

Baltic Deal

**- PUTTING BEST AGRICULTURAL PRACTICES INTO WORK
Through transnational co-operation and farmers' engagement**



How much - how many

2500 farmers reached
1800 measures and investments made or planned
300 events
300 advisors
117 demonstration farms
50 agri-environmental measures in a toolbox
7 countries: Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Sweden
5 advisory organisations
4 million euros
3 years: 2010–2013
2 farmers' organisations
1 mission: less nutrients from farms into the Baltic Sea

Project attributes

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Farm activities | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Economy | <input type="checkbox"/> Pesticides |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Quick fix | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Co-operation | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Nutrient efficiency |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Knowledge exchange | <input type="checkbox"/> Mission completed | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Future |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Advice & demonstration | <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial farms | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Cross-border |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Theoretical analysis | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Soil analysis | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Advisors & farmers | <input type="checkbox"/> Professors & bureaucrats | |



PHOTO: STINA BERGSTRÖM

Knowledge exchange

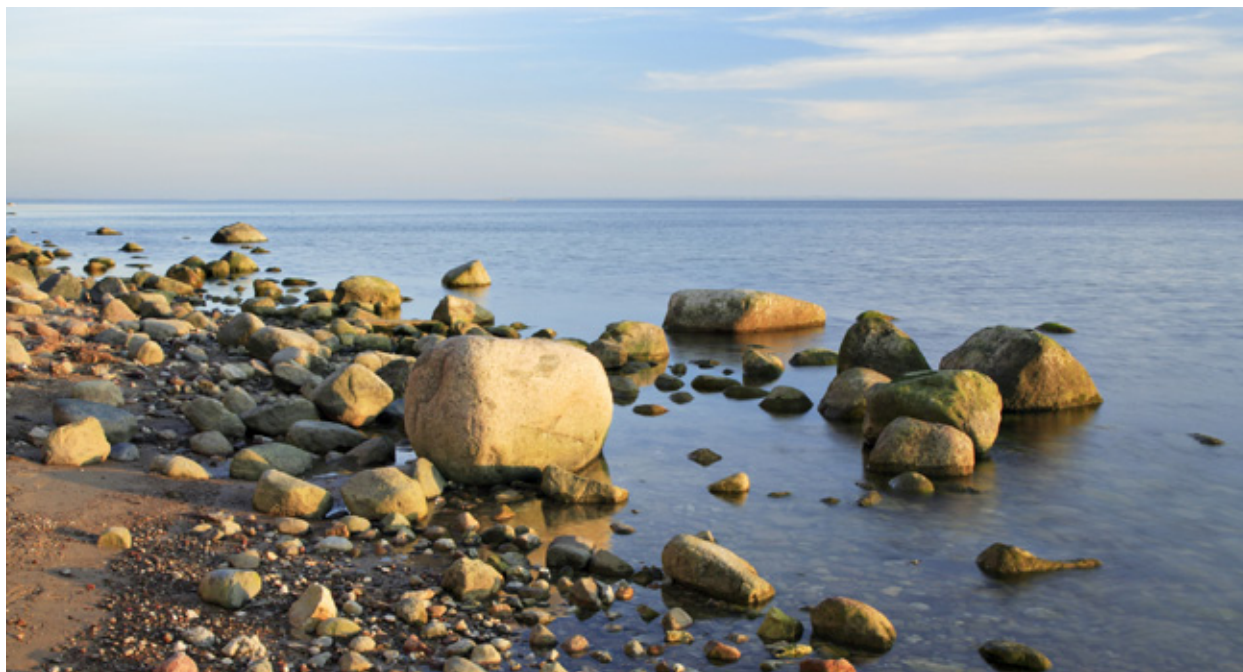
Best agricultural practices, measures and investments that are often kept within countries, organisations and the mind of individuals have been exchanged widely within the project.

2500 farmers

Knowledge exchange has been achieved by allowing people to meet in several hundred forums. Major conferences and seminars have acted as meeting points for advisors, experts and decision makers, enabling vivid discussions on all dimensions of nutrients. Small-scale farmer-to-farmer meetings have also been important in enabling more detailed discussions about specific solutions and future plans on each farm. In addition, journalists have taken part in Baltic Deal pilot events and study tours. In total, more than 5000 people have participated to learn and discuss, 2500 of whom are farmers. The result: new insights and knowledge crucial for a sustainable future.

Advisors across borders

Advisors know the soils, farmers and the regulations in their area and have wide experience from science to practice. Thus advisors play an important role in facilitating changes in the farming community. About 100 strategic advisors on the national level have been directly involved in the Baltic Deal project and have carried out invaluable work across borders. In addition, more than 250 field advisors have been reached in various events. By collaboration between countries, they have achieved a greater understanding of the differences in national advisory systems in the Baltic Sea region. This provides an excellent basis for improvement of the national advisory programmes.



What has been achieved?

Creation of a strong co-operative platform between farmers' organisations and advisory organisations around the Baltic Sea.

Development of a common strategy for the Baltic Sea region to strengthen the agricultural advisory services.

Establishment of a demonstration farm network of more than 100 farms surrounding the Baltic Sea.

