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Baltic Sea Agricultural Solutions

Best Practices of Baltic-Friendly Agriculture

Agricultural Solutions

You are holding a booklet of solutions in your hands. The problem is already known: agriculture is responsible for much of the eutrophication (or over-fertilization) in the Baltic Sea. The solutions to this problem are often mentioned but rarely applied, even though they can be simpler than you think.

This is why the WWF Baltic Ecoregion Programme, together with Swedbank, and in cooperation with the Baltic Farmers Forum for the Environment and farmers' organisations from around the Baltic Sea, launched the WWF Baltic Sea Farmer of the Year Award in 2009.

The award aims to raise awareness about all the good initiatives being practiced on farms around the Baltic Sea to achieve sustainable agriculture. It is also intended to promote cooperation around the region in order to further the application and promotion of good environmental practice in the agricultural sector.

In order to further this goal we have compiled this booklet of agricultural solutions — best practices showcased by past winners of the Baltic Sea Farmer of the Year Award. The examples highlighted are based on standards from a national context and truly showcase the broad spectrum of possible measures that can be applied, from environmental standards according to national legislation to ground-breaking and innovative technological applications. The measures showcased herein can easily be replicated by other farmers around the Baltic Sea to achieve sustainable farming and subsequently a healthier Baltic Sea.

On the following pages you will meet the winners of the 2009, 2010, and 2011 competition who have all taken steps to help the Baltic Sea.

We hope they will inspire you to do the same!



POLAND



Marian Rak

Location: Samotwór village near Wrocław.

Type of farm: Crop production: wheat, barley, corn, rape; potatoes; orchards; permanent grassland and cattle production.

Polish farmer Marian Rak has made outstanding achievements in regards to the implementation of environmentally friendly practices. He implements agrienvironmental schemes in order to reduce nutrient losses using wide buffer strips, trees planted around the roads, streams and drainage ditches, intercrops and undersown crops. Apart from reducing nutrient runoff, Marian Rak has made a great effort in the preservation and restoration of biodiversity on his farm. He is a pioneer in constructing wetlands in Poland. Among the measures he has taken to restore natural habitats and offer sufficient space for wildlife are the construction of artificial ponds and marshes, the plantation of midfield trees and shrubs and nesting boxes for bats.

Lidia Ordysińska

Location: Wołczkowo village, near Szczecin.

Type of farm: Crop production and dairy production.

Lidia Ordysińska has taken many measures to reduce nutrient runoff from her farm on her own initiative, such as building manure plates and slurry tanks and establishing buffer strips from willow trees. These efforts go beyond what is done on the average Polish family farm. These key practices include not using artificial fertilizer — only organic manure and compost; ensuring that the ground is under plant cover all year round and that animals are housed on a deep straw bed; and that basalt dust is mixed into the manure. Lidia popularizes her experience to other farmers, agriculture advisors and students.



"I try to show that farmers can achieve excellent results by returning back to nature, and that economic success depends not only on quantity but also on quality."







"It is still believed by many that industry is the main cause of the degradation of the environment.

Not many of us see that arable lands are a part of our environment, and that hazardous substances from there easily get into the natural environment"

Biskup Zbigniew

Location: Pogony river basin in catchment area of Odra river, near city of Poznan.

Type of farm: Animal husbandry of pig and crop production.

Biskup Zbigniew has a typical Polish farm that serves as a model of easy measures that can be applied to reduce agriculture effects to the surrounding area. Fertilizing and plant protection are carried out according to special programs, which take soil composition and the needs of the crops into consideration. Crops cultivated on the farms are fertilized according to their specific requirements for nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium. Biskup Zbigniew is also careful to ensure that the soil and ground water are not contaminated by hazardous substances. He also works to reducing gas emissions by storing manure in tightly closed containers.

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DENMARK





Christian Danneskiold Lassen

Location: Neastved municipality, Zealand.

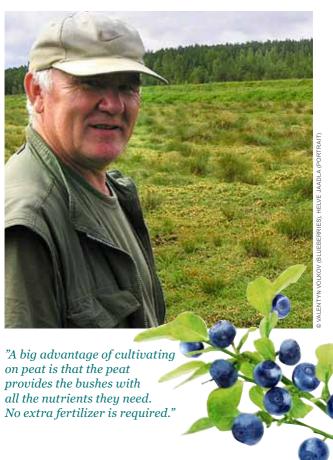
Type of farm: Conventional crop production and forestry.

