

## **Priority 9. To reinforce sustainable agriculture, forestry and fisheries**

30.6.2010

*Priority Coordinator: State Secretary, Ms. Minna-Mari Kaila, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Finland  
(starting from 28.6.2010)*

### **1) General progress of the priority area**

#### Kick-off meeting

The kick-off meeting of Priority 9 took place on 7-8 October 2009 in Helsinki, Finland. The aim of the meeting was to gather together representatives of the ministries responsible for the issues under Priority 9. Another objective was to agree how to organise the implementation of the priority. The meeting was divided into three parts according to the subject: agriculture (including rural development as well as food and feed legislation), forestry and fisheries.

The relevant ministries from 8 EU member states in the Baltic Sea Region as well as representatives of the European Commission were invited to the meeting. Russia was invited as an observer. The total number of participants in the meeting was around 40. There were participants from each of the 9 countries and the Commission.

At the kick-off meeting it was confirmed that Finland will be the overall coordinator of Priority 9. Sweden was confirmed to act as the coordinator on fisheries. Lithuania expressed its interest to take over the coordination of some of the points under Priority 9 as well. During the autumn 2009 it was agreed that Lithuania would be the coordinator of the rural development.

In general, the participation in implementation of Priority 9 was decided to be kept open. Any organisation in the Baltic Sea Region that has expertise in the subjects that are covered by Priority 9 and interested to participate is welcome to do so.

#### Second joint meeting

The second joint meeting took place on 21-22 January 2010 in Helsinki. In addition to the ministries, also other relevant public bodies, organisations and research institutes were invited. The member states were asked to send the invitation to the respective organisations and other stakeholders of their country. There were around 150 participants at the meeting representing the eight EU member states and the European Commission (DG-Regio, DG-MARE, DG-AGRI, DG-ENV).

The major part of the second meeting consisted of workshops that were running in parallel. The workshops were divided into five different subjects covered by Priority 9:

- 1) Agriculture
- 2) Rural development
- 3) Food and feed legislation
- 4) Forestry
- 5) Fisheries.

Furthermore, there was a separate meeting for the representatives of the ministries in the beginning and at the end of the second meeting. The representatives of the ministries were agreed to form a steering group for the implementation of Priority 9.

The general objective of the second joint meeting was to discuss the future actions, the flagship projects and potential sources of funding as well as agree on timetable and responsible organisations for the different activities. A road map 2010 for each of the five sectors was finalised after the meeting.

The third joint meeting of Priority 9 will be arranged on 18th November 2010 in Helsinki.

#### General implementation of Priority 9

State Secretary of the Finnish Ministry of agriculture and forestry is the main coordinator of Priority 9. In addition, there is a contact person in general issues of Priority 9 as well as substance related contact persons who are experts in the five different sectors under the priority at the ministry of agriculture and forestry. The Finnish contact persons are in regular contact with the coordinators in fisheries (Sweden) and rural development (Lithuania) as well as to the respective flagship projects.

The fisheries part of priority area 9 is coordinated by the Swedish Ministry of Agriculture. The priority area coordinator is in continuous contact with flagship project leaders to follow progress. The coordinator also receives proposals for new flagship projects. The coordinator is further involved in fund raising.

Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of Lithuania is the coordinator of the rural development part in Priority 9. This includes the **common action** under the cooperative action “Enhance the combined effects of the rural development programmes“, dedicated to the development of the sustainable rural development in the Baltic Sea Region. The common action related to the future of the Common Agricultural Policy after 2013 will concentrate on joint learning and training how to implement the Rural Development Programme. Those activities will aim at both a better implementation of the on-going programme and collecting good ideas for better rural development policy after 2013. The principal participants of this common action would be EU member state’s representatives from managing authorities (ministries) together with social, economic and institutional partners.

