

Report on implementability of agro-environmental targets in Lithuania

BALTIC COMPASS WP 6

Baltic Sea Region Programme

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Introduction

The purpose of the report is to explore the agri-environmental policies in Lithuania, based on the following guiding questions: Are the agro-environmental policy targets set appropriately?; Do they reflect the needs of environmental stakeholders?; Is the policy implementation impact monitored properly?; and, Is the impact visible and appropriate?.

The current assessment is based on the Lithuanian Rural Development Programme 2007-2013, its implementation programmes and measures concerning agro-environmental measures, and Lithuanian policies and legislation on implementation of the EU Water Framework Directive.

Methodology

The report is focused on a *systemic* level of analysis. At this level capacity constraints were assessed at the overall policy and legal framework level, and aspects of institutional setup, and available financial resources were also targeted.

The following methods were undertaken in developing the report:

Existing information analysis comprising of a desktop review of the latest national documentation and institutional databases. Internet resources were also used. Here, the linkages between Lithuanian national legislation and EU agri-environmental targets were assessed.

Consultations with stakeholders were done frequently to ensure the quality of the report and to ensure all capacity constraints are addressed and considered.

Individual interviews and consultations were conducted, focusing on expert institutions in the sectors related to the ministries of agriculture and environment, as well as with related public servants. Experts representing various interest groups were also approached.

National agri-environmental targets

There are three main national strategies in Lithuania: the National Development Strategy, a national long-term economic development strategy (to 2015) and the National Sustainable Development Strategy. These strategies form a baseline for all other strategic policy documents, which must be coordinated and inline with these main strategies.

Considering aspects related to agri-environmental policy in these three strategic documents, it can be concluded that agri-environmental policy is not reflected in the major policy strategies. Agri-environmental policy can be considered a cross-sectoral issue, integrating economic and environmental aspects in agriculture. Such integration in the above-mentioned strategic documents (including in the sustainable development strategy) is missing. While water, soil, and environmental quality issues are described in the environmental chapter, ecological farming, infrastructure development and increased competitiveness for the agriculture sector are reflected in a separate chapter for agriculture.

The sustainable Development Strategy contains very limited mention of the agriculture sector, – mainly highlighting the necessity of pollution reduction. Such a view, recognising agriculture as an obstacle to good environmental status, is rather narrow since it does not recognise, for example, agriculture as an important sector in terms of addressing fragmented landscapes and maintaining extensive farming practices, which are vital for favourable biodiversity conditions. At the same time, the National long-term economic development strategy recognising the integration of environment and agriculture is limited to the extent of promoting ecological farming, and which is understood not

as a tool for increasing environmental quality in the area, but rather as a measure addressing health- and food-safety aspects. Missing integration between agriculture and environment sectors in basic policy strategies, is probably one of the root-causes explaining the current lack of institutional cooperation between the Ministries of Environment and Agriculture, as well as challenges arising while implementing agri-environmental measures.

The definition of agri-environmental measure is included in the National Rural Development Programme, and since integration into the European Union in 2004 Lithuania has implemented the second period of this programme. This report will focus on the programme for the period of 2007-2013.

The objective of the Rural Development Plan's 2007-2013 Measure 1: 'AGRI-ENVIRONMENT PAYMENTS' is to ensure sustainable development of the countryside, and to create and preserve a healthy and harmonious living environment for people, natural landscape elements and for overall ecological stability. These are to be reached through the following specific objectives: "preserving the landscape, biodiversity and semi-natural habitats" and "reducing the negative impact of agricultural activities on the environment"¹.

Operational objectives of the measure are:

- to preserve and to duly maintain natural and semi-natural meadows and wetlands, when necessary, restoring extensive farming systems in them, to reduce the intensity of farming on intensively-used meadows;
- to reduce water pollution from nutrients from intensive arable farming activities;
- to reduce soil erosion that occurs because of inappropriate arable land cultivation;
- to contribute to mitigating climate change;
- to promote organic farming as a production system that offers social and economic benefits to rural residents, ensures environmental protection and the production of quality foodstuffs that are in great demand on the market;
- to help attain the 'good condition', as defined under the Water Law, in water bodies that by virtue of negative effect of farming are classified as 'bodies at risk' and where it is likely good condition may not be attained by 2015.