On Holmegaard farm, Christian Danneskiold Lassen has managed to combine productive agriculture with an active effort to reduce nutrient leaching and ensure a greater biodiversity. The concept of zoning is central. There are three main zones: one is intensively cultivated, one is used for less intensive agriculture, and one is left alone for nature to take its own course. The less intensively cultivated areas are areas close to watersheds or areas with larger buffer strips and rows of trees interspersed between the fields. There are also vast natural and recreated wetlands on the Holmegaard farm where ducks, waders and other birds thrive. Some of these wetland areas are established solely to reduce nutrient runoff, others are there for the birds and wildlife, and some have both purposes. Christian Danneskiold Lassen's farm also includes semi-natural grasslands for grazing and forest.

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ESTONIA



Toomas Jaadla

Location: Marjasoo farm, Rannu.

Type of farm: Berry production: lowbush blueberry, common cranberry.

Marjasoo farm is innovatively combating peat erosion with fields of lowbush blueberry. Recultivating deserted peat mines avoids the erosion of residual peat. The estimated effect is the annual reduction of peat erosion to water bodies of up to 1000 m³/ha. With the farm's current coverage of 16.5 ha, the farm may avoid annual erosion of up to 16,500 m³ of peat per hectare.

The Tobreluts Family

Location: Põlva parish. Puuri village, Jõgeva county.

Type of farm: Crop production: corn, legumes, rape and hay seed.

Toomas Tobreluts and his two sons run an innovative Baltic-friendly farm with great demonstration potential. They apply no-till farming to avoid ploughing the soils. This method reduces water consumption, maintain levels of soil nutrients and reduce erosion and surface runoff while





© MARGUS ESS & INDREK TALPSEF

"Although our farm is located far away from the Baltic Sea, we still influence its environment via the river system."

conserving biodiversity. The use of intercropping and cover crops maintains a balanced nutrient flow effectively avoiding losses of nutrients from the farm. Moreover, Toomas Tobreluts has invested in a machine called a cross-slot seeder which optimizes manure spreading, seeding and conserves soil structure while minimizing nutrient leakage. He uses a stripper header to harvest just the head of the grain from the crop, leaving the remaining plant material to break down in the field thereby preventing soil erosion and promoting nutrient recycling. These energy-efficient methods result in both a decrease of costs and conservation benefits.

Toivo Kens

Location: Viraito Farm, Põltsamaa municipality.

Type of farm: Dairy and fodder production.

Toivo Kens has engaged in a successful cooperation with a nearby cheese factory, thereby gaining environmental benefits for his farm as well as a neighboring enterprise. The factory benefits by gaining an efficient



means to dispose of its waste, and the Viraito farm benefits by being able to use this 'waste' as a valuable fertilizer for its fields. The farm has also constructed manure tanks with underground pipelines that pump out manure in exact amounts to avoid any leakage to the surrounding area. Moreover, fodder is produced at just the amount required to create a closed nutrient cycle at the farm.

More information on the farm: www.viraito.ee



For more information on agricultural best practices in Estonia contact:

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RUSSIA



Angela Kiprushova

Location: Mikhailovskoe village, Karelia Republic in Olonets region.

Type of farm: Animal husbandry of cattle and pig.

Angela is the first organic farmer in Karelia to ranch cattle and pigs for meat. Through her organic farming practices, she not only lowers nutrient runoffs, but also maintains biodiversity which is important for the increasing nature tourism. The free pasture area for cattle and the regular haymaking provide effective ways to restore and maintain biodiversity on her farm. Among the measures Angela has taken to reduce nutrient losses on her farm are fencing of the pasture for steers and the introduction of leash-free maintenance of animals on heavy hay bedding. She also uses soft litter (hay) for cattle in the cowsheds to reduce occasional organic sewage from the farm.



Vyacheslav Komov

Location: Lembolovo village, close to Saint Petersburg.

Type of farm: Dairy production and animal husbandry.

This farm has pioneering experience in organic farming and environmentally friendly management. Vyacheslav Komov has designed his farm to reduce all water consumption needed subsequently reducing the threat of leakage of nutrients to local rivers and lakes. Sawdust is used in the cage housing to prevent manure leakage. The mixture of sawdust and manure is then sold to other farmers and garden owners in the surrounding villages further preventing the waste of nutrients.





