EUSBSR
EU STRATEGY FOR THE BALTIC SEA REGION

Experiences from Baltic Sea Region on tackling challenges in agriculture and water sectors

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4.12.2025

Interreg Baltic Sea Region
Co-funded by the European Union

Objectives of the Strategy

The three objectives of the EUSBSR are

- SAVE THE SEA
- CONNECT THE REGION
- INCREASE PROSPERITY

The strategy contributes to a **better division of labor among existing networks and organisations. This** reduces overlaps and strenghtens synergies.

The Action Plan (2021) presents sub-objectives, 14 Policy Areas and the actions and activities for each of the Policy Areas.

Key facts

- First of the four EU macro-regional strategies, launched in 2009
- **8 EU Member States** bordering the Baltic Sea, and **Norway and Iceland**. Cooperation with Russia and Belarus has been suspended
- Addresses **common challenges** and makes the most of the **long history of cooperation** in the region
- **A platform for cooperation and coordination** among the Baltic Sea States on all levels of society from civil society, businesses and academia to administrations and ministries
- The EUSBSR **calls for more effective use of existing funds, structures and legislation** to deal with the challenges faced by the region, Member State(s) and the macro-region
- Thrives on **continuous political support, commitment and ownership**
- **Interprets and implements national and EU strategic objectives** to the Baltic Sea Region reality
- Constantly monitored, evaluated, and revised when needed

Regional policy making – HELCOM, Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission

- HELCOM publishes BAT/BEP documents, recommendations, guidelines, policy briefs, etc with an attempt at reducing the pollution of the Baltic Sea
- Baltic Sea Action Plan (BSAP) outlines the main Actions to be done

- Role for PA Nutri is to help implement the BSAP, work with issues not included there, and be a bridge towards the EU

Policy Area Nutri

- Four Actions in 2021 Action Plan:

1) Reduce nutrient emissions from agriculture and other diffuse sources
2) Reduce nutrient emissions from urban areas and other point sources
3) Develop and promote safe and sustainable nutrient recycling
4) Address nutrients already accumulated in the Baltic Sea

- Actions contribute towards implementing HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan, Regional Nutrient Recycling Strategy

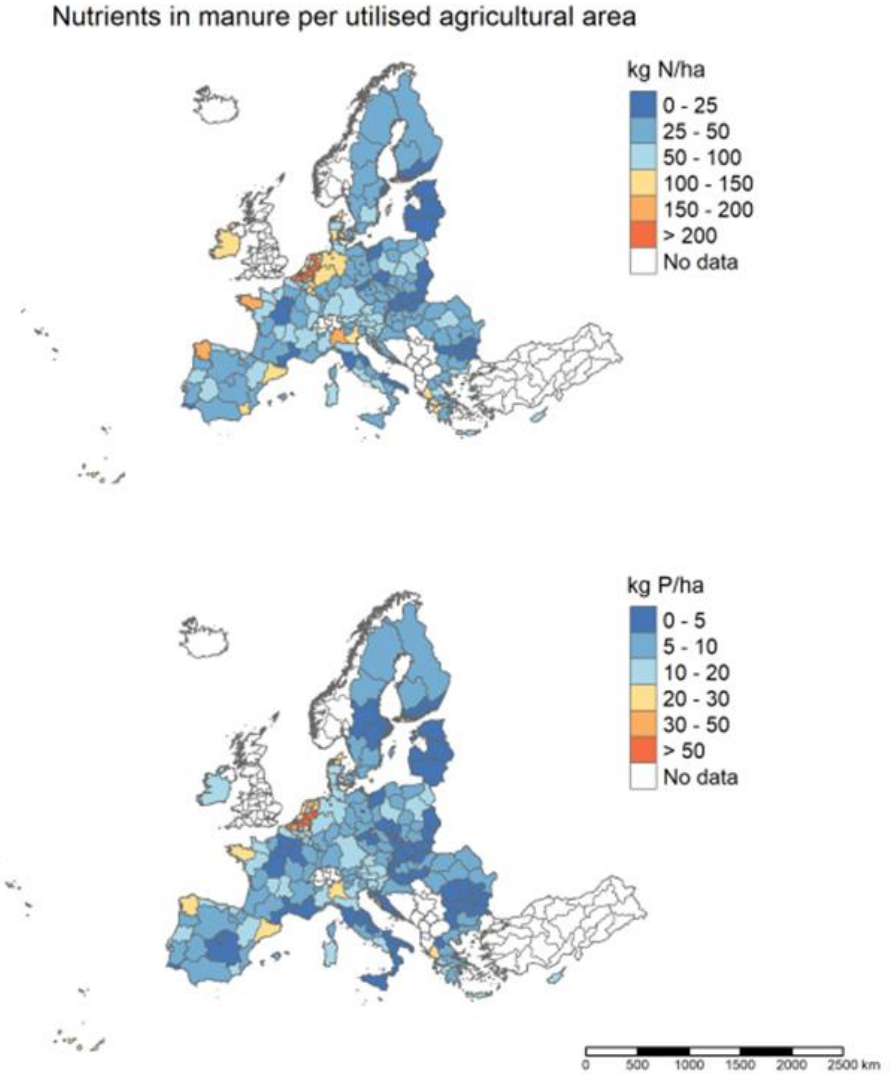
- Coordinated by Centre for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment for Southwest Finland and State Water Holding Polish Waters