The stakeholders of Priority 9 were active in commenting the contents of the EUSBSR Action Plan that was under modification in early 2010. As a result, several new flagship projects were introduced in the new version of the Action Plan. Priority 9 now consists of in total 11 flagship projects. In addition, one flagship project in forestry (9.7) includes in total nine sub-projects. At the moment, some of the flagship projects or sub-projects have already

received funding for their activities either from EU programmes or other funding sources, while others have submitted an application for funding or intend to do so during the second half of 2010. Some of the flagship projects are being implemented through cooperation between the national authorities and, for the time being, do not plan to apply for separate project funding.

### Progress and challenges

The main challenge for the second half of 2010 will be to ensure funding for those flagship projects that are still in the phase of application. Lack of funding would endanger the implementation of the flagship projects and, thus, the implementation of respective parts of Priority 9 and the Baltic Sea Strategy. Regarding the coordination activities in Priority 9, absence of technical assistance for arrangements of joint meetings will complicate the implementation of the Baltic Sea Strategy as well.

After the challenges in lack of funding as well as in general organisation of activities has been solved, the implementation of Priority 9 can be started in full. Another challenge will be to raise public awareness about the EUSBSR and to spread information about the implementation of the Action Plan. It is evident that more information would be needed both at government and at the stakeholder level.

As the implementation process has started only recently it is too early to assess its benefits. The transnational cooperation within Priority 9 is expected to help in finding joint solutions to BSR wide problems. Learning from each other and developing of new working processes would thus contribute both to better understanding of each other as well as more efficient implementation of joint activities, e.g. by avoiding overlapping of work.

## **2) Progress for each action**

- ***“Continue the adaptation of the Baltic fishing fleet capacity to the available resources”:***

- No activities

- ***“Improve the control and stop illegal fishing”:***

- No activities

- ***“Develop sustainable strategies for wood”:***

The development takes place at various levels independently but in close cooperation with the EUSBSR. Activities are supported and facilitated by the Nordic Council of Ministers, and more concretely, through the cooperation structures of the Nordic Forest Research Co-operation Committee (SNS). Potentially, the development of sustainable strategies for wood is one of the main directions in the establishment of new Centres of Advanced Research (CAR) under the SNS. In the long run, the strategies developed would be placed in the

broader context of national forest programmes or similar and / or national renewable energy plans, balancing supply of wood raw material to the forest-based industries, renewable energy development, nature conservation strategies and wood mobilisation.

- ***“Enhance the combined effects of the Rural Development Programmes”***:

The coordinator is Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of Lithuania. The principal participants of this common action are EU member state representatives from managing authorities (ministries) together with social, economic and institutional partners. A system of joint learning and training will be addressed to public officers working with the Rural Development Programme (RDP) implementation. Final beneficiaries in the member states should be involved as well as they can identify the most urgent issues to be solved, Rural Networks and Managing Authorities will be invited to discuss together possible ways of simplification of implementation i.e. application processes, payments and funding etc.

State of play: Lithuania, as the coordinator of this common action, prepared a *Questionnaire on common action "CAP after 2013 - joint learning and training in implementation of the RDP"* in accordance with the coordinating area and sent it to the member states seeking to identify their concrete demands. The questionnaire was orientated to member state representatives from the managing authorities, their social and economic partners seeking to identify commonly actual questions, cooperation model, frequency of the meetings, etc.

Problems encountered and solutions found: all member states in the Baltic Sea Region have their own national or federal (regional) Rural Development Programmes. As the Member States elaborated their own National Strategic Plans and consequently Rural Development Programmes addressing their specific needs, the selections of measures and allocations of funds differ from Program to Program. The administrative systems for implementation also reflect a variation of possible solutions. Despite of existing flexibility within the RDPs, effective spending of the public money and achievement of the programme goals remain key challenge for all Member States. Moreover the common European framework leads to numerous similarities during the implementation of RDP, including both limitations and opportunities. According to this the decision to organise and implement this common action was taken.

Next steps: the generalisation of the member states' answers to the questionnaire prepared, identification of the most appropriate ways and forms for the communication through the member states' authorities, identification of the more concrete content for the organisation of the common action.