F. DANILOVA



Elena Ermolaeva

Location: Tzvelodubovo village, Vyborg city region, Roshino, Leningrad Oblast.

Type of farm: Private organic dairy farm and livestock.

Elena Ermolaeva has combined the rich farming traditions of the region with an innovative approach supporting the present state of biodiversity and the environment. She takes care that all measures to prevent excessive discharge from her livestock stalls are applied. She has applied a sustainable manure handling method where manure mixed with sawdust is regularly removed to a special storage tank. During spring, summer and autumn, the manure is sold to other farmers as a natural fertilizer, and during the winter it is stored in tanks. Elena Ermolaeva is also committed to conserving and re-creating semi-natural grasslands around the farm. The area is partially used for haymaking, which is important to maintain the sustainability of the old rural landscape.





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FINLAND



"It has always been important for me to think about the consequences of my work. Our agriculture here in southern Finland affects the Baltic Sea so heavily and we need to avoid these effects."

Teppo Heikkilä

Location: Loimaa, in the catchment area of river Loimijoki.

Type of farm: Organic grain and organic beef cattle.

Teppo Heikkilä has an exemplary farm that succeeds in combining profitable major production with a vast variety of environmental measures. The list of water protection measures is highly impressive such as extensive grassland projection, spreading manure only during the growing season, deep buffer zones along the riverside and the use of undersown crops, to name a few. On top of that, Teppo Heikkilä has a comprehensive dry manure system with covered manure pits, permanent bedding base in the cattle housing and all manure and urine is being absorbed in peat. Teppo Heikkilä also does not use artificial fertilizers, due to organic production, and manages magnificent traditional biotopes, and pays careful attention to animal welfare and energy efficiency procedures.

Katariina Vapola & Jyrki Ankelo

Location: Vapola Farm situated in Kalanti area of Uusikaupunki.

Type of farm: Organic beef cattle.

The Vapola farm implements a number of highly innovative agriculture measures to be more environmental friendly – wintertime green cover, organic production and renewing the grassland by direct sowing, which have successfully reduced the risk of nutrient leaching. Furthermore, a sedimentation basin and constructed wetlands take care of the nutrient effluents from the cattle exercise yard and pasture. Cattle slurry is spread on the grassland during the growing season using a precision spreader. To reduce ammonia emissions, the manure yards have been covered and the use of a concrete base when storing manure for composting also prevents the leaching of nutrients.

More information on the farm: www.vapola.fi





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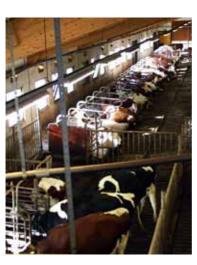
Katariina Vapola believes that farmers share the responsibility to care for the environment together with consumers who, by making the right choices, can help to reduce damage to the natural environment.

Toni & Mari Haapakoski

Location: Kalmari, in central Finland by the Saarijärvi waterway. Lake Saarijärvi is part of the River Kymijoki catchment area discharging into the Gulf of Finland.

Type of farm: Conventional family farm. Main practice is dairy production.

Farm Koivurinne is a perfect example of how protection of the Baltic Sea starts with water protection at a local level. On the Haapakoski's farm particular attention is paid to efficient use of nutrients from manure production. Precision spreading of manure to the root zone of the soil optimizes its use as a fertilizer and avoids surface runoff. Adding micronutrients and sulphur to the slurry helps the crops take in nutrients more efficiently. Manure-spreading takes place only during the growing season and nitrogenfixing crops are used. The soil structure is maintained with liming, correct draining, and crop rotation. The possible runoff is controlled with green winter cover crops, wide buffer zones and a wetland that is under construction.





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LATVIA



Aivars Kokts

Location: Ulbroka, Stopiņu District.

Type of farm: Pig farm.

Aivars Kokts runs a large pig farm where he has made a great effort both to reduce nutrient runoff and to improve the environment and air quality on and around his farm. SIA Ulbroka is the first farm in Latvia to install special air filters to capture the ammonia gas produced by the manure. By reducing emissions of ammonia into the air, the unpleasant smell has decreased significantly along with nitrogen gas into the surrounding area. Aivars also takes care to ensure that nutrients are returned to the soil by using modern covered manure storage facilities. Moreover, he is eager to find innovative solutions to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases and to minimize his energy consumption. A heat pump makes use of the heat from the manure to balance the temperature and to heat the floor in the barn where the piglets are housed.

