fisheries management.

Fisheries

Develop a comprehensive Luga River salmon management plan by 2014, in order to safeguard and expand the wild salmon population, as well as control the illegal river fisheries (to fulfil implementation HELCOM BSAP actions related to salmon).

Eutrophication

- Many Industrial Animal Farms in Russia are simply dumping the manure at forest soils or in lagoons that leaks nutrient pollution to rivers and the Baltic Sea. Introduce, by 2014, requirements for proper manure storage, recycle and use the manure nutrients for farmlands as fertilizers, applying nutrient-balanced fertilization practices, in accordance with HELCOM agreements (Helsinki Convention, Annex III) for Industrial Animal Farms in Russia.
- List Industrial Animal Farms not fulfilling the HELCOM Annex III, as Hot Spots, in accordance with HELCOM BSAP decision
- Allocate federal financing for all state-owned Industrial Animal Farms in Russian Baltic Sea catchment, to handle the manure in a proper way, in accordance with HELCOM requirements.
- Transpose the requirements of the legally binding Annex III - Prevention of pollution from agriculture – to the Helsinki Convention (HELCOM), into national Russian legislation.

ESTONIA:

Marine Protected Areas (MPAs)

Estonia has 18 % of its waters protected, but very little of this includes offshore waters including offshore waters, particularly in places such as the Gulf of Finland, Estonia would show commitment to protecting the marine biodiversity found in its waters. Also, the existing network need to be better managed, like the larger Väinameri protected area located between Hiiumaa, Saaremaa and Estonian mainland.

Fisheries

Remove the Sindi Dam in Pärnu River, or develop a fishway, for an open fish passage so wild salmonids populations (salmon and sea-trout) could recover and the Pärnu river catchment upstreams could become an important river for recreational salmonid fisheries.

Eutrophication

- Introduce mandatory nutrient bookkeeping and nutrient surplus calculation on all farmland to reach nutrient-balanced fertilization practices on farmland by 2014. Develop requirements with low surplus limits of nitrogen per hectare (always below 50 kg N/ha, year). Nutrient-balanced fertilization practices have already been agreed upon within the Intergovernmental Baltic Sea environmental cooperation – HELCOM - but is not implemented.
- Introduce taxation for use of Chemical fertilizers to limit overfertilization and develop requirements (for both manure and artificial fertilizers) for low surplus limits of nitrogen and phosphorus per hectare (at least maximum 50 kg N/ha, year and max. 8 kg P/ha, year).
- List Industrial Animal Farms not fulfilling the HELCOM Annex III, as Hot Spots, in accordance with HELCOM BSAP decision.

LATVIA:

Marine Protected Areas (MPAs)

Latvia has 15 % of its waters protected. These areas cover rocky reefs and sandy bottoms hosting wide variety of species, like sea weeds which form dense meadows and serve as spawning grounds for fish, such as herring. Management plans of these areas should address and ensure the protection of the key species, and ensure that a wider range of biodiversity as included in HELCOM recommendations is being protected, including fisheries management.

Fisheries

- Latvia has 10 wild salmon rivers, many with weak salmon populations. No other Baltic Sea Region country has so many wild salmon rivers as Latvia, giving Latvia a special responsibility to guarantee safeguarding of Baltic salmon. Latvia should take the lead for Baltic salmon management of weak salmon stocks and implement measures for

“active protection of threatened salmon populations”, signed in 2007 within the HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan.

- Develop, by 2014, at least one comprehensive wild salmon river management plan.

Eutrophication

- Introduce mandatory nutrient bookkeeping and nutrient surplus calculation on all farmland to reach nutrient-balanced fertilisation practices on farmland by 2014. Develop requirements with low surplus limits of nitrogen per hectare (always below 50 kg N/ha, year). Nutrient-balanced fertilization practices have already been agreed upon within the Intergovernmental Baltic Sea environmental cooperation – HELCOM - but is not implemented.
- 2. List Industrial Animal Farms not fulfilling the HELCOM Annex III, as Hot Spots, in accordance with HELCOM BSAP decision.

