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WWF Baltic Sea Farmer of the Year Award 2009

WWF Baltic Ecoregion Programme 2009



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Farmers make a difference



We cannot stop the eutrophication of the Baltic Sea without the active engagement of farmers. The WWF Baltic Sea Farmer of the Year Award competition has highlighted the important role that farmers play in protecting the Baltic Sea and has illustrated some impressive examples of how farmers are taking innovative approaches and moving towards a more Baltic-friendly farming.

THE WIDE AND IMPRESSIVE RANGE of measures taken by the farmers in this competition show that, although basic conditions may vary, every farmer can do something to significantly reduce nutrient runoff from their farm. Irrespective of the type of farming, organic or conventional, important changes in farming practices are advancing the application, and promotion, of good environmental practice in the region.

The winners of this competition also reflect the different country-specific contexts and standards of agrarian measures in the Baltic Sea region. The environmental prerequisites differ as well as national jurisdictions and legislation. However, controlled drainage, advanced digital farming systems and careful handling of manure, to mention but a few examples from the national winners, are all important measures that have proven effective in reducing runoff from farms. They are also examples which should serve as inspiration and as models for other farmers from around the region to follow.



Farmers are on the front lines when it comes to the fight against eutrophication.



Photo: Orlando G. Bestrom / IBL

Raising the awareness

Important changes are nevertheless needed in several areas to make it easier for farmers who want to take active action in the fight against eutrophication of the Baltic Sea.

The winners interviewed in this brochure call for more support from national as well as international decision makers in moving towards a new vision for rural Europe to combat problems such as eutrophication of the Baltic Sea.

A significant obstacle mentioned by many farmers is the lack of information available to them as to how farming practices actually affect the health of the Baltic Sea. Additionally, they would like more information about steps they can take to protect and pre-

serve the unique Baltic Sea environment. We hope that this competition can begin to provide farmers with some of the information they need as well as be a source of knowledge and inspiration for more farmers in the region.

Exchange of experience

There is a growing need to exchange experiences between farmers, farmers' organisations and authorities on the effectiveness of approaches and measures to reduce nutrient losses.

With this competition, new opportunities are now available for different sectors in society to collaborate. We hope this will open doors and encourage new partnerships to develop between farmers, authorities and environmental NGOs in the region in

order to advance cooperation on this important matter. Farmers are on the front lines when it comes to the fight against eutrophication. Their awareness and views are of critical importance to make a difference. Farmers who are taking active actions towards more sustainable farming practices are, unfortunately, still too few. Those who are leading by example, such as the winners highlighted in this year's competition, deserve to be honoured and celebrated. If more farmers followed their good examples, further eutrophication of the Baltic Sea could be significantly reduced. We therefore hope these winners will inspire other farmers with their excellent examples of best practice in moving towards a more Baltic-friendly farming.

The Baltic Sea suffers from serious environmental

The Baltic Sea, surrounded by nine countries and home to some 90 million people, suffers from serious environmental problems. Eutrophication has been identified as the single most important threat to its health, the major cause of which comes from agricultural runoff from around the region.

THE BALTIC SEA is one of the largest brackish water seas in the world. It provides a range of goods and services that the people living in the surrounding countries are critically dependent on.

150 years ago the Baltic Sea was a nutrient-poor, clear water sea. It is now seriously affected by eutrophication, or nutrient overloading. Every summer, large areas of the Baltic Sea are plagued by widespread algal blooms, one of the most visible effects of the increasing eutrophication process.

Large amounts of nutrients are released into the Baltic Sea each year, mainly as a result of modern farming practices and the use of artificial fertilisers. Other nutrient sources include forestry, industrial and municipal wastewater, shipping and car emissions.

The two main nutrients causing eutrophication are nitrogen and phosphorus, deriving mainly from agricultural runoff from the surrounding drainage basin. Agricultural practices are responsible for 40 percent of the phosphorus and 60 percent of the nitrogen emissions (HELCOM 2009).

Although a decline in the nutrient loading has been observed in recent years, little change in eutrophic effects has been recorded. Today the Baltic Sea contains 800 percent more phosphorus than it did 100 years ago! It is also one of the most threatened marine ecosystems on the planet.

Global warming is stimulating eutrophication as higher temperatures and precipitation levels in the Baltic Sea region will cause an increase in runoff to the Baltic Sea. Climate change together with the development of agriculture in the new EU countries



Photos pages 4 & 5: Ola Jernsten

around the Baltic Sea are expected to worsen the conditions considerably if no measures are taken to reduce the harmful nutrient inputs to the Baltic Sea.

Efforts made ...

Since the 1970's, several recommendations have been adopted to limit nutrient discharges to the sea from all sectors, including industry, municipal wastewater treatment and agriculture.