"Pig farms are one of the worst polluters in the world so I think I have a great responsibility to run my business in the best possible way for the environment."



Rihards & Vanda Valtenbergi

Location: Valti farm in Skrunda municipality.

Type of farm: Beef cattle, breeding fish, pigs and some crop production.

The Valti farm utilizes sedimentation ponds in a creative and productive way where the collected nutrients are used to sustain organic aquaculture. This, in addition to many other measures such as crop rotation and a closed mineral cycle, sets an admirable example of how farmers can fight eutrophication.



"We want to leave a clean environment for coming generations. That is more important than the forgone income from short-term intensive farming."

Guntars Dolmanis

Location: Lielkruzes farm, north-eastern Latvia.

Type of farm: Crop production and fish ponds.

Working only with organic methods for crop production for the past 15 years, Guntars Dolmanis also runs different educational projects to spread information about environmental friendly farming. The farm practices crop rotation, where nitrogen fixating plants are incorporated, ensuring that subsequent plants have access to biologically fixated nitrogen from the soil. The farm also includes certified fish ponds, located next to the fields to collect runoff from the farm. The mud from the ponds is stockpiled in the lowest situated pond and used to fertilize the fields.

On Lielkruzes farm Guntars Dolmanis uses organic methods for growing crops. The crops produced are used to feed both farm animals and farmed fish.



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LITHUANIA



Jonas Sidaravičius

Location: Paterai village, located between the lakes of Snaigynas and Skaistis.

Type of farm: Sheep, crop production and forestry.

Jonas Sidaravičius implements very diverse measures on his farm and is very personally engaged. His farm is not ecologically certified, which means that almost all the measures he employs are done on a voluntary basis. This farm can serve as a good example for other farmers on how some measures can be made by quite simple means. Such measures include laying a clay foundation in the barn to prevent contamination of groundwater and using tree buffer strips stretching 200 meters to reduce the impact of rainfall on arable land as well as reduce runoff. Sheep manure is kept in the barn during winter and placed in compact piles outside during the spring, covered with plastic wrap to reduce nitrogren losses.



"It is an inner desire for me to live in a beautiful and healthy environment with sufficient space for wildlife."

Arūnas & Daiva Giedrikai

Location: Pabirze rural district, Birzai district.

Type of farm: Organic gardening and horticultural production, no animals.

The Giedrikai couple runs a well-managed environmentally-friendly farm in a part of Lithuania characterized by karst formations. Nutrient leaching is more intense in this part of the country and therefore it is especially important to reduce the amount of nitrogen and phosphorus. The Giedrikai family farm is organic and produces vegetables in a four year crop rotation system. No pesticides are used and only natural fertilizers such as compost and green manure are applied to the soil. Mustard is used as groundcover between the vegetables and every four years a separate cover crop, such as lupines, is used to replenish the soil with nitrogen. The Giedrikai couple has also planted buffer strips of trees and large fields of shrubs to fight against wind and water erosion. This is also a way to improve conditions for birds and other wildlife, creating bird migration corridors.

"We always knew we wanted to live in harmony with nature. Our knowledge about the environmental problems caused by the agricultural sector evoked our interest in working with these methods."







Vladas Gricius & Aušra Griciuvienė

Location: Gricius Farm, Kretinga district in northwestern Lithuania.

Type of farm: Cattle and crop production.

The Gricius family farm has limited the nutrient emissions from their farm in several ways. To prevent nutrients from escaping the farm they use water protection zones along the water bodies and manure is stored in a special area and used to fertilize arable land, ploughed directly into the soil after its distribution. Special measures to protect the biodiversity of the meadow, the main part of the farm, have also been taken.

For more information on agricultural best practices in Lithuania contact:

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SWEDEN



Håkan & Teri Lee Eriksson

Location: Wiggeby farm on Ekerö island in Lake Mälaren.

Type of farm: Crop production.

Håkan and Teri Lee Eriksson are dedicated to showing how a farm can apply environmental measures to reduce nitrogen and phosphorus losses. By using modern and innovative techniques that are being systematically documented, nutrient losses have been significantly reduced. According to instant calculations based on 'in field' readings using an N sensor the farm can accurately dose the level of fertilizer needed on the crops.

