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The EU is preparing a strategy for the Baltic Sea Region. CCB member organisations are important stakeholders in the development of the strategy and WE ARE INVITED TO EXPRESS OUR VIEWS BEFORE THE END OF THIS MONTH.

The rest of the newsletter is dedicated to the presentation of farming policies around the Baltic Sea. It is a common goal among the member organisations that organic farming should be supported as the most environmentally friendly farming practice. From Belarus through Poland to Denmark it becomes more and more obvious that the balance between nature, environment, and landscape cannot be restored unless we remove industrial pig farming from the open land. It is a matter of political will and courage.

*Henrik Butze-Ruhnenstjerne, Editor of the CCB Newsletter*

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## Organic Farming in Belarus - NGOs make it possible

Successes and challenges are the most suitable words to describe the present situation in organic farming in Belarus.

The main obstacles in the promotion of the organic farming in Belarus are; the absence of legislation on organic farming, certification establishments and the imperfect price policy, lack of information and absence of financial support for organic farmers. It is very important to make mechanism to encourage farmers and state producers to choose organic agriculture and to create a strong motivation. The position of Belarusian officials can be described as observing. In general their position is; no preventing and no supporting.

There is, however, information about preparation of legislation on "alternative" farming.

Many people in Belarus understand the importance and benefits of organic

agriculture. Among them are farmers, educational institutions, small garden owners and even big agricultural enterprises. Together we created a working group consisting of 4 NGOs, a consulting company, farmers and scientists. Within this framework there is a good possibility for collaboration between all stakeholders.

The working group on organic agriculture "Agracultura" worked hard and this year was really filled with different events in the field of organic agriculture, such as seminars, meetings, publications and informational activities.



There is no legislation on organic farming and organic certification in Belarus. Pro-organic food producers cannot define themselves from those who use conventional methods. A seminar-round table on organic certification took place in September 2008. Many people showed keen interest in the topic and some articles were published in periodicals.

We have moved a first step towards the organic certification. At the preliminary stage we organized a competition named "Agriculture in accordance with Nature", for agricultural producers. A label was designed, criteria were elaborated on the basis of EU organic law, we spread information about the competition and the jury visited farms and choose "winners". We were surprised that Belarusian farmers know about many ecological issues of farming. They understand that right agriculture should be organic. The 22 of November 2008 the final event took place in Minsk and we presented Diplomas and labels to nine winners. The event was widely reported in mass-media.

With the help of PKE (Polish Ecological Club) we organized an educational trip to Poland for Belarusian farmers and local agricultural producers. The participants shared experience from organic farming and rural tourism in Poland. They could see what organic farming looks like in Poland and were really inspired.

But the producers need to reach the consumers to know what they want. We conducted marketing survey (1000 respondents - representative sample for big cities) and concluded that almost 95% of the consumers would like to buy organic food. They also consider that organic production is better for their health (for detailed information see: [www.agracultura.org](http://www.agracultura.org)). We came to the

conclusion that there is quite a big demand on such production in Belarus. The probable organic consumer is young, single, well-educated and his\her earned income is middle or upper.

We know 6 farmers at the moment who wants to create organic farms, but many problems prevent them from realizing this idea. Unfortunately farmers need a lot of time to register a farm. In some cases farmers have been waiting 1 year for official registration. In addition, significant funds are needed to create private farming estate. It's a big problem to get credit and the rate of interest is too high.



The working group "Agracultura" is going to continue the work during next year. The main tasks are practical assistance for organic farmers an advocacy to make possible discussion and comprehension of all sectors.

We think that there are good opportunities for developing organic agriculture in Belarus at present; with support and interest of stakeholders it's absolutely real to change the situation.

We'll do our best!

*Lana Semenas ("Ecohome") and Dzmitry Sinitski ("FRI")*

## **Green Federation GAJA's Project on Industrial Animal Farming in Poland**

Agricultural pollutants existing on the Baltic catchment area are considered to play a significant role in the process of eutrophication of the Baltic Sea. The secondary product of industrial hog-rearing farms – manure – contains such organic pollutants, which are a source of odours and a main factor causing the nutrient leaching, leading to excessive eutrophication of water, by the over-fertilization and large nutrient run-off to watercourses and groundwater.

In order to control aforementioned impact on the environment Green Federation GAJA, in cooperation with CCB, implement a project "Strengthening the execution of the environmental and agriculture law in regards to industrial animal farming", which is part of an action undertaken three years ago. The project's goal is to minimize the impact of industrial animal farming on the pollution of the Baltic Sea and the Baltic catchment area as well as improve the transparency of the mechanism of administrative procedure concerning issuing integrated permits. Main objectives were: strengthening implementation of EU Integrated Pollution Prevention and Control (IPPC) Directive and EU Nitrogen Directive by industrial animal sector, social monitoring of the environmental control mechanisms, strengthening the right to access to environmental information, raising the awareness of the public concerning negative impact of industrial animal farming on environment and living conditions.

