

SWEDEN

Farm's performance, restructuring & modernisation

Location

Nationwide

Programming period

2014 – 2020

Priority

P2 – Competitiveness

Measure

M16 - Cooperation

Funding

Total budget 9 293 781 (SEK)

RDP contribution 6 472 385

(SEK)

Private / own 2 821 396

(SEK)

Project duration

2019 to 2023

Project promoter

WWF

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www.wwf.se/hav-och-fiske/baltic-stewardship/

A CAP-funded cooperation project to strengthen the competitiveness of agricultural companies that minimise nutrient leakage, thereby contributing to the long-term goal of minimising agricultural nutrient leakage in the Baltic Sea by 2045.

Summary

Today, the Baltic Sea is considered one of the world's most polluted seas. Eutrophication is one of the biggest challenges and nutrient leakage from agriculture is a major source of eutrophication. Led by the Swedish Farmers Association (LRF) and the World Wildlife Foundation (WWF), this project brings together actors from

different parts of the food value chain to encourage and facilitate their engagement with the challenge of increasing plant nutrient cycling to reduce nutrient leakage into the Baltic Sea. The participants are given the opportunity to jointly define their own goals and explore new technical solutions, methods, and business models that may help them to reduce nutrient leakage from their farms.



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Project Results

Ten companies in the food chain and 25 farmers have joined the cluster.

Information about eutrophication has reached 140 000 members of the Swedish Farmers Association (LRF) at least once per project year.

Information put out as part of WWF's communication campaign for influencing food consumers can reach between 50 000-110 000 people per post.

The project's policy messaging has reached the Riksdag's Environment and Agriculture Committee as well as the Ministry of Trade and Industry.

Lessons & Recommendations

- ❑ The partnership between WWF and LRF has been very important for the success of the project, as has the mix of actors from throughout the entire food value chain.
- ❑ Maintaining internal communication and knowledge sharing during the difficult COVID-19 period was a challenge, but the project team's efforts paid off.
- ❑ Encouraging high levels of interaction and discussion on the project's dedicated online platform has proved to be more difficult than expected.



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Context

Agriculture is an important sector of the Baltic Sea region's economy. It employs 2.5 million people and accounts for a third of EU agricultural production, but it is also considered one of the world's most polluted seas. Eutrophication is one of the biggest challenges and nutrient leakage from agriculture is a major source of eutrophication.

Today, the Baltic Sea contains five times as much nitrogen and eight times as much phosphorus as it did 100 years ago. This is less than in the 1980s because much has been done to reduce nutrient leakage since then; but nevertheless, an area the size of 60 000 square kilometres is now completely oxygen-free, which is the worst figure ever.

This shows the crucial importance of continued measures and the need for new business models and practices for those who produce and trade agricultural goods from the Baltic Sea region.

Objectives

Led by the Swedish Farmers Association (LRF) and the World Wildlife Foundation (WWF), this project aimed to establish a cluster of companies from different parts of the food value chain to address the challenge as to how to increase nutrient absorption as a way of reducing nutrient leakage. The project vision is for sustainable and resource-efficient agricultural production to exist alongside a prosperous, healthy marine environment.

Activities

Activity 1 - Project management. The coordination of the entire project was ensured by the project team, the steering group, and the scientific reference group. The latter was formed to contribute insights into the latest research on eutrophication, agriculture, and innovation / business development.

Activity 2 - Cluster activities. Clusters are small operational groups that each focus on a development area (minimising eutrophication, business models that reward reduced nutrient leakage, increased nutrient circulation, etc.). Together, they identify potential solutions – such as partnerships, business models, working practices – and outline plans for exploring them alongside the relevant stakeholders and subject specialists. Clusters organise workshops and meetings for knowledge sharing and exchange, as well as site visits to farms and production facilities.

Activity 3 - Knowledge bank. The knowledge gaps identified through the cluster activities are addressed as far as possible through the production of reports, lectures, webinars, etc., or they become the subject of external monitoring activity (concerning policy, research, investment, and innovation, for example). Cluster participants and external contributors share their respective knowledge, which is gathered on the project's website.

Activity 4 - Internal and external communication. To raise awareness on the topic of nutrient leakage, the project's aims and objectives are presented at conferences and events where agricultural competitiveness and the role of food companies are discussed, both in Sweden and in other Baltic Sea countries. In addition to cluster-/action area-specific information on the website, project actions and findings are also communicated via print press and social media.

Activity 5 - Policy impact. The cluster activities also contribute to a broader set of advocacy actions, working to influence policy messaging and decision making. All contributors to the project jointly support this effort and that lends greater weight to the arguments set forth. In this area, the WWF has well-established channels for dialogue with decision makers, both in Sweden and the EU.

Main Results

Ten companies in the food chain and 25 farmers have joined the cluster.

Information about eutrophication has reached 140 000 members of the Swedish Farmers Association (LRF) at least once per project year. Information put out as part of WWF's communication campaign for influencing food consumers can reach between 50 000-110 000 people per post.

The project's policy messaging on key topics – such as self-sufficiency in plant nutrition, closing the plant nutrient cycle, incentives for the use of manure, measures to prevent nutrient leakage and bio-leakage from farms – has reached the Riksdag's Environment and Agriculture Committee as well as the Ministry of Trade and Industry.

Key lessons

It required a lot of effort from the project management team to maintain internal communication and knowledge sharing during the difficult COVID-19 period, but their efforts paid off.

The mix of actors from the entire food value chain has been a unique aspect of this project and has resulted in new ideas and the identification of new priority areas for future action.

The partnership between WWF and LRF has been very important for the success of the project and the strategy of initially focusing on internal activities – producing well-anchored results before external communication – has led to clear messaging and strong impact.

Establishing new online platforms that encourage high levels of interaction and discussion linked to the project's activities has proved to be difficult. The team are now looking at alternative concepts and platforms to see how this kind of interaction can be encouraged and sustained going forward.

Additional sources of information

n/a