While an N sensor is an expensive investment, several farmers can cooperate and share the costs of one sensor.

The farm also includes permanent grass buffer zones, six meters wide along major drainage ditches and a sedimentation pond they created to reduce phosphorus seepage into the aquatic environment. Finally they aim to plant 75 percent of the farm's tilled land with a catch crop over the winter to minimize surface runoff.

For more information on the farm:

www.odlingibalans.com/Pilotgardar/Wiggeby/wiggeby

The N sensor continuously measures the nitrogen content of the field and adjusts the application dose of fertilizer being applied at that exact location.



Bertil Aspnäs

Location: Ragnabo Dämme, Kalmar County.

Type of farm: Crop production.

Bertil Aspnäs showcases the importance of having a balance between nature and agriculture, and that what is good for the environment is also beneficial to the farm. By modifying and reconditioning existing drainage systems nutrient losses have been prevented. Creating a system of controlled drainage pits that control the influx and duration of nutrients in the soil for a longer time period has helped reduce the overall leakage from the soil. The farm also benefits in several ways from the controlled circulation of water. For example harvests are guaranteed even in dry years since water supply only varies slightly. Another important accomplishment includes the wetland Bertil has constructed to further filter the outlet water and which also increases the biodiversity on his farm.

For more information on the farm:

http://ragnabodata.se/damme

"I was raised on this farm and for me it is important that we take care of what we leave for coming generations."





Fredrik Andersson & Johan Lindgren

Location: Vallentuna, Stockholm county.

Fredrik Andersson and Johan Lindgren were awarded for a number of environmental projects they have carried through together with local farmers to inspire the actions of other farmers to reduce nutrient runoff. Fredrik Andersson and Johan Lindgren are the chairmen of two local groups of farmers organized within the Federation of Swedish Farmers. They have played an important role as sources of inspiration promoting new and efficient techniques. Together with their farming colleagues they have started projects and received grants for applying structural liming, sampling, soil mapping and seeding of pastures to reduce erosion. Structural liming is considered to have a very good effect for phosphorus leakage. If conditions are favourable it can reduce leakage by up to 50 percent. By using an active structural lime instead of conventional lime, phosphorus is kept in the ground but can still easily be taken up by the crops. Fredrik Andersson and Johan Lindgren have also taken part in the network "Greppa näringen" - or "Catch the Nutrients", a project providing information to farmers about how to reduce their nutrient runoff.

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GERMANY Wilfried Littman

Location: Neetzower Agrarhof Peenetal GmbH holding - Municipality of Liepen, Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania.

Type of farm: Conventional crop production.

Wilfried Littman has developed an advanced digital agricultural management system called ADAM that generates site-specific application maps in order to avoid over-fertilization in his farming. His objective is to use precision farming technologies to optimize the use of fertilizers. Via this system all relevant measures regarding the inventory management of arable land are logged semi-automatically and with georeference. These provide a foundation for transparent documentation and follow up analysis of nutrient balances and are applied to sowing, fertilisation, plant protection and harvest.

Wilfried uses a Digital Agricultural Management System - to optimize the use of fertilizers and avoid over-fertilization.



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MEASURES THAT CAN REDUCE

Here are the main measures practiced by the winners of the WWF

GENERAL MEASURES

Zoning of farmland, i.e. using different levels of intensity in farming on different parts of the farm, can ensure that land-use is optimized to avoid nutrient leakage and to preserve biodiversity.

Restoration and re-creation of wetlands can be a highly effective solution for reducing nutrient runoff on farm or landscape level. Wetlands absorb nutrients and store them in growing biomass and in sediments.

Planting trees and brushes between fields can help reduce nutrient runoff and will support local biodiversity.

Cooperation and skill-sharing on nutrient reduction measures among farmers can multiply good initiatives and support inventive practices.



ALENA WATEIN

NUTRIENT LOSSES ON FARMS

Baltic Sea Farmer of the Year Award 2009, 2010 and 2011.

ANIMAL PRODUCTION

Unfortunately, many farms around the Baltic Sea still store manure directly on open ground. This practice should be avoided. Instead, manure should be stored in a way that prevents leaching before the manure is spread on the fields.