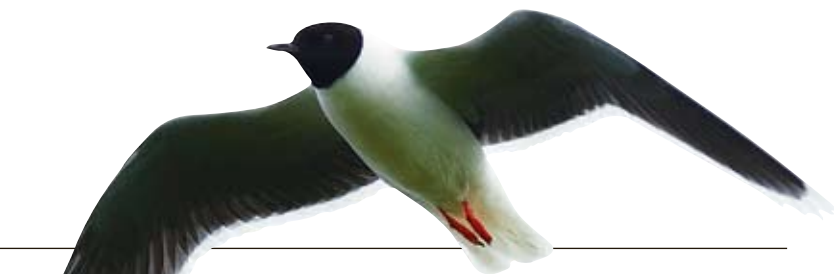
The Helsinki Commission, HELCOM, works to protect the marine environment of the Baltic Sea through inter-governmental cooperation among the surrounding countries. Since the late 1980s, HELCOM has been working to implement a 50 percent reduc-

tion target for nutrient emissions and discharges. The Baltic Sea Action Plan (BSAP), adopted by HELCOM in 2007, emphasizes the problem of eutrophication and reaffirms the commitment to reduce nutrient loads from waterborne and airborne inputs.

... are not enough

However, the follow-up of the implementation of these agreements make it clear that much remains to be done. None of the Baltic Sea states have come even close to implementing satisfactory measures to address the problem of eutrophication. In order to achieve "clear water", which is one of the main objectives of the HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan, phosphorous and nitrogen inputs to the Baltic Sea

ental problems



“ Large amounts of nutrients are released into the Baltic Sea each year, mainly as a result of modern farming practices and the use of artificial fertilisers.

Photo: Johanna_Tunela_Ilja-Saromaa_WWF

must be cut further by about 42 percent and 18 percent, respectively². Further action is required in several areas and reduction of nutrient losses from agricultural runoff is urgently needed to ensure the sustainable development of the Baltic Sea. We have a duty to future generations to deliver, not just commit to, decisive action now.

¹ Encyclopedia of World Environmental History, Shepard Krech, John Robert McNeill, Carolyn Merchant, Routledge 2004

² <http://www.helcom.fi/BSAP>

³ Sehestad, H., Keul, N., Torndeldt, S., Erichsen A. and J.H. Andersen. 2007. Baltic Sea Oxygen Maps 2000 – 2006. BALANCE Interim Report. No. 17.

Some of the negative effects of the nutrient overload of the past century

An overload of nutrients causes certain algae to grow at the expense of other species, and the normal functioning of the ecosystem is disrupted. When large quantities of these microscopic algae multiply, we see them as a greenish or brownish coloured layer on the sea surface, or as a thick 'soup' in the water – an algal bloom. When the algae later die, oxygen is consumed as the algae decompose and sink to the sea bottom, resulting in oxygen-low or oxygen-free areas with little or no life – so called “dead zones”. Dead zones have now been measured to cover up to 100,000 km² of the bottom of the Baltic Sea³.

Other examples of negative effects:

- The growth of plants and algae is exces-

sive. Annuals such as green and brown filamentous algae have grown at the expense of the perennial bladder wrack, which in turn has had severe impacts on the ecosystem.

- Algal blooms, some of them even toxic, are a frequent phenomenon in the summer months for the Baltic Sea.
- Water transparency has decreased by 2.5–3 meters.
- There are changes in fish species composition. Economically less valuable fish species are thriving, inhibiting the reproduction and survival of the Baltic cod.
- There is a decrease in the number and spread of predatory fish, such as pike and pike-perch, in coastal waters.

The time for change is now

Agriculture accounts for roughly half of the nutrient inputs leading to the eutrophication of the Baltic Sea. In order to help farmers adopt more sustainable farming practices, and to save the Baltic Sea, agricultural policies within the EU must be reformed.

THE GENERAL TREND WITHIN European agriculture over the past fifty years has been one of intensification and specialisation. This has resulted in fewer and larger farms. Mixed farming is not as common anymore and a greater emphasis is put on monocultures and substantive use of artificial inputs. After the Second World War the industrialisation of agriculture developed rapidly and the use of fertilisers was promoted to achieve bigger harvests to feed a growing population. The use of nutrients has continued to increase with the extensive use of EU subsidies to European farmers, accounting for almost half of the total EU budget. Eutrophication of the Baltic Sea is partly a consequence of agricultural policies that

have promoted intensive agriculture and the use of chemical fertilisers.

EU policies play a major role

The current state of health of the Baltic Sea makes it clear that the time has come for EU and its Member States to develop and implement regulations and policies to reduce eutrophication. A major solution to the problem is to be found in the promotion of more sustainable farming and land management practices. Successive reforms of the EU's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) have started the process of putting agriculture on a more sustainable footing, removing production incentives. But much remains to be done.