Green Federation GAJA participates in almost all administrative procedures conducted by local authorities concerning integrated permits for pig farms. At the same time it analyze the situation of farms that had already obtained integrated permits, including monitoring of fertilization plans oversee the situation of industrial farms that do not possess integrated permits and which did not apply for it,

including submitting applications to Regional Environmental Protection Inspectorate (REPI) demanding closing aforementioned farms.

Green Federation GAJA gave its comments on Polish draft of Law on prevention of odour emission by industrial farms. It was also one of the main donors of information connected to industrial animal farming, which were used by "The Supreme Chamber of Control" in inspection of IPPC-farms in Poland.

At the beginning of the 2007 Green Federation GAJA has coordinated an elaboration of international report regarding to a situation of industrial animal farming in the Baltic's countries, entitled "Report on industrial swine and cattle farming in the Baltic sea catchment area". At this time, there are 117 IPPC pig farms in Poland. The number of poultry and cattle farms is much more difficult to estimation.

Jakub Skorupski is the Green Federation GAJA's coordinator of activities connected with large-scale animal farming. He is a biologist, an alumnus of the University of Szczecin, the last-year student of biotechnology at Agriculture University of Szczecin and PhD student in genetics. He is interested in nature conservation and environment protection issues. Since 2006 he cooperate with Coalition Clean Baltic in common CCB and Green Federation GAJA's project on industrial animal farming in the Baltic sea catchment area, which take effect in elaborating a "Report on industrial swine and cattle farming in the Baltic sea catchment area". Jakub Skorupski is a member of the West Pomerania Society for Nature Conservation and cooperate with the Polish Green Network, the largest ecological NGO's platform in Poland.

*Jakub Skorupski, Green Federation GAJA*

## Displaced Industry

*The Environmental Costs of Big Scale Farming Have to Be Paid in Technology - Not in Impoverishing Land Use.*

*A production which is based on land use can only expand to the borders of public tolerance.*

The Danish Society for the Preservation of Nature – hereafter called DN - has for decades offered alternative perspectives on agricultural land use. A repeated condition has been the support of organic farming and the criticism of unbalanced growth.

It is a fact that big scale meat production, especially pork and bacon, is an essential part of the Danish export profile. However, the agricultural contribution to the total Danish exportation is hugely exaggerated. We are talking about approximately 1/10<sup>th</sup> of the exportation which is mainly based on pig production. In order to contribute with 10% of the export the farming industry uses 62% of the Danish landscape, much of which is regarded as national heritage.

### Industrial practice on agricultural traditions.

Traditions connected to owner-occupied land use have been regarded as a stable and reasonable management of the public heritage in the Danish countryside. Farmers have been working in accordance with some kind of balance with the surrounding environment. Diversity and variety were unquestionable qualities both for those who owned the land and for those who owned the pleasure to enjoy it. This was only some 50 years ago

The proof of success is quality and enlargement. Enlargement is complicated in an environmentally balanced production. Diversity and variety become obstacles to enlargement. Therefore successful farmers withdraw from mixed agricultural production and counted on a large-scale unified production. Industrial means of production, industrial technology, and industrial buildings made their entry into the countryside. Beside these renewable means of production there were animals in rapidly growing

numbers and a less varied landscape. The single animal life and the uniqueness of landscapes are non-renewable resources, but are treated as if they were mechanical parts of an industrial production.

It is misleading to name the modern mega-stables “welfare stables” just because they can accommodate thousands of pigs in clean and effective surroundings. For a while consumers bought the story of happy pigs with curly tails living in harmony in the modern stables. But when the production, which had to be rather secretive for sanitary reasons, at rare intervals became transparent the consumers were made aware of the fact that the welfare stables were occupied by pigs with limited freedom of movement, limited rooting possibilities, sores, and other side effects of a production based on quantity. Modern consumers demand not only an agricultural product, but also a story of the product.

There is a total of 13.6 mio pigs (landbrug.dk (2006)) making Denmark the largest pig-producing country in Scandinavia and the fifth largest pig-producing country in the EU-27 (only exceeded by Poland, Germany, France, and Spain). Compared to the size of the country Denmark is the largest pig-producing nation in the world. Around 10 mio of the Danish pigs are included in herds with more than 2000 heads.

Handling livestock concentrations of 2000 pigs or more requires methods and practices which are more related to industrial production than to farming traditions.

Therefore DN suggests that it becomes compulsory for big scale pig farms to use technologies which can solve the “harmony requirement” – the number of hectares in “slurry-harmony” with the number of animal units.

When the handling of slurry can be solved by the use technological separation procedures it will loosen the pressure on farm land and change the recent years’ massive buying of arable land by still fewer farmers mainly for manure disposal purposes.