Specific challenges for the Baltic Sea Region

- Temperate/cold and wet climate
  - In the most northern parts agriculture becomes unpractical, only animal husbandry (reindeers) exists
  - Drainage necessary for agriculture, and has been established throughout the region in the 60-70s
  - Drought is a new issue brought by climate change, and mostly only relevant for southern and middle parts of the region, and islands
    - Timing of drought is usually during the start of the growth season (April-June)
- Large areas are peat lands, additionally challenges with clay soils, acid sulphate soils, etc.
- Climate change causing shortening of winters and lack of snow cover
  - Instead of snow we get rain even during winter months, causing increased discharge from agriculture and other sectors
- Baltic Sea is a heavily polluted brackish sea, suffering from algae blooms
  - Sensitive environment
- Agriculture contributes to almost half of the total nitrogen and phosphorus inputs to the Baltic Sea

Spatial variation in the availability of and the need for recyclable nutrients

- The nutrient-rich side streams are rarely located directly in the place where the nutrients are needed
  - Livestock and crop production are segregated and located in different regions in many countries
    - Livestock manure is regionally concentrated
  - Active industries are often close to larger human settlements with both of their nutrient-rich side streams also originating there
- Nutrient recycling requires transportation



Slide: Sari Luostarinen / Luke

EU Horizon project https://lex4bio.eu/

Example: Finland

- According to a recent estimate, 90% of phosphorus fertilization required in the Finnish plant production could be covered with the phosphorus in nutrient-rich side streams
  - 65% of this in livestock manure alone
- Still, approximately 11 500 tons of mineral phosphorus fertilizers are used annually
  - Improved nutrient recycling has a significant potential to replace mineral P

Phosphorus need/source	P (t)
Need for fertilization	23 300
Livestock manure	15 200
Sewage sludge	4 000
Food processing side streams	770
Municipal biowaste	540
Excess grass	560

http://urn.fi/URN:ISBN: 978-952-380-612-2

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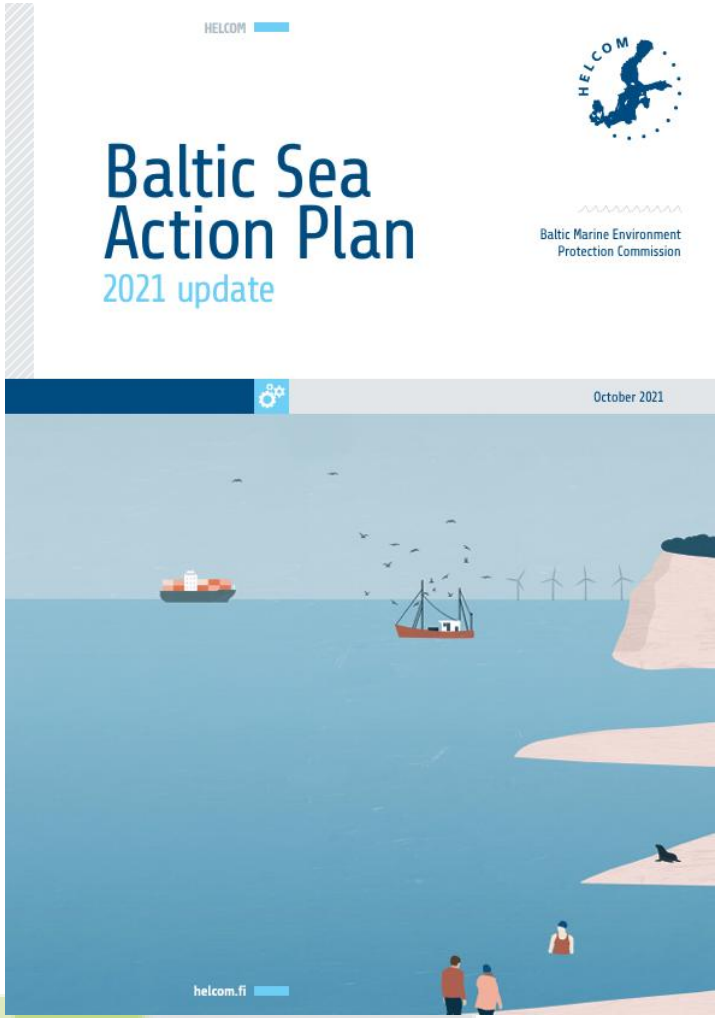
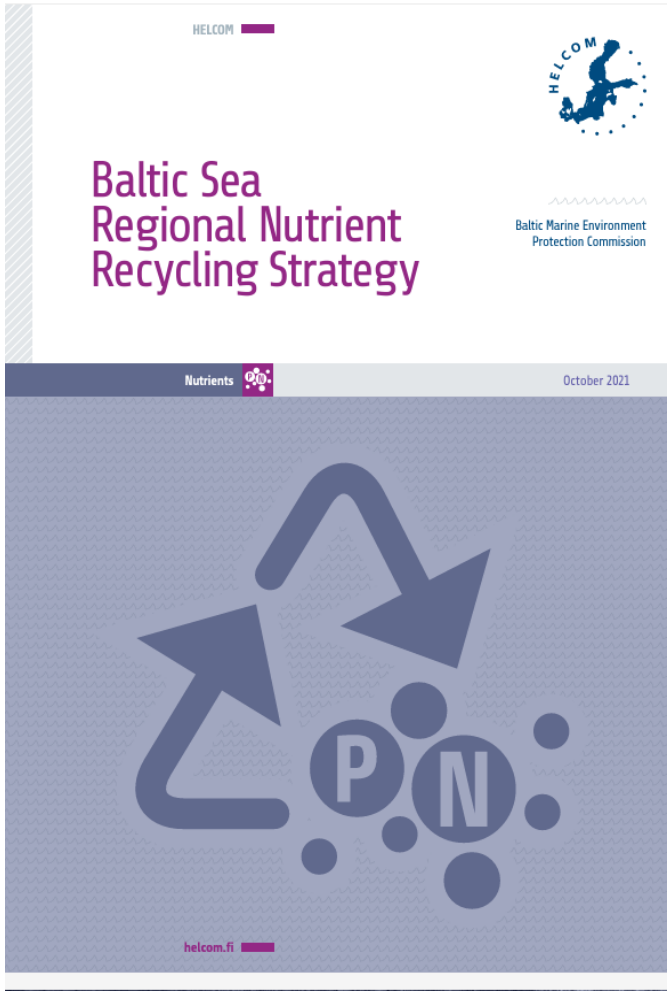
HELCOM BSAP and Regional Nutrient Recycling Strategy