Having a solid barn foundation – for example made of clay or concrete – prevents urine from livestock from penetrating into the groundwater. It can be absorbed by litter and manure on the barn floor.

One way to handle manure is to keep it in the barn during winter and place it in compact piles outside during spring, covered with plastic wrap to reduce nitrogen (ammonia) losses.

Another method is to store manure in tightly closed containers to reduce gas emissions.

Manure storage should have an impermeable base, such as concrete. Manure can be stored in slurry tanks before spreading it on the fields.

Adding basalt dust to manure absorbs ammonia.

Manure management – how much, when and how it is spread, over how large area, and how the soil is prepared - is important to optimize the use of the nutrients.

Reducing the number of animals per hectare helps to ensure that the soil can absorb all the manure.

Cleaning stalls, coops and cages without water prevents runoff to surrounding waters.

Adding sulphur and micro-nutrients to manure sludge can help crops use the nutrients more efficiently, thereby reducing fertilizer amounts.

Ammonia produces local air quality problems but is also a source of eutrophication. Excess ammonia can be reduced on the front-end by using lower levels of protein in the feed and at the back-end by installing air-filters in the stalls.

Keeping permanent grasslands for grazing can lower nutrient runoff, help store more carbon in the ground, and preserve biodiversity.

CROP PRODUCTION

Crop rotation, intercrops and undersown crops keep a good nutrient balance in the soil. In crop rotation, nitrogenfixating plants ensure that subsequent plants have access to biologically fixated nitrogen.

Keeping the soil covered by plants all year round – even during winter – fixates nutrients to the soil surface.

Permanent grass buffer zone along major drainage ditches, riversides and lakes reduces runoff from agriculture.

Likewise, trees can be planted around fields to reduce the impact of rainfall on arable land and to reduce runoff.

Documenting everything that is done on the farm in a database provides a tool for follow-up analysis.

Calculation of nutrient balance as well as chemical analysis of the soil ensures the appropriate amount of fertilizer is used.

An N sensor helps in applying an accurate rate of fertilizer on the crops according to instant calculations based on "in field" readings.

Sedimentation ponds reduce phosphorus seepage into the aquatic environment. They can also be used for aquaculture.

Manure should only be spread during the growing season.

Recultivating deserted peat mines avoids the erosion of residual peat.

Manure should be ploughed into the soil right after it has been distributed

Fertilizer can be procured in innovative ways.

In Estonia, for instance, a farmer cooperates with a cheese factory and receives the residues from the factory's wastewater treatment plant.

Direct seeding of grasslands for silage and hay – i.e. seeding without previous tillage – minimizes soil disturbance and reduces erosion.

No-till farming, combined with innovative machinery for sowing, fertilizer application and harvesting, can allow for a permanently covered soil and precision fertilizing, thereby minimizing nutrient runoff.

Structural liming of soils increases water permeability, thereby reducing surface water runoff and thus also reducing runoff of nutrients, especially phosphorus. Better structure of the soil will also facilitate tilling thereby reducing fuel consumption.



WWF BALTIC ECOREGION PROGRAMME

THE FOLLOWING ORGANIZATIONS ARE LEAD PARTNERS

WITHIN THE WWF BALTIC ECOREGION PROGRAMME:

WWF Denmark (www.wwf.dk)

WWF Finland (www.wwf.fi)

WWF Germany (www.wwf.de)

WWF Poland (www.wwf.pl)

WWF Russia (www.wwf.ru)

WWF Sweden (www.wwf.se)

Baltic Fund for Nature (Russia – www.bfn.org.ru)

Estonian Fund for Nature (www.elfond.ee)

Lithuanian Fund for Nature (www.glis.lt)

Pasaules Dabas Fonds (Latvia - www.pdf.lv)

WWF BALTIC SEA FARMER OF THE YEAR AWARD 2011

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WWF Baltic Ecoregion Programme

DELIVERING RESULTS

We are an active and effective agent of change in the conservation and sustainable management of the Baltic Sea

REGIONAL NETWORK

We represent the largest membership network in the region and are represented in all the countries surrounding the Baltic Sea



REGIONAL POLICY We are and continue to be a watchdog that monitors how

governments manage our common resource the Baltic Sea

We promote constructive interactions to create awareness, spread ideas and stimulate discussion among stakeholders and partners



Why we are here

To stop the degradation of the planet's natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature.

www.panda.org