Expected finalisation: the common action related to the future of Common Agricultural Policy after 2013 will concentrate on joint learning and training how to implement the Rural Development Programmes. Those activities will aim at both a better implementation of the on-going programme and collecting good ideas for a better rural development policy after 2013. The aim of the common action regarding the Common Agricultural Policy after 2013 is to advance improvement and better functioning RDPs in the Common Agricultural Policy after 2013. The joint learning about the state –of –the –art and new concept is the measure to achieve it.

- ***“Develop strategies for a sustainable use of and breeding with forest-, animal- and plant genetic resources”:***

- Project "Management and conservation of forest tree genetic resources in the Baltic Sea" under the EFINORD flagship directly support this goal. The project consists of two sub-projects: evolutionary genetic pockets for broadleaved tree species and Cooperation in breeding of Norway spruce are at start-up phase. They received financing (400 000 DKK in total) from the Nordic Council of Ministers (NCM).

- ***“Animal health and disease control”:***

- No activities.

- ***“Enhance the combined effects of the European Fisheries Fund (EFF) programmes”:***

- No activities.

### **3) Progress for each flagship project**

- ***9.1. “Develop and improve coordination and cooperation among Member States and stakeholders”:***

To develop and improve coordination and cooperation among Baltic Sea Member States and with stakeholders a fisheries forum within EU strategy for the Baltic Sea region is being developed. The forum is called Baltfish. More specifically it aims at improving and strengthening coordination and cooperation of fisheries administrators among Baltic Sea member states, but also among the administrations and other key stakeholders relevant for the Baltic Sea fisheries. It is a forum with a regional perspective for exchanging ideas, views and information and a forum that can facilitate joint forces in various concrete projects aiming at achieving sustainable fisheries in the Baltic Sea.

The idea is to facilitate ongoing processes by enhanced information and communication, but also to find synergies between ongoing work within these bodies and the member states. This could be one way of avoiding duplication of work as well as avert potential misunderstandings and misinterpretations. The core of Baltfish is a high level group (HLG) consisting of the fisheries directors of the Baltic Sea member states as well as the director of Baltic Sea fisheries at the Commission.

The high level group will meet on a regular basis to discuss issues of common interest. The high-level group may invite other stakeholders that are deemed relevant for the discussions in the group. This includes BSRAC, Helcom and ICES that are all key organisations in the management of fisheries in the Baltic Sea. A larger meeting is expected to be organised on a regional basis (e.g. once a year). The first Baltfish-meeting was held in Stockholm 7-8 June,

2010. In addition to fisheries administrators, and abovementioned organisations, stakeholders including NGO:s and the industry as well as the scientific community participated.

Leader of this flagship project is the Swedish Ministry of Agriculture. However, the chairmanship of Baltfish will change each year. The project is expected to continue without a pre-determined endpoint.

- **9.2. “Eradicating discards”:**

Within the Baltic Sea fisheries, fish are thrown over board as under-sized fish are not allowed to be landed. This is a loss of resources and can reduce future catches. There is a broad consensus in EU that discards should be eliminated. This was addressed in a workshop on discards in Copenhagen, June 2009, and became a flagship project within the Baltic Sea Strategy in autumn 2009. The issue was considered in the Stockholm Declaration in October 2009 and decisions were taken in the October Council, 2009.

A Technical Working Group was established in spring 2010 with two meetings held in April and May. Issues that were discussed includes revision of delimitation of the present closed areas, further seasonal or permanent closed areas, further effort restrictions, mesh size increase 2010, further increase in mesh size/selectivity, technical changes to present gear, new gear development, change in landing size, a discard ban, use of landed discards, fully documented fishery, control provision necessary in light of 2010 measures and required control levels at sea to eliminate discards.

The group includes participants from Baltic Sea member states, BSRAC, scientific experts and gear technologists. It is chaired by the European Commission. Conclusions of the Technical Working Groups first two meetings were presented at the Baltfish-meeting in Stockholm 7-8 June, 2010. This flagship project will end with a completed road map in place to guide future action on how to eliminate discards in the Baltic Sea.

Project leader is the Danish Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Fisheries. Depending on when the road map is in place the project is expected to be finished by the end of 2010 or first half of 2011.

