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## **Nutrient cycling in Finland – State of Play**

Ladies and gentlemen,

The Ministers of the Environment of all the nine Baltic coastal states and the EU Commission will in October in HELCOM Ministerial meeting gather to discuss the status and the future of the Baltic Sea. The outcome of the Meeting is expected to revolve around the still unsatisfactory status of the Baltic Sea; the ecosystem approach underpinning blue economy and green growth, the opportunities for more coherent policies and implementation, as well as generally committing to do more for a healthier Baltic Sea. New nutrient reduction targets to all the Baltic Sea countries will be launched to reach the good ecological status of the Baltic Sea. The targets will be ambitious and will require more efficient measures from all the sectors – including agriculture.

The nutrient recycling is an essential part of green-growth in agriculture that is aiming to ensure that enough food is provided, efficiently and sustainably, for a growing population. The green growth means increasing output while managing scarce natural resources; reducing the carbon intensity and adverse environmental impacts throughout the food chain; enhancing the provision of environmental services such as carbon sequestration and conserving biodiversity. Green growth in agriculture offers business opportunities for example in utilizing water resources and developing water rich products, developing health and functional food products and aiming to closed nutrient circulation and producing renewable energy.

The current situation, involving waste and losses at every step of the nutrient life cycle, contributes to concerns about future supplies and water and soil pollution. With efficient production and use, as well as recycling and minimisation of waste, major strides could be made towards the sustainable use of nutrients. This would lead the way towards resource efficiency and ensuring that nutrient reserves are still available for the generations to come.

The added value of nutrient cycling is obvious, so we should act as soon as possible. We should give nutrient recycling the attention that it deserves. It is not always easy to explain why we need to tackle what some may see as a longer-term environmental issue, especially in a

time of economic hardship like today. Dealing with the problem today can help us save money tomorrow.

In the Baltic Sea Summit in 2010 the Finnish Government committed itself to improve the state of the Archipelago Sea by 2020, which is in a more ambitious timetable than in the current plans and programs. The Archipelago Sea is a very vulnerable sea area, with heavy pollution coming from agriculture. This is also Finland's last remaining HELCOM hot-spot.

The Finnish Government also committed to aim at becoming a model region in the recycling of nutrients. The Ministry of the Environment together with the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry established a working group that drew up a roadmap how to become a model region in the recycling of nutrients. The road map presented over 80 concrete measures to be implemented by administration and different stakeholders.

The Ministry of the Environment launched in 2012 a three year programme and allocated three million euros per year to implement some of the measures in the roadmap. The objective of the programme is to promote the recycling of nutrients and to improve the status of the Archipelago Sea. The emphasis of is on agriculture, especially on more efficient utilization of manure and development of recycled fertilizers. In addition the management of nutrients in sewage sludge; waste water treatment in boating; development of monitoring and evaluation tools for water protection measures; and enhancing the civic activities in water protection and nutrient recycling are important objectives of the programme. It is not a research programme but is aiming at promoting piloting and demonstration activities, putting the research results into action and solving the practical problems by identifying and unblocking the bottlenecks.

By now twenty-two projects have been accepted to the programme. The projects are dealing with promoting the co-operation between animal and crop farms in manure management; improving nutrient recycling in horse husbandry; increasing biogas production; recycling nutrients in forestindustry wastes; and raising environmental consciousness about nutrient recycling and water protection. Just to mention some examples.

There is an increasing interest in manure treatment. Intensive animal production is concentrated in specific areas which has led to an oversupply of manure into these regions, with a gradual build-up of the phosphate content of soils and increased risks of water pollution. The key challenge is to have processed manure that can be transported, at least regionally, away from nutrients saturated zones and that can be used with precision to minimise nutrient losses. Although many industrial technologies for the recovery of phosphorus from manure are already on-stream and used to varying degrees, there is need to promote the use of such renewable

sources by farmers. The price of recovered fertiliser is generally higher than the price of mineral fertiliser. Much more could be done in terms of identifying markets for recycled phosphorus and barriers to its increased use; and in implementing the technologies that are already available. To turn manure problems into business opportunities; to improve knowledge about manure handling and use and to stimulates technology development and marketing the Ministry of the Environment will launch in September a next application round of the Programme with manure as the main theme.

Ladies and gentlemen,

This autumn will be of high importance for the protection of the Baltic Sea. In the HELCOM Ministerial meeting in October we need to renew our commitments and adapt new nutrient recycling goals to make sure we can put an end the eutrophication of the Baltic Sea. During this autumn Finland, as surely other EU states as well, will be finalizing its new Rural Development Programme for 2013 – 2020. It is essential that these Programmes support the nutrient reduction targets and that the support schemes under the Programme are cost efficient.

Many EU countries are likely also considering how could they better implement the targets of the EU Nitrates Directive. The directive aims to protect water quality by preventing nitrates from agricultural sources polluting ground and surface waters and by promoting the use of good farming practices. In Finland, we are renewing our legislation to make sure we reach the aims of the directive.

It is crucial that we, the policy makers, make sure that all these on-going policy processes; the targets of the HELCOM process, the Rural Development Programme and the implementation of EU directives, support each other and make it easy and flexible for farmers to engage in reducing nutrient loss. At least in Finland, the financial support paid through the Rural Development Programme is the most central tool for reducing nutrient losses into our waters and we need renew the Programme to gain even better results.

The general atmosphere and the attitude towards the environmental issues in agriculture are important. We need to acknowledge what has already been done in agriculture for the water protection but we also need to admit that there is still work to be done. This conference and the ones held earlier by the same organizers show that a lot of progress can also be made by bringing motivated stakeholders to work together.

I wish you all a successful conference!