Luke

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• CiNURGi in Action – Supporting PA Nutri Goals in Practice

- **Demonstrating safe, high-quality BBFs via regional pilot sites:**
- Pilots in Sweden, Poland, Germany, and Finland test BBFs from diverse waste streams (e.g., manure, sludge, food waste)
- Results feed into standards, safety assessments, and market readiness
- **Establishing a cross-sector Knowledge and Processing Service Centre**
- Central platform for farmers, tech providers, municipalities to access validated techniques, tools, and policy guidance
- Enhances regional coordination and learning
- **Co-developing business models for nutrient value chains:**
- Business cases tailor-made for rural/urban nutrient surpluses
- Includes cost-efficiency, logistics, value-added strategies for BBF producers
- **Gathering user insights to guide BBF design and adoption:**
- Surveys, interviews, and workshops with farmers and advisors
- Aligns product formulation, packaging, and messaging with real-world needs
- **Informing EU and BSR nutrient and bioeconomy policy frameworks:**
- Recommendations contribute to CAP, UWWTD, WFD, and Bioeconomy Strategy revisions
- Aligns with PA Nutri's call for policy coherence across sectors

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CIRCULAR ECONOMY CiNURGi

Slide: Erik Sindhöj and Cheryl Marie Cordeiro / Rise

PA Nutri's role and next steps for nutrient cycles

- Webinars on nutrient recycling in the Baltic Sea Region
- PA Nutri coordinated a joint statement to EU's open consultation on Bioeconomy Strategy
  - Gathered inputs from several projects, also CiNURGi
  - Highlighted importance of nutrient recycling

- During the update process of the EUSBSR's Action Plan it was identified a need for a cooperation group on nutrient recycling
  - PA Nutri will start establishing it in 2026-2027

- Market of recycled fertilizers is still not functional, too expensive for farmers
  - The technologies are more ready
  - Market solutions in focus in a new platform-project application

Water management challenges in the Baltic Sea Region

- Because of climate water drainage/ditching is necessary for efficient agriculture
  - However, its usually even over-done and causes leaching of nutrients when nutrient management is not sustainable on the fields
  - Water retention is too low, increasing drought

- Anything more complicated than the “usual” solutions (wetlands, subsurface drainage, buffer zones) need a lot of land and cooperation between farmers

  → Multi-objective planning in catchment level
    - Different scales

  → A need for coordination

Solutions for water management

- WaterDrive-project (2019-2021) identified a need for local water partnerships or catchment officers
  - Wrote HELCOM Policy Brief on integrated rural water management
- BaltCOP-project is building capacity for catchment coordination
- WSSP-project is working on a kind of risk mapping of rural catchments

- Seminar **“Integrating water smart agriculture and pollutant control through catchment-based collaboration”** is being planned for 6-7 May 2026, Tallinn

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Thank you for your attention!

Contacts: https://eusbsr.eu/policy-area-nutri/