We urgently need a new vision for

rural Europe and steps must be taken now to make that vision a reality. WWF believes sustainable agriculture is agriculture that produces safe, affordable and healthy food in ways that are ecologically responsible, economically viable and socially equitable. A fundamental principle of sustainable agriculture must be that it does not damage or deplete the very natural resources on which agriculture itself depends.

WWF calls on European and national decision makers to:

- Make full use of existing CAP measures to combat eutrophication of the Baltic Sea, achieve better management of land and water resources, reverse the decline in biodiversity and adapt, and mitigate, to climate change.
- Engage in a full and open debate about the future of the EU budget and the need for substantial reform of the CAP to create a new fund focused on sustainable land management and rural development.
- Work in partnership with environmental NGOs, farmers' representatives and others to develop a new Common Environment and Rural Policy for implementation in 2019.

Time for reform

Europe's decision makers have a responsibility to citizens and taxpayers to address the many environmental problems of the past and forge a new and sustainable future for Europe's rural areas. Agricultural policies within the EU must be reformed if we want to save the Baltic Sea.



Photo: Michaela Renie / Scampix

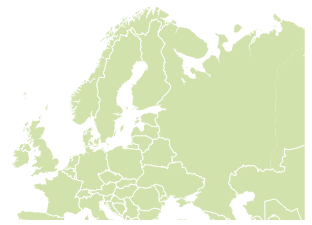


Photo: Ola Jennersten



The current state of health of the Baltic Sea makes it clear that the time has come for EU and its Member States to develop and implement regulations and policies to reduce eutrophication.

Principles for a new rural policy:

Some key principles should underpin all future investment in rural areas:

- ‘The Polluter Pays Principle’: all public payments should be underpinned by a strong regulatory floor and the application of the ‘polluter pays’ principle. All beneficiaries in receipt of public payments should be able to demonstrate compliance with standards established by EU and national legislation such as the Nitrates Directive.
- ‘Public Payments for Public Goods’: public money should only be used for the

provision of public goods. A broad definition of public goods should be applied including: the regulation of environmental functions such as sustainable water management, carbon sequestration and soil protection; the provision of environmental benefits such as the preservation of biodiversity and habitat protection and the maintenance of valued cultural and historic landscapes; and, the provision of non-environmental benefits such as public access and enjoyment, rural employment and the socioeconomic viability of rural areas.



Photo: Germund Selgren

- ‘Payments should be linked to the delivery of clear objectives and targets’: these payments and objectives should reflect the defined environmental and socio-economic needs of rural areas.
- ‘Information on payments made to all beneficiaries should be in the public domain’: to ensure that the use of public funds is transparent and open to public scrutiny.

Presenting the Baltic Sea Farmer of the Year

To highlight the role of farmers and the good work they are already doing, WWF, together with Swedbank, and in partnership with the Baltic Farmers Forum for the Environment and farmers' organisations from around the Baltic Sea, created the Baltic Sea Farmer of the Year Award.

THE EUTROPHICATION OF the Baltic Sea should be a common concern for all of us. It affects all of the countries surrounding the Sea and we all share the responsibility to stop it. The importance of sustainable agriculture to reduce the threat of eutrophication to the Baltic Sea cannot be underestimated. Farmers around the Sea have an opportunity to contribute and change the current situation by reducing the nutrient losses from their farms – a true challenge.

The Baltic Sea Farmer of the Year Award is an annual competition intended to inspire farmers from around the entire Baltic region to take an active part in combating eutrophication.

In this brochure we proudly present the regional winner of the competition of 2009, as well as the remaining seven national winners; farmers from Estonia, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania,

Poland, Russia and Sweden who have taken important steps to implement more sustainable farming practices.

The nomination of the national winners has been carried out by WWF and our partner organisations around the Baltic Sea, in cooperation with farmers' and advisory organisations and, in some cases, the Ministry of Agriculture in respective countries.

The examples presented by the national winners illustrate a truly impressive and diverse range of effective measures being applied to reduce the threat of eutrophication. We hope that these examples will inspire more farmers to take active action, and we also hope that they will promote further collaboration between different sectors around the region on this issue. We need to work together if we want to stop the eutrophication of our Baltic Sea.

Our vision is to continue this competition each year, providing more farmers with an opportunity to inspire others with their good work.

So read on – we believe you too will be inspired!

The members of the international jury are

- **Lasse Gustavsson**, Chair
WWF Sweden and Chair of the WWF Baltic Ecoregion Programme
- **Johanna Ikävalko**, Baltic Farmers Forum for the Environment
- **Professor Enn Loigu**, Institute of Environmental Engineering, Tallinn University of Technology
- **Lars-Göran Pettersson**, LRF, the Federation of Swedish Farmers
- **Hans Wennberg**, Swedbank



Photos: Oja Jemmers ten

Award Competition



“ The examples presented by the national winners illustrate a truly impressive and diverse range of effective measures being applied to reduce the threat of eutrophication.