LITHUANIA:

Marine Protected Areas (MPAs)

Lithuania has 12 % of its waters protected. These areas cover zone of reefs including the moraine ridges as well as patches of stones, gravel and sandy bottoms of the coast and parts of the deeper waters too. Important benthic species and habitats include many species of algae grow on the stony parts, and serving as spawning areas for Baltic herring and other fish species. Blue mussel dominate (90 %) among bottom-living animals, forming the basis for a special diversified bottom community. The quantity and quality of the Lithuanian MPA network need to be enhanced by designating offshore areas and extend the scope of the management plans to address wider range of biodiversity as included in HELCOM recommendations and including fisheries management.

Fisheries

Phase-out cod bottom-trawling practices with poor selectivity (when more than 3 % of the catch are below minimum landing size) and change to better selectivity gear such as bottom-set gillnets and cod-pots. Measures to mitigate unwanted species should also include flatfish, which severely impacts the selectivity of current trawls.

Eutrophication

- Introduce mandatory nutrient bookkeeping and nutrient surplus calculation on all farmland to reach nutrient-balanced fertilisation practices on farmland by 2014. Develop requirements with low surplus limits of nitrogen per hectare (always below 50 kg N/ha, year). Nutrient-balanced fertilization practices have already been agreed upon within the Intergovernmental Baltic Sea environmental cooperation – HELCOM - but is not implemented.
- Establish, by 2014, a list of Industrial Animal Farms in Lithuania not fulfilling the requirements of HELCOM agreements (Helsinki Convention, Annex III).

- Transpose the requirements of the legally binding Annex III - Prevention of pollution from agriculture – to the Helsinki Convention (HELCOM), into national Lithuanian legislation.

POLAND:

Marine Protected Areas (MPAs)

- Poland is having 20 % of its water protected. The sites are relatively large and mainly coastal areas, and the management plans are under preparation. More offshore sites should be protected, like Middle Bank which functions as a nursery area for cod. Poland should also secure the proper management of existing protected areas, in particular the offshore Slupsk Bank, by phasing-out of bottom-trawling and other harmful activities that can destroy the biodiversity in this area. The management plans should address wider range of biodiversity as included in HELCOM recommendations and including fisheries management.
- Special protection is needed for Baltic harbour porpoises, by expansion of the Puck Bay and Hel Peninsula area for harbour porpoise.

Fisheries

- As one of countries holding a significant part of the cod quota, Poland should take urgent action to improve selectivity in the cod fisheries and phase-out cod bottom-trawling practices with poor selectivity (when more than 3 % of the catch are below minimum landing size), as well as promote a shift to more selective fishing gear such as bottom-set gillnets and cod-pots. Measures to mitigate unwanted species should also include flatfish, which severely impacts the selectivity of current trawls. This should be done within the context of multi-annual management plans.
- Poland is one of the countries in favour of lowering the current Minimum Landing Size for cod from 38 to 35 cm, which is in direct contradiction to the HELCOM BSAP targets to avoid catching juveniles and to restore a natural age/size distribution in fish stocks. We call on decision-makers not to take this action, which could again seriously jeopardise the Baltic cod stocks.
- Establish a project for reintroduction of naturally spawning salmon in former salmon rivers in Poland and restoration of river connectivity, and develop a comprehensive salmon management plan, by 2014, to secure the re-establishment of at least one naturally spawning salmon population, to fulfil HELCOM agreements for reintroduction of salmon to Baltic Sea rivers.

Eutrophication

- Introduce mandatory nutrient bookkeeping and nutrient surplus calculation on all farmland to reach nutrient-balanced fertilization practices on farmland by 2014 (small-sized farms, up to 20 ha, may be excluded, as Poland has so many farmers). Develop requirements with low surplus limits of nitrogen per hectare (at least always below 50 kg N / ha, year). Nutrient-balanced fertilisation practices have already been

agreed upon within the Intergovernmental Baltic Sea environmental cooperation (HELCOM), but is not being implemented.

- Transpose the requirements of the legally binding Annex III - Prevention of pollution from agriculture – to the Helsinki Convention (HELCOM), into national Polish legislation.
- Introduce mandatory code of the best agricultural practices, including for example buffer zones along the fields and proper storage of manure (according to HELCOM recommendations).
- Establish, by 2014, a list of Industrial Animal Farms in Poland not fulfilling the requirements of HELCOM agreements (Helsinki Convention, Annex III).
- Raise the ambition to expand Organic Farming in Poland, to reach 5 % of Polish farmland as organic in year 2016, to limit the overfertilization of Polish farmland, as organic farming has approximately half of the nitrogen and phosphorus surplus per hectare compared to conventional agriculture.
- Increase cooperation between the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of the Environment in fulfilling the provisions of the Helsinki Convention and the BSAP.