When the connection between industrial farming and land use is rendered superfluous it becomes possible to move pork production from arable land to industrial sites, where it belongs when the production is based solely on profit-maximizing and expansion.

In Denmark new regulations on arable land has made it profitable to re-cultivate set-aside areas. Despite warnings from both scientists and DN the natural sanctuaries of the fallow land has almost disappeared in 2008 due to re-cultivation. 82,000 hectares of valuable fallow land have been re-cultivated this year. This only strengthens the point of view that management of the arable land has to include both management of production resources and management of nature resources, preferably according to long-term nature planning for the individual farm, based on balance between nature, environment, and landscape.



To-day some 6% of the farm land is organically managed. The ultimate goal for DN is for Denmark to have organic farming as the major means of production and land use outside reservations for urban and industrial development within the next 25-30 years.

The land is never to be lost.

*Henrik Butze-Ruhnenstjerne*

*Vice-chairman in the national DN-network for farming practices*

*Vice-chairman in CCB, Coalition Clean Baltic*

*Editor of the CCB Newsletter*

*Organic farmer*

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## The EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region

The European Commission is preparing an EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region on the request of the European Council. The common problems of the Region call for cooperation between countries and should the CCB groups want to spend a passing moment to fill out the questionnaire then, who knows, Santa in a year 20XX brings us not a hard-to-escape-not-just-manage sea level rise, but instead a cleaner and healthier Baltic Sea and rivers bursting with healthy fish. The author cannot agree more with the EC in the following:

**It would therefore be very helpful if you could give your and your NGOs opinion. The DG Regio wants to be consulted on the Baltic Sea Region EU Strategy by December 31st, 2008.**

The Strategy is open for consultation now

and can be found here:

[http://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/consultation/baltic/doc/consul\\_baltic\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/consultation/baltic/doc/consul_baltic_en.pdf)

Inside textboxes in the Strategy to be consulted there are guided questions to be answered should you choose to do so. The consultation documents and details on how to submit your opinion are available here:

[http://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/consultation/baltic/consultation\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/consultation/baltic/consultation_en.htm)

According to what is said each organisation may choose to register or not with the EC.

Whilst leaving the particular wording and letters content to the absolute discretion of each organisation the author wishes to share his opinion that from all different aspects the following issues may be the ones to prioritise and dealt with a sense of urgency in the Strategy:

1. Aarhus Convention real and benchmarked implementation in all three

pillars: Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Justice. Without these even the delay of the Sea environmental degradation (e.g. Eutrophication or Coastal Management) will not be possible and this should be treated as the highest priority of the Strategy for all the Aarhus Convention Parties.

## 2. Climate Change.

The NGO world is well aware of the uptake IPPC/BAT Directive, Air Quality Directive, NEC Directive, Bird and Habitat Protection Directives in Member States. Should the Commission choose to properly implement these important legislative acts issued then this would be a tremendous help to the Baltic Sea, the people around it, as well as the environmentally friendly and sustainable industries. Very fossil transport sector is on rise (including increase of greenhouse gas emissions) and Coastal Management and Protection, Biodiversity on fall. It is no surprise that Climate change from a distant threat is coming into medium term disaster. The united Transport Energy Policy in the Baltic Sea Region along with the fuel types to be used in a sustainable way would be a great direction to pay attention to. The author calls upon NGO share and express the sense of urgency in this respect should the stakeholders share the need of NGOs of predictable future of planet ecosystem and medium term sustained and sustainable mobility.

## 3. Biodiversity.

Overfishing has been known for decades to be a real threat to Baltic Sea ecosystem. Now there is a risk of collapse of Baltic fish resources unless promptly stopped. The history knows both successful and not successful ban on overfishing. We call upon the stakeholders to choose sustainability and choose it asap. Of course, it can only be success should the right to perform traditional forms of sea-shore fisheries exclusively by the local fisherman communities and excluding any risk of overfishing.

## 4. Wild Salmon River protection.

Our NGO along with the CCB shares the view of wild salmon rivers being an etalon of nature values. We call the certain number of rivers be included, and

plans and actions mapped. The number of such rivers should be at least 30 in the region. The dams and other installations should be made mandatory and take into account that for migratory fish species the only mobility available is the river.

5. Too many aquifers in the Baltic Sea catchment area are affected by chronic contamination of nitrates, phosphates and sulphates. These chemicals are linked to health problems such as reproductive disorders and cancer. The full list is longer. There is only one way to help - change the Common Agriculture Policy's way of promoting intensive agriculture and cut fertilisers where contamination is present. There is a need for mandatory deforestation or other functioning form of limiting nutrient flow along river and lake shores, and ban of use of any fertilizers within a certain distance from waters respecting the very highest water levels.

*With greetings from Latvian CCB member  
VAK - Environmental Protection Club,  
Ojars Balcers, Dr.Phys.*