Photo: Oia Jannersten



Finland – Katariina Vapola & Jyrki Ankelo

Chosen as the regional winners of the competition, the Finnish couple Katariina Vapola and Jyrki Ankelo have implemented a number of Baltic-friendly measures which they look forward to sharing with other farmers.



“AS THE WINNERS OF THIS competition we have a duty to tell people about the importance of stopping the eutrophication of the Baltic Sea,” says Katariina.

She and Jyrki Ankelo have an organic farm which includes livestock such as breeding stock and suckler cows. The methods used on the farm - wintertime green cover, direct sowing, as well as organic production – have successfully reduced the leaching of nutrients from the farm. In grassland cultivation, for example, the greatest risks of nutrient leaching, and also of greenhouse gas emissions, are associated with ploughing. Renewing the grassland by direct sowing reduces these risks.

“We believe that by doing our part to conserve water we can reduce the total amount of nutrient runoff,” says Katariina Vapola.

Furthermore, on Vapola farm, nutrient effluents from the cattle exercise yard and from pastures are taken care of by a sedimentation basin and a constructed wetland. To reduce ammonia emissions, the manure yards have been covered. The use of a concrete base when storing manure for composting also prevents the leaching of nutrients.

The farm has also chosen to monitor nutrient balances in order to aid fertiliser planning. The only fertiliser used is well-composted dry manure from the farm’s own cattle and small quantities of cattle slurry, which is spread on the grassland during the growing season using a precision spreader.

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. For farmers, encouragement and motivation, as well as the sharing of information, are critical factors needed to promote environmental friendly measures.



Jyrki Ankelo, his wife Katariina Vapola and two of their children, the boys Tuomas and Jussi, aged 2 and 4. Their daughter Elsa, age 7, was at school when the picture was taken.



“The jury is proud to present Ms. Katariina Vapola and Mr. Jyrki Ankelo of Finland with the WWF Baltic Sea Farmer of the Year Award 2009 for their strong and long commitment to environmental protection; for the high number of innovative measures to reduce nutrient runoff that have been implemented on their farm; and for the jury’s belief that most of these measures could easily be replicated and duplicated by other farmers around the Baltic Sea.”



Members of the National Jury

Sampsa Vilhunen, Marine Expert,
WWF Finland

Johanna Ikävalko, Head of Environmental
Affairs, MTK

Helena Ålgars, Attorney with the Central
Union of Swedish-Speaking Agricultural
Producers in Finland (Svenska Lant-
brukarnas Centralförbund SLC)

Marjatta Kemppainen-Mäkelä,
Senior Inspector, Ministry of Agriculture
and Forestry

Sari Peltonen, Plant Product Group
Director, The Association of ProAgria
Centres

Tarja Haaranen, Environment Counsellor,
Ministry of the Environment

Maaseudun Tulevaisuus ("The Rural
Future"), Editor-In-Chief Lauri Kontro

WWF Finland's wetland project

In 2008, WWF Finland launched a field project on wetlands which focuses on building wetlands in agricultural landscapes within the drainage area of the Archipelago Sea. Wetlands are considered to be one of the most cost-effective methods to reduce nutrient runoff due to erosion from agricultural lands. Moreover, wetlands help support and conserve biodiversity, as many plants, birds and other animals depend on wetlands for their survival.

Besides actually re-constructing full scale wetlands, WWF Finland's wetland project also includes advising local farmers on the importance of agricultural wetlands and sharing the latest research in order help them improve their wetland's nutrient retention capacity.

Photo: Thomas Öberg

Estonia – Toivo Kens



Dairy farmer Toivo Kens, the Estonian winner, has engaged in a successful cooperation with a nearby cheese factory, thereby gaining environmental benefits for his farm as well as a neighbouring 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 fertiliser for its fields.



Toivo Kens has put a strong emphasis on manure management and the production of fodder on the farm. Viraito has constructed several advanced manure tanks with no leakage.

THE VIRAITO FARM CONSISTS of 650 hectares of arable land located in the Baltic Sea drainage basin in inland Estonia. The nitrate-sensitive limestone area allows polluted water to easily leak into the groundwater. Thus, all efforts to reduce nutrient leakage are important. However, when Toivo Kens decided to establish his dairy farm, he was not initially concerned with the environmental aspects of this.

"At that time, none of us thought of the Baltic Sea or its protection, but since we are located in a sensitive area we had special environmental obligations to follow," says Toivo Kens. Although the farm is not entirely organic, it has completed several very successful projects in order to reduce its leakage to surrounding water bodies. Among the most effective

is the cooperation with the nearby cheese factory, which earlier was unable to treat its waste water properly. In a joint project with Toivo's dairy farm, the cheese factory constructed its own treatment plant, providing the treatment residues to the farm, which are directly applied to the fields as fertiliser.