Demonstration of cost-effective and sustainable measures for farmers.

A significant increase in the speed of innovation and technology diffusion across national boundaries.

Why is this important?

To contribute to restoring the health of the Baltic Sea.

To reduce nutrient losses from farms to groundwater and surface waters in sustainable ways.

To facilitate exchanges of knowledge across boundaries within the farming sector.

To motivate the general public and the agriculture sector to adopt a voluntary, preventive and sustainable approach to environmental investments.

Demonstration farms

The Baltic Deal demonstration farm network consists of 117 farms scattered across all seven countries involved in the project. The demonstration farms are leading the way in several environmental aspects, not only as regards nutrient management. They are also good businesses, well-organised and tidy and owned by farmers who welcome visitors to share experiences and views.

Farmers investing in the environment

The demonstration farms have already implemented, or plan to implement, 1785 measures and investments that contribute to a better environment (period 2000–2015). This represents on average 16 measures per farm. More than four per farm were undertaken during the Baltic Deal project period and 2–3 more are planned for the immediate future.

Increased soil knowledge

Management measures are well developed

on most of the demonstration farms and advisors are widely used. Many farmers use a nutrient balance, but better soil characterisation would be beneficial. A variety of other measures have been undertaken, such as optimisation of fertilisation and the use of manure, catch crops, buffer zones, improved storage and handling of manure or adjusting animal feeding. Most of the investments concern manure and water management, followed by improved application technology, N-sensors and precision farming, but also soil management.

The importance of networking

Meeting other farmers and national or international visitors is the aspect of the Baltic Deal network most appreciated by the farmers involved. This can provide an incentive for them to improve and develop their farm. There have been 200 events focusing on demonstration farms, attended by 4000 people. Around 2500 people have visited the actual demonstration farms.



A Baltic Sea region strategy for agri-environmental advisory work

A strategy for the development of agri-environmental advisory work in the Baltic Sea Region has been developed and tested in the Baltic Deal project. A key message of the strategy is to continue to strengthen transnational co-operation among advisory actors. This must be done in light of varying

national competence areas, a variation that stimulates knowledge transfer across national boundaries. Another key message is the need to strengthen demonstration farm networks nationally and internationally and provide advisory support.

Strong added values across borders

There is a strong added value in working across national borders. The main value lies in the potential to level out differences in national measures, practices and ways to

engage and train farmers. More importantly, this will collectively boost the agriculture sector in the entire Baltic Sea region on these matters.

National programmes for handling nutrients

Activities aimed to make the handling and use of nutrients on farms more efficient are already being carried out successfully at national level in many countries. Relevant

national programmes exist, such as Focus on Nutrients in Sweden and TEHO+ in Finland, in addition to the mandatory Farm Advisory Systems.

Some well-proven measures

Farmer can reduce nutrient losses from farms, as well as saving money, by improving practices, implementing measures and investing in best available technology. Around 50

agri-environmental measures are available on www.balticdeal.eu, some of which require economic support to be sustainable. A selection of well-proven measures:

- ▶ Farm nutrient balance
- ▶ Soil samples
- ▶ Grassland
- ▶ Plant cover
- ▶ Floating crust on slurry
- ▶ Fertilisation plans

- ▶ Catch crops
- ▶ Precision farming
- ▶ Management of solid manure
- ▶ Wetland to capture nutrients
- ▶ Covered slurry tank
- ▶ Buffer zones



EACH FARMER CAN ...

- RECOGNISE that resource use efficiency is key to long-term farm sustainability.
- RECOGNISE that improved handling of phosphorus and nitrogen is often economically beneficial to the farm economy.
- COMPLY with regulations and cross-compliance requirements that seek to minimise losses of nutrients.
- SEEK to introduce practices that benefit the long-term fertility of the soil, increase yield and reduce nutrient losses from the farm.
- CARRY OUT soil and feed analyses and prepare nutrient balances to optimise usage on the farm.
- SEEK professional support from advisors to assess the farm potential of possible measures and practices that improve the farm economy and reduce nutrient losses.
- ENGAGE in group activities aimed at improving water quality, together with other farmers.



EACH COUNTRY CAN ...

- PROVIDE nationally attractive frames that encourage Baltic farmers to become even more environmentally friendly, using the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) as a basis.
- RECOGNISE that improved agricultural practices regarding nutrient efficiency often lead to reduced losses.
- EXPAND the obligatory Farm Advisory Service (FAS) to complementary free advisory packages, going beyond the cross-compliance requirements and allowing the advisory services to be a knowledge hub for environmentally sustainable development.
- SUPPORT a network of national demonstration farms.
- FUND cross-border agricultural partnership projects around the Baltic Sea that increase the speed of knowledge and innovation flows across national borders.
- BEAR IN MIND there is no “one measure that fits all” to reduce losses of nutrients in the Baltic Sea and that there is no “quick fix”.
- CREATE public awareness that the current poor state of the Baltic Sea is a consequence of 50 years of societal development and not necessarily strongly linked to present-day activities with nutrient loads equivalent to those of the 1950s.