- **9.3. “Sustainable rural development”:**

Description of the project<sup>1</sup>: In order to narrow down the area of the co-operation within the flagship project two themes were agreed at the Priority 9 meeting in January 2010: “Youth in rural areas” and “Innovation in rural areas – how to create an innovation friendly climate”. Cooperation between the National Rural Networks and the Local Action Groups is main tool for the flagship project but other rural actors are not excluded from the project.

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- <sup>1</sup> According to the Action Plan: Projects must be developed that bring together people in the region for sustainable rural development and livelihood, such as supporting the environment for innovations, youth, rural tourism, agriculture and forestry. New practices on using an integrated approach should be developed. (Lead: Poland and Sweden; Deadline for progress review: to be determined).

The leaders of the project are the Swedish National Rural Network and the Polish Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development. The activities under the flagship have been covered by financial resources of the National Rural Network or Leader resources;

At the moment, a list of good project examples for the selection has been collected and the selection criteria for the project have been elaborated. As the issue of sustainable rural development is very broad a special questionnaire was prepared in order to focus the topic. The outcome of the questionnaire was basis for further discussion.

By October 2010 draft Action Plan for 2011 is to be elaborated. The draft will be discussed during the joint meeting in Poland in September 2010. The Action Plan may include actions such as: common conference to choose good projects; a common publication on Rural Youth and/or Innovation; common transnational cooperation actions and others. The finalisation of the flagship project has not yet been determined.

- **9.4. “Ensure sustainable fishing”:**

The objective of this flagship project that will start in the second half of 2010 is to ensure sustainable fishing. Salmon fishery will be used as a case having a broad approach to how sustainable fishing can be sustained. It aims at improving status, and safeguarding genetic variability, of salmon populations in the Baltic Sea. A common ground on issues of high relevance to the sustainability of salmon fisheries with focus on population status, genetic and institutional diversity will be achieved. Important will be to support the implementation of the EU long term management plan for the Baltic salmon and institutional coordination across scales. Project leader is the Swedish Board of Fisheries. It is a 3-year project finishing in 2013.

- **9.5. “Encourage sustainable aquaculture production methods”:**

Following the discussions at the second joint meeting for Priority Area 9 in Helsinki 21-22.1.2010 the planning of the aquaculture flagship project continued. The idea developed to have a project for preparing a “Code of Best Practices for Sustainable Aquaculture in the Baltic Region”. The Code would set Baltic specific standards for relevant aquaculture issues such as:

- Recycling of phosphorus in the Baltic Sea Region by using feed made of pelagics or other fish caught in the Baltic Sea
- Siting (spatial planning) of aquaculture farms
- Offshore aquaculture
- Recirculation and inland aquaculture technologies
- Feeding technologies
- Fish releases
- Environmental permits

- Incentives for the application of Best Practices

The leader of the project will most probably be director Unto Eskelinen from the Finnish Game and Fisheries Research Institute. The financing for the project will be applied for when the project plan is finalised. The project will be based on expert work and their meetings, which indicates that the project management needs funding as well as participation by experts and technical assistance for meetings.

The developed project idea was presented at the Baltfish meeting in Stockholm on 7-8.6.2010 (see description above for flagship on cooperation in fisheries). The idea of a Code found support and it was agreed that Member States in June would nominate experts to participate in the work. The group of experts would prepare a Draft Code to be presented at the Baltfish meeting in June 2011. The objective is to have a Code that is widely accepted and implemented in decisions that affect Baltic aquaculture.

The Finnish Game and Fisheries Research Institute would apply for funding of the project and its management. This is planned to take place during autumn 2010.

- **9.6. “Create a network on the implementation of EU food and feed legislation”:**

This is a fast-track project, based on the assumption that there is already substantial intergovernmental cooperation concerning food and feed legislation implementation in the Baltic Sea Region. The leader of this project is Dr. Sebastian Hielm from the Food Safety Unit at the Department of Food and Health at the Finnish Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry. Two meetings have been held in Helsinki in October 2009 and January 2010 in conjunction with Priority Area 9 meetings. Meeting arrangements have been financed by the Finnish Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry while participants have had to finance their travel and accommodation expenses themselves.