Toivo Kens has also put a strong emphasis on manure management and the production of fodder on the farm. Viraito has constructed several advanced manure tanks with no leakage. Manure is pumped out through underground pipelines and all of the manure can be applied in the exact amounts needed. Moreover, fodder is produced at just the amount required to create a closed nutrient cycle at the farm. Toivo believes that there is a strong need for farmers to receive more information on the effects of farming practices on the environment.

"I think researchers should put more effort into explaining how the health of the Baltic Sea is affected by the activities of the farmers and what connection there is between them," says Toivo Kens.



Estonian Fund for Nature

In Estonia the competition was carried out by the Estonian Farmers' Union and the Estonian Fund for Nature – ELF. ELF is an environmental NGO which aims to preserve Estonian nature and biodiversity. Since 1991, the voluntary civic association, in co-operation with a number of supporting individuals and organisations, has led various wildlife conservation projects in Estonia. For several years ELF has worked within the WWF Baltic Ecoregion Programme to ensure the sustainable development of, and address the most important threats facing, the Baltic Sea.

Members of the National Jury

Kaul Nurm, CEO,
Estonian Farmers' Union

Indrek Rohtma, Advisor,
Estonian Farmers' Union

Kristjan Piirimäe, Eutrophication Expert,
Estonian Fund for Nature

Kaia Lepik, Rural Development
Expert, Estonian Fund for Nature



Germany – Wilfried Littmann



The German winner of the WWF Baltic Sea Farmer of the Year Award, Wilfried Littmann, has developed an advanced digital farm management system in order to avoid over-fertilisation in his farming.

“I KNOW THAT ECONOMIC GROWTH, viability and environmental friendly farming methods are not mutually exclusive, but rather can complement each other,” he says.

Wilfried Littmann began his experiment more than ten years ago. His objective is to use precision farming technologies to optimise the use of fertilisers and pesticides. His holdings include 1,870 hectares of arable land, located in Mecklenburg in northern Germany where he practices conventional crop farming. Together with his partners, he developed the digital agricultural management system ADAM, based on his basic idea.

“Through modern agricultural technology we were able to derive sound fertilisation optimization by automated logging of actions performed in the field,” he says.

Through the results obtained from intense data analysis, it is possible to estimate yield potentials for different holding sites. In combination with targeted nitrogen fertilization tests, nutrients balances could be kept low. In the beginning economic considerations were most important to Wilfried Littmann who highlights that saving operational resources without reducing plant yields is a way to realise economic growth.

“In my opinion, the development of technical equipment which can be used independently by farmers is the basis for an effective improvement of agricultural practices,” he says.

Members of the National Jury

Werner Ambros, German Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Consumer Protection

Uwe Schleuss, German Ministry of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Development

Kai-Uwe Kachel, German Ministry of Agriculture, Environment and Consumer Protection



“In my opinion, the development of technical equipment which can be used independently by farmers is the basis for an effective improvement of agricultural practices,” says the German winner Wilfried Littmann.

In the right direction

Although nitrogen surpluses still need to come down further, an overall promising trend can be seen in Germany. Since the German reunification, the average nitrogen balance surplus of German agricultural land has decreased by almost 40 percent.

The main reason for this reduction is increased yields with no increase in the amount of fertilisers. More nutrients are thus removed from the farm in the harvested crops. In Germany, rules on the use of

fertilisers are specified in detail and made compulsory in the Federal Fertiliser Ordinance, making them mandatory for the entire territory. The implementation of the rules is supported by advisory and education measures and a system of field research by the Länder authorities on a regional level. Nitrogen balances prove the effectiveness of the action programmes against nitrogen losses, providing immediate information on relevant input and output quantities.

Latvia – Guntars Dolmanis



Working only with organic methods for over 15 years, the Latvian winner, Guntars Dolmanis, also runs different educational projects to spread information about environmental friendly farming.

“THERE ARE QUITE A LOT OF FARMERS who are interested in environmental friendly farming but many of them are not ready to implement these ideas until they are able to see good examples in practice,” he says.

On the Lielkruzes farm, in north eastern Latvia, organic methods are used for growing crops. The crops produced are used to feed animals on the farm and the manure from the live-stock is used as fertiliser on the fields. The farm also practices crop rotation, where nitrogen-fixating plants are incorporated, ensuring that subsequent plants have access to biologically fixated nitrogen from the soil. Finally, the farm contains several 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 is used to fertilise the fields.

“In the beginning we started fish farming as a way to use a part of the farm that could not be used for agriculture and to produce fish for ourselves, but with time this system appeared to have a positive impact on the entire ecosystem,” says Guntars Dolmanis.

For the last few years, Guntars Dolmanis has been engaged in education and ecotourism activities on the farm through the association “Vides Biedriba Kruzes”.