GERMANY:

Marine Protected Areas (MPAs)

- Germany has 45 % of its waters protected. These areas cover reefs and mussel banks and sandy bottoms being a home to diverse ecological communities. Of major importance are large quantities of red algae and kelp offering shelter and food for many threatened small organisms, fish and marine mammal species, including harbour porpoise. Most of the management plans are under preparation and these should ensure the protection of full range of biodiversity taking into account HELCOM recommendations and including fisheries management.
- Designate all German MPAs as Baltic Sea Protected Areas (BSPAs)
- 2. Transpose protection measures in MPAs effectively via management plans and regulations, especially concerning bycatch, fisheries management, mining and industrial development.

Fisheries

- *Stop catching baby cod!* Take urgent action to improve selectivity in the cod fisheries and phase-out cod bottom-trawling practices with poor selectivity (when more than 3 % of the catch are below minimum landing size), as well as promote a shift to more selective fishing gear such as bottom-set gillnets and cod-pots. Measures to mitigate unwanted species should also include flatfish.
- Germany is one of the countries in favour of lowering of the Minimum Landing Size for cod from 38 to 35 cm, which is in direct contradiction to the HELCOM BSAP targets to avoid catching juveniles and to restore a natural age/size distribution in fish stocks. We call on decision-makers not to take this action, which could again seriously jeopardise the Baltic cod stocks.

- Strengthen the monitoring and control of unreported catches, particularly for cod and in recreational fisheries.

Eutrophication

- Introduce more effective control of existing regulations on maximum allowable nutrient surplus on farmland, and consider lowering the limits for nutrient surplus to the level of approx. 30 kg N / ha, year, to secure implementation of WFD and the Good Ecological Water status in inland waters, and to secure Good Environmental Status (GES) in German exclusive economic zone (EEZ) in the Baltic Sea.
- Establish, by 2014, a list of Industrial Animal Farms in Germany not fulfilling the requirements of HELCOM agreements (Helsinki Convention, Annex III).

DENMARK:

Marine Protected Areas (MPAs)

Denmark has 17 % of its waters protected and with the majority of its sites having management plans, there is still more to be done. Some important species and communities (such as Haploids and horse mussels) are not protected sufficiently in terms of management and areas. To protect these new MPAs should be established in Kattegat. Also coastal areas like the northern part of the Sound and Little Belt should be protected. By doing so, Denmark combine smaller, MPAs into larger ones would enlarge the overall coverage as well as making them more efficient and specific from a management and conservation point of view.

Fisheries

- *Stop catching baby cod!* Take urgent action to improve selectivity in the cod fisheries and phase-out cod bottom-trawling practices with poor selectivity (when more than 3 % of the catch are below minimum landing size), as well as promote a shift to more selective fishing gear such as bottom-set gillnets and cod-pots. Measures to mitigate unwanted species should also include flatfish.
- Denmark has been one of the countries driving a lowering of the Minimum Landing Size for cod from 38 to 35 cm, which is in direct contradiction to the HELCOM BSAP targets to avoid catching juveniles and to restore a natural age/size distribution in fish stocks. We call upon decision-makers not to support such changes in landing sizes, which could again seriously jeopardise the Baltic cod stocks.
- *End eel fishing!* The European eel is close to extinction and the ICES advises that fisheries should be reduced to zero, but Denmark keeps fishing for eels. This is especially severe, as the eels caught are mainly silver eels on their way to the Sargasso Sea. Many of these eels are also escapees from other Baltic Sea countries which have taken greater measures to protect them.

Eutrophication

- Continue annual nutrient accounting at farm and field level, and develop environmentally tolerable national levels of nutrient surplus in fertilization practices or alternatively limiting economical optimum fertilization or corresponding measures, to secure implementation of WFD and the Good Ecological Water status in inland waters, and to secure Good Environmental Status (GES) in Danish exclusive economic zone (EEZ) in the Baltic Sea.
- List Industrial Animal Farms not fulfilling the HELCOM Annex III, as Hot Spots, in accordance with HELCOM BSAP decision.