At the meeting it was agreed to focus on following topics:

- harmonization of dioxins monitoring and detection methods in fish from Baltic sea within Baltic and Nordic countries;
- investigation of best practises for minimising administrative burden for food and feed business operators within Baltic and Nordic countries;
- development and harmonization of good hygiene practise guides for primary production of food and feed, investigation of best practises of official control in this area within Baltic and Nordic countries;
- organization of simulation exercises for eradication of outbreaks of animal contagious diseases within Baltic and Nordic countries;

The assumption that creating this flagship project out of existing regional networks would be a straightforward task has not been substantiated. Indeed, there has been an ongoing cooperation in this field for several years as part of the work coordinated and partly financed by the Nordic Council of Ministers, but enlarging this endeavour is not easy. Inclusion of the Baltic States (EE, LV and LT) into the Nordic cooperation has been tried

for some years, but has unfortunately been suspended in the area of food safety in 2009 because of lack of interest. Getting the remaining Baltic Sea states (PL, DE and RU) to take part in a so far unspecified 'network on the implementation of EU food and feed legislation' seems to be an uphill struggle as well: either the proposed areas of networking have been too important to deal with on the regional level (instead of dealing straight in/with Brussels) or then the issues have been of such limited interest that governments have not deemed it worthwhile to engage their experts in the work. One area originally included in the flagship project which seems to generate real interest among several Baltic Sea governments is veterinary contingency planning, but this has now evolved into its own flagship project (9.11. Reinforcement of animal health and disease control).

As a next step, Finland will once more try to find some suitable areas for networking within the flagship project, possibly in the feed legislation sector. We have reserved a meeting date and venue (November 18, 2010; Helsinki) for this purpose. It has also been suggested that in the future the flagship could arrange regional meetings on current food and feed legislation issues immediately before EU meetings in Brussels, which might be a good way of getting the relevant policy makers to participate in discussions on the possible Baltic Sea-dimensions of the food and feed matter currently at hand. However, if interest for this flagship does not pick up in the fall, we propose to consider its termination at the end of 2010.

- **9.7. “Sustainable forest management in the Baltic Sea Region - EFINORD”:**

The Flagship of sustainable forest management in the Baltic Sea Region was established under the newly founded EFINORD, the regional centre of the European Forest Institute. EFINORD interacts with EU especially in policy related issues and integrates forest research of the Nordic region into Europe. The network should focus on sustainable forest management, reflecting regional issues; primarily biomass production and ecosystem services, which are high on the agenda for forest owners, industry, and society at large. In this sense, EFINORD is well suited to facilitate cooperation and strengthen synergies between the forest projects under the EUSBSR including reporting and information exchange between the projects. EFINORD flagship consists of several independently implemented activities, or projects.

The leader of the project is Dr. Tatu Torniainen from the Forestry Department of the Finnish Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry. The Flagship is, however, coordinated in close cooperation with the EFINORD and NCM. A flagship coordination meeting was organised by the NCM, EFINORD and Finnish Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry together with Nordic Forest Research Co-operation Committee (SNS) on May 19th in Copenhagen. The aim of the meeting was to follow the progress of project activities, as well as to discuss the possibilities to improve the coordination and to further deepen and expand forestry cooperation in the Baltic Sea area under the flagship. As a result of the meeting, next steps were defined, including definition of common criteria for possible future activities under the Flagship. It was also agreed that the next meeting will take place later this year, probably incorporated to another EUSBSR meeting.

At the moment, there are altogether nine projects under the flagship. The projects are at various stages of project cycle. Project "Hardwoods are good" has received funding (1.2 million € from the South Baltic Programme) and implementation is underway. Three

projects/activities ("Evolutionary genetic pockets for broadleaved tree species", "Cooperation in breeding of Norway spruce" and "Creating a Nordic-Baltic information service for forests and forestry") have received seed-money from the Nordic Council of Ministers. The goal of the seed money granted to launch start-up phase and to further develop project activities. The rest of the projects are currently still at planning phase or seeking funding.