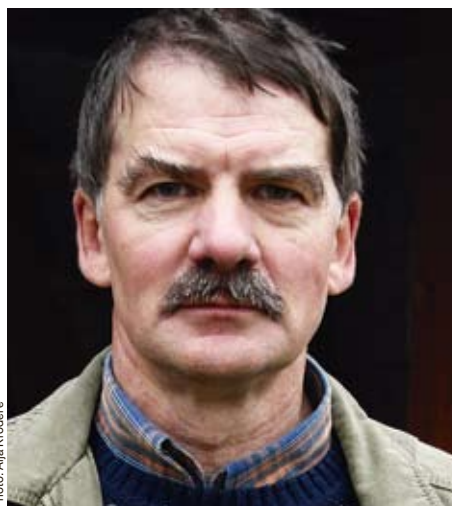


Photo: Alja Krodere



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



Pasaules Dabas Fonds The Latvian Rural Advisory and Training Centre

Pasaules Dabas Fonds is the most well-known environmental conservation organisation in Latvia and an important WWF partner. For several years Pasaules Dabas Fonds has worked within the WWF Baltic Ecoregion Programme to ensure the sustainable development of, and address the most important threats facing, the Baltic Sea. Pasaules Dabas Fonds is working to promote Baltic Sea friendly land use practices in Latvia and increase farmers' knowledge and awareness about the links between land-use practices and the eutrophication of the Baltic Sea.

The Latvian Rural Advisory and Training Centre is the largest and most widespread rural consultancy enterprise, covering the entire territory of Latvia.

The centre was established to facilitate rural development by improving the professional and economic knowledge of rural entrepreneurs; organise consulting and training in all districts; increase the competitiveness of the rural population in the European Union and organise post-graduate education for the staff of the institutions reporting to the Ministry of Agriculture.

Members of the National Jury

Ilze Skudra, Latvian Rural Advisory and Training Centre

Kaspars Zurins, Latvian Rural Advisory and Training Centre

Ugis Rotbergs, Pasaules Dabas Fonds



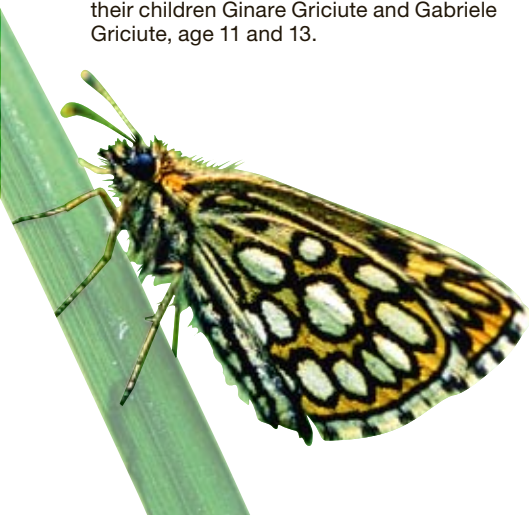
Lithuania – Vladas Gricius & Aušra Griciuvienė



Ausra Griciuvienė and her husband Vladas Gricius are the Lithuanian winners of the WWF Baltic Sea Farmer of the Year Award. They run a partly organic farm together.



The Gricius family consists of Vladas Gricius, his wife Aušra Griciuvienė and their children Ginare Griciute and Gabriele Griciute, age 11 and 13.



Members of the National Jury

Pranas Mierauskas, Chairman,
Head of Programme, Lithuanian Fund
for Nature

Roveta Budreviciute, Head of Agro-
Environment and Ecological Farming
Division, Ministry of Agriculture

Kristina Narvidiene, Senior Specialist,
Agriculture Division, Lithuanian Agri-
culture Service

Meile Taraskeviciene, Journalist,
“Valstieciu Laikrastis” (“Farmer
Newspaper”)

THE GRICIUS FARM is located in the Kretinga district in northwestern Lithuania. It consists of 200 hectares of which 40 hectares are organic.

“We hope organic farming is the future of farming and as more farmers join us, the environment will be cleaner and the food healthier,” says Ausra Griciuvienė.

The Griciuvienė couple have tried to limit nutrient emissions in several ways. The main part of the farm includes a meadow area with around 90 cows. In order to prevent nutrients from escaping the farm uses water protection zones along water bodies, and manure is stored in a special area and used to fertilise arable land. Manure is not kept in open fields and it is ploughed into the soil just after it has been distributed. Special measures have also been taken on the farm in order to protect the biodiversity of the meadows.

“Farmers can help stop the eutrophication of the Baltic Sea. As more farmers choose environmental friendly farming, more positive effects will be seen,” says Ausra Griciuvienė.

Lithuanian Fund for Nature

The Lithuanian Fund for Nature (LGF) is a non-governmental nature protection organisation that encourages and supports nature conservation activities. Established in 1991, the fund became the first non-governmental organisation in Lithuania to accumulate funds and provide support to various nature protection programs and projects.

The Lithuanian Fund for Nature carries out its activities in cooperation with state institutions, local authorities, non-governmental and private organisations. Special attention is given to the protection of the Baltic Sea and its coastal area. LGF is an important partner of the WWF Baltic Ecoregion Programme.