Recognitions

The Baltic Deal project has gained broad recognition from organisations and bodies for a multitude of reasons:

- ▶ The initiative was taken by five farmers’ organisations and is one of only a few truly private sector initiatives within the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region.
- ▶ Nutrient losses and eutrophication are a high priority issue within the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region.
- ▶ The solutions offered seek to be both economically and environmentally viable and thus readily continued in practice by project partners, advisors and farmers after project closure.
- ▶ The strong focus on farmers and the environmental perspective and on win-win solutions means that the Baltic Deal project is relevant as a regional policy response in the process of reforming CAP.

BECAUSE OF THIS: Friends of the Earth Europe and WWF Europe have featured Baltic Deal on their website: “Over the three years of its existence the program [Baltic Deal] has clearly demonstrated how countries can work together and voluntarily create systems that address environmental challenges.”

DG Regio has cited Baltic Deal as a best practice example of a flagship project within EU macro-regional strategies in several of its communications.

COPA-COGECA, the joint interest body for the European national farmers’ organisations and co-operatives, considers Baltic Deal with its attractive win-win solutions to be a positive and proactive solution from the agricultural sector.

“The project has enabled us to strengthen ties with both the academic sector and environmental NGOs. We have cooperated closely in research on NPK runoff changes in the Lielupe river basin and in the establishment of buffer strips, constructed wetlands, sludge ponds and floodplain management. Latvia

Plans ahead

There are plans for a continuation, first a bridging project and then Baltic Deal 2.0, to be submitted to a forthcoming major EU call. Baltic Deal 2.0 would include 15 partners and 9 countries, and a budget of 5–8 million EUR. The project focus would be to develop and strengthen the demonstration farm network and activities as well as strengthen the advisory network. It would include more investments and measures, reinforced nutrient focus and additional water environmental issues of concern.

“Agricultural business development and production at farm level and environmental performance is directly interlinked. Given that agricultural production at each farm is unique, it is evident that smart solutions used needs to be tailor-made and based upon specific knowledge of the farm conditions and its production system. Strong advisory services and demonstration farms play an important role in supporting the farmers with knowledge and suggestions for improved practices. Baltic Deal has indeed significantly lifted the agricultural sector around the Baltic Sea in this respect.



PHOTO: JOHANNA MORIN

Helena Jonsson
Organic Hereford cattle breeder,
President of the Federation of Swedish Farmers,
and Chairman of the Steering Board of Baltic Deal

EACH ADVISORY CAN ...

- IMPROVE farmers’ knowledge about the factors that lead to nutrient losses and how to prevent it.
- MAINTAIN up-to-date knowledge of best measures to reduce nutrient losses.
- ENCOURAGE soil analysis and nutrient balances on all farms.
- CONTINUOUSLY SEEK new tools and knowledge which in combination improve the economic and environmental performance of farms.
- CO-OPERATE with demonstration farms and provide support in describing and analysing the economic and environmental effects of measures implemented.

“Polish farmers and advisors got new ideas and inspiration in different meetings. For example reduced tillage aroused great interest due to its positive influence on crop yield, cost reduction and environmental protection. Poland



Macro-regional context

The project has been carried out within a unique and empowering macro-regional policy and funding context:

- The EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea region – arose from a desire for a collective response to environmental deterioration of the Baltic Sea and for concerted action to challenges and opportunities in the region.
- The HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan – concerted objectives and associated actions to restore the environmental state of the Baltic Sea.
- The Baltic Sea Region Programme 2007–2013 – structural funds programme, in particular supporting financially pertinent projects with partners from a large number of the Baltic Sea region countries.
- The NEFCO/NIB Baltic Sea Trust Fund – a fund set up by Sweden and Finland that has provided grants for technical assistance to projects supporting the implementation of the HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan (BSAP).
- Baltic Manure and Baltic Compass – EU projects complementing Baltic Deal with their focus on manure management and policy analysis of nutrient matters.
- WWF Baltic Ecoregion Programme – its WWF Baltic Farmer Award has raised the status of the most environmentally friendly farmers in the region.

What’s the deal?

- ▶ Eutrophication indicates a disruption of the ecosystem caused by high loads of nutrients. It is evident as e.g. excessive algal blooms and dead areas of sea bottom.
- ▶ Nutrients to the Baltic Sea water come from the drainage basin, but also from within the sea itself. The main share of phosphorus originates from marine bottom sediments under oxygen-free conditions.
- ▶ The loads of nutrients from the drainage basin may be natural background losses from the soil or the result of human activities and losses from agriculture, wastewater, industry and forestry.
- ▶ Nutrient loads increased steeply from 1950 to 1980, due to increased demand for food and a strong influx of people to major coastal cities without proper wastewater treatment.
- ▶ Since the peak in the 1980s, nutrient loads have now decreased to the level of the 1950s.
- ▶ 85 million people live in the area around the Baltic Sea. They all affect the water ecosystem by living, eating, working and travelling.
- ▶ It will take a long time to restore the eutrophied Baltic Sea to its natural state. Achievements today will be measurable in 30–50 years, i.e. around 2050.
- ▶ Further improvements in agricultural practices can reduce nutrient losses significantly.