The main challenge for the latter half of 2010 will be to ensure funding for the projects under the flagship that are still in the phase of application.

- **9.8. "Network of institutions for management and conservation of plant genetic resources (PGR) in the BSR under changing climate conditions":**

- No activities.

- **9.9. "Establish a Forum for Inventive and Sustainable Manure Processing - BATMAN":**

Intensifying and concentration of animal production has resulted in environmental problems caused by manure based nutrient surplus and water eutrophication in some regions. Whilst animal manure is still considered mainly as an environmental problem, agriculture uses substantial amounts of non-renewable nutrients and energy. BATMAN is turning the perception of manure as an environmental problem into an opportunity for business innovation. The project develops and utilizes the high potential and know-how for innovative solutions for manure management, such as production of renewable energy, organic fertilizers and other added value products.

Knowledge base needed for effective and commercially feasible manure management will be produced by project's research organisations with respect to national characteristics while also developing common, BSR wide concepts. Innovation networks, business associations and environmental organisations will contribute to the feasibility and acceptability discussion of innovative technologies. BSR wide policy forum will be set up to discuss the different aspects of manure as waste, hazard, energy and nutrient source and to enhance its commercial utilization in the region.

Leader of the Flagship project proposal is MTT Agrifood Research Finland in close cooperation with Agro Business Park of the Innovation Centre for Bioenergy and Environmental Technology in Denmark. MTT has received national financing from the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry of Finland for the year 2010 for the preparation of the Flagship Project proposal.

By now flagship project partnership consisting of 18 partners in 8 countries has been established and BATMAN project application (3.7 mil. euro) submitted to the BSR Programme in March 2010. In addition, Norway and Russia have been involved as associated partners. BATMAN objectives have been considered also in the Finnish-Russian ECOWASTE project preparation in the frame of the ENPI CBC Programme and cooperation planned with BSR related Baltic COMPASS and Baltic Deal projects.

Activities for establishing a Manure Policy Forum are carried out and the next Forum meeting will be held in the autumn 2010.

BATMAN Knowledge and Policy Fora makes up a platform, which will enhance R&D activities, policy development and promotion of business and innovation in the field of manure utilization far into the future.

- **9.10. “Recycling of Phosphorus”:**

The overall target of the project is to deliver strategies and tools for closing the phosphorous (P) cycle on farms in the BSR and reducing significantly the discharge of P from agriculture into the Baltic Sea. The project covers relevant aspects, which are not integral parts of the flagship project *Batman*. These imply the sustainable and efficient production of fertilisers from recycled P sources, comparative studies on the energy potentials of P from different origins, research on genotypic differences in P utilisation efficiency of crop plants and the development of concepts for food security in the BSR after peak oil and peak P.

P is a strictly limited resource on a global scale, but nationwide millions of tons are either wasted, for instance if sewage sludge and products from rendering are co-incinerated with domestic waste and dumped, or directly used as P fertilizer materials (e.g. meat and bone meal) due to only restricted plant availability of P on soils. Mono-incineration in combination with thermo-chemical treatment delivers a P fertiliser product, which is plant available and free from undesired contaminants such as xenobiotics (organic pollutants and heavy metals). Uranium (U) is another limited resource and extraction of U from rock phosphates delivers U for nuclear energy and P fertilisers, which are free of the toxicologically critical radioactive heavy metal.

The leaders of the project are Prof. Dr. habil. Dr. sc. agr. Dr. h.c. Ewald Schnug (JKI, Germany) and Dr. Eila Turtola (MTT, Finland). The project leaders are internationally acknowledged experts and have long-term expertise in the field of P recycling. Several EU-funded projects in this field of activity have been completed successfully.

The total costs are estimated to be 2.284.000,- €. The project has not yet applied for funding.

The next steps will be organisation of a workshop with potential experts and partners in the project; definition of assignments, operation charts and deliverables of each work package and partner as well as submission of project proposal. The expected finalisation of the project will be in 2013.

- **9.11. “Reinforcement of animal health and disease control”:**

- No activities yet.