Photo butterfly: Oia Jennersten

Poland – Biskup Zbigniew



Unlike many other Polish farmers, the Polish winner of the WWF Baltic Sea Farmer of the Year Award, Biskup Zbigniew, stores and applies his organic manure according to environmental standards.

“THE NATURAL FERTILISERS produced by the animals on my farm replace the expensive chemical ones, so it is worthwhile caring for their appropriate storage,” he says.

Biskup Zbigniew’s farm consists of 140 hectares and is situated in the Pogony river basin, in the catchment area of the Odra River near the city of Poznan in central western Poland. The farm’s primary focus is animal husbandry, producing 3,000 pigs per year. In addition, the farm cultivates cereals and colza (a type of rape-seed).

On the farm, manure is stored in tightly closed containers to reduce gas emissions. Fertilising 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 farm are fertilised 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.

“Many people still believe that industry is the main cause of environmental degradation. Not many of us see that farmed lands are a part of our



environment, and that hazardous substances applied to the land can easily find their way into the natural environment,” says Biskup Zbigniew.

Members of the National Jury

Eugeniusz Chyłek, Polish Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development

Janusz Lesisz, Agriculture Advisory Centre in Brwinów Branch Radom

Tomasz Stachowicz, Agriculture Advisory Centre in Brwinów Branch Radom

Ireneusz Gradka, Agriculture Advisory Centre in Brwinów Branch Radom

Hanna Łukowska, Wielkopolski Agriculture Advisory Centre in Poznan

Ewa Strzeszewska, Mazovian Agriculture Advisory Centre in Warsaw

“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”, says Biskup Zbigniew.

Big challenges ahead

As the largest country in the Baltic Sea catchment, Poland also accounts for the largest percentage of the total nutrient losses to the Baltic Sea. The new environmental programme, developed by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development in Poland, aims to reduce these nutrient losses by providing farmers with advice on the proper use and application of fertilisers and the protection of soils and water.

Poland is responsible for 55 percent of the phosphorous and 36 percent of the nitrogen that flows into the Baltic Sea each year. A big part of these nutrient inputs originate from the country’s 12 million hectares of farmed land. A contributing factor leading to these nutrient losses is the tradition, still practiced on many farms, of storing animal manure directly on the open ground. Another problem is the high density of animals on pig and poultry farms. And finally, even when the facilities for manure storage are adequate, the application of manure in the fields is often spread in too high doses, which leads to leakages.

The high concentration of nitrate and phosphate in ground water is a critical problem in Poland. The new agri-environmental programme aims to build awareness of the urgent need to reduce nutrient losses from farms through information campaigns. The main objective of the programme is to contribute to the sustainable development of rural areas and to maintain biodiversity. The average size of Polish farms is currently only eight hectares so reaching all farmers at a local level remains a big challenge.



Photo: Thomas Öberg



Russia – Angela Kiprushova



The Russian winner Angela Kiprushova 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.

ANGELA KIPRUSHOVA'S FARM is situated on the Olonets plain, on the southeastern coast of Lake Ladoga in one of the oldest rural districts in northwestern Russia. Two years ago, Angela and her husband Nikolay, started crossbreeding to select the most suitable cattle for local conditions and organised a summer pasturing area specifically for young cattle. The free pasturing of cattle, and the regular haymaking, is an effective way to restore and maintain biodiversity on her farm.

"More and more nature tourists visit our region every year, and I hope that my farm will contribute to the area's "rural charm", she says.

Among the measures Angela Kiprushova 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



"We need teaching and professional training for farmers which focuses on environmentally-friendly farming", says Angela Kiprushova.

sewage from the farm. The environmental consciousness in this part of Russia has grown stronger in recent years. However, Angela points out that farmers still lack proper incentives.

"We need teaching and professional training for farmers which focuses on environmentally-friendly farming approaches together with loans for building new cattle yards and cowsheds that take environmentally-friendly technologies into account," she says.

Members of the National Jury

Sergey Rezviy, Baltic Fund for Nature

Kondratiev Alexander, St. Petersburg State University, Expert on Biodiversity Protection in the Agricultural Landscapes

Evgeny Genelt-Yanovskiy, Baltic Fund for Nature



Photos: Oia Jennersten

Baltic Fund for Nature

The Baltic Fund for Nature (BFN) was established in 1995 and works actively to support environmental networks in northwestern Russia. It also promotes international cooperation in the fields of biodiversity and ecosystem protection in the Baltic region and the whole of northern Europe.

BFN supports and takes part in the implementation of research projects to study and preserve biological diversity, endangered species and valuable biotopes in northwestern Russia.

Among its goals is the introduction of European experience in sustainable use, economic practices and especially environmentally friendly agriculture, allowing maintenance of rural landscapes with rich biodiversity.

BFN is also an active partner in the WWF Baltic Ecoregion Programme.



Sweden – Bertil Aspernäs



The Swedish national winner, Bertil Aspernäs, built, modified and reconditioned an existing draining system which prevents nutrient losses from his farm and instead returns these nutrients to the soil. “In this case, what is good for the environment is also a benefit to the farm,” he says.

TOGETHER WITH HIS WIFE, Marie-Louise, Bertil runs a farm of 50 hectares in southeastern Sweden where he cultivates mainly crops, cereal and potato. They both work outside the farm, although they are able to perform most of the farm work themselves and only hire external help with some tasks, such as manure spreading and potato harvesting. Bertil has taken over the farm from his father and over the years has become more concerned with environmental issues such as the eutrophication of the Baltic Sea.

Bertil Aspernäs has created a system of controlled drainage with ten control pits. The pits control the water flux and keep the nutrient in the soil for a longer period, which reduces leakage. By facilitating the circulation of the water and preventing it from leaking out, the farm benefits in several ways. 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.

However, it is mainly due to his concern for the health of the Baltic Sea, rather than the prospect of economic gain, that made Bertil Aspernäs take concrete steps towards reducing his nutrient losses.



“I was raised on this farm and for me it is important that we take care of what we leave for coming generations” says Bertil Aspernäs. Together with his wife, Marie-Louise Aspernäs, he runs a farm of 50 hectares.

Members of the National Jury

Lennart Gladh, Baltic Project Coordinator, WWF Sweden

Markus Hoffman, Water and Eutrophication Expert, LRF
Fredrik Wulff, Professor Emeritus in Marine Systems Ecology, Stockholm University

LRF – The Federation of Swedish Farmers

LRF is the Federation of Swedish Farmers and a partner with WWF in establishing the Baltic Sea Farmer of the Year Award.

“I hope this competition will make the farmers feel that they are rewarded for the good work they are already doing and at the same time inspire them to do more,” says Markus Hoffman, in charge of water issues within LRF.

LRF also contributes to the fight against eutrophication of the Baltic Sea through the campaign “Focus on Nutrients”. Over 30 000 farm visits have been conducted

by LRF to give Swedish farmers individual advice on how to reduce nutrient losses to air and water from livestock and crop production.

“Focus on Nutrients” is a joint venture between the Swedish Board of Agriculture, the County Administration Boards, the Federation of Swedish Farmers and a number of companies and organisations from the farming sector.

“The project has proved to be successful. A majority of the farmers follow our advice,” says Markus Hoffman.

Sponsors ...

Swedbank – a proud sponsor of the WWF Baltic Sea Farmer of the Year Award

“To engage in the environmental threats facing the Baltic Sea is a natural choice since it is something that links our different markets, Sweden and the Baltic countries, closer together,” says Claes Fagerström, Group Sponsorship Manager of Swedbank.

The history of Swedbank is closely linked to the farmers’ movement in Sweden. The bank was established in the early 20th century, emerging out of the Common Agricultural Funds which aimed to provide the growing agricultural sector with the needed financial resources. It later merged with Hansabank and became Swedbank in 2006. Today it is one of the leading banks in Sweden, as well as in the Baltic states.

The current economic crisis in the Baltic states has severely affected the bank as well as its customers. It makes commitments like the sponsoring of the WWF Baltic Sea Farmer of the Year Award even more important, according to Claes Fagerström. Swedbank is committed to the principle of corporate responsibility and places a strong emphasis on sustainability.

“The Baltic countries are a part of Swedbank’s home markets; hence it is important to show that we want to take responsibility and invest in long-term projects that are of common interest.”

Claes Fagerström believes that the annual Baltic Sea Farmer Award holds great potential for advancing sustainable agriculture around the region through the promotion of the best practice examples demonstrated by the participants. The competition’s intent of honouring and promoting farmers who are already taking measures to stop eutrophication will hopefully inspire others to follow.

“The focus is on rewarding good examples. I hope this competition will be a long term project for us to support in order to create a more sustainable Baltic Sea region.”

Swedbank



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Baltic Fund for Nature
(Russia – www.bfn.org.ru),
Estonian Fund for Nature
(www.elfond.ee),
Lithuanian Fund for Nature (www.glis.lt)
and Pasaules Dabas Fonds
(Latvia – www.pdf.lv).

WWF is one of the world's largest and most experienced independent conservation organisations, with almost 5 million members and supporters and a global network active in some 100 countries.

WWF's mission is to stop the degradation of the planet's natural environment to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature, by:

- conserving the world's biological diversity
- ensuring that the use of renewable natural resources is sustainable
- promoting the reduction of pollution and wasteful consumption.



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WWF Baltic Ecoregion Programme
is part of WWF, set up to save the Baltic
marine environment and restore vitality
and beauty to the surrounding region.

**Please contact us for more
information!**

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