This measure consists of the following schemes:

- Landscape stewardship scheme:
 - Activity 1 - management of natural and semi-natural meadows;
 - Activity 2 - management of wetlands;
 - Activity 3 - management of shore protective belts of water bodies in meadows;
 - Activity 4 - protection of water bodies against pollution and soil erosion on arable land;
 - Activity 5 - stubbly field in winter season;
 - Activity 6 - strips or plots of melliferous plants on arable land;
 - Activity 7 - management of the holding landscape elements;
 - Activity 8 - management of reclamation ditches,
- Organic farming scheme,
- Rare Breeds Scheme,
- Scheme for improving the status of water bodies at risk; and,
- Natura 2000 payments and payments linked to Directive 2000/60/EC.

This report does not evaluate the scheme "Rare breeds" since it doesn't have a direct impact on Agri-environmental measures.

The key requirements for farming within the Measure mentioned above are:

¹ Rural Development Programme for Lithuania 2007 – 2013, p. 53

- grass cutting from July 15th to September 30th,
- biomass should be removed from the fields,
- regulating the density of cattle for pasturage.
- For the Activities 'Management of shore protective belts of water bodies in meadows' and 'Protection of water bodies against pollution and soil erosion on the arable land' fertilizers and pesticides are not allowed to be used.

Other specific requirements:

Within the activity 'Stubble field in winter season' the applicant should after harvest time leave straws tied up in parcels or chopped, must not use fertilizers, pesticides, and herbicides, and must not put cattle out to pasture.

Within the Activity 'Strips or plots of melliferous plants on arable land' farmers with big, arable fields should in every 10 ha introduce strips or plots up to 0,5 ha of melliferous plants, consisting of at least 3 kinds of melliferous plants and must maintain them in a proper way (cut up to 10 cm height, pasture cattle from September 15th etc.).

Within the Activity "Management of the holding landscape elements" describes requirements for developing and maintaining hedges, with strict regulation hedges must not be cut within the bird breeding period (March 1st to July 31st).

Requirements within the "Organic farming scheme" applicants should engage in the agricultural production of agricultural produce and production has to apply EU and National regulations on ecological products.

Requirements within the "Scheme for improving the status of water bodies at risk", the applicant, holding at least 1 ha of arable land at the area of water bodies at risk, should till July 1st sow perennial meadow seeds. Once the meadow is set up the applicant should cut the grass and remove biomass 1st grass by August 1st, second mowing – by September 30th.

Requirements within 'Natura 2000 payments and payments linked to Directive 2000/60/EC' the applicant should hold at least 1 ha land at Natura 2000 sites, and the quality of holding crops and meadows should correspond to good agricultural status.

Financial allocations:

Axes	Measure	Measure title	Total Public Expenditure	
			Value, EUR	Share, %
1	111	Vocational training and information actions	16.539.999	0,7%
	112	Setting up of young farmers	62.240.000	2,8%
	113	Early retirement	167.149.779	7,4%
	114	Use of advisory services	36.419.999	1,6%
	121	Modernisation of agricultural holdings	401.298.847	17,8%
	122	Improvement of the economic value of forests	20.500.000	0,9%
	123	Adding value to agricultural and forestry products	137.498.487	6,1%
	125	Infrastructure related to the development and adaptation	58.660.000	2,6%
	141	Semi-subsistence farming	29.890.000	1,3%
Total Axis 1			930.197.109	41,2%
2	212	Payments to farmers in areas with h. other than mountain areas	287.033.696	12,7%
	213	Natura 2000 payments and payments linked to Directive 2000/60/EC	7.500.000	0,3%
	214	Agri-environment payments	364.916.304	16,1%
	221	First afforestation of agricultural land	59.214.489	2,6%
	223	First afforestation of non-agricultural land	45.425.916	2,0%
	224	Natura 2000 payments (in forest area)	25.500.000	1,1%
	225	Forest-environment payments	10.000.000	0,4%
	226	Restoring forestry potential and introducing prevention ...	15.000.000	0,7%
	227	Non-productive investments	10.000.000	0,4%
Total Axis 2			824.590.405	36,5%
3	311	Diversification into non-agricultural activities	75.631.727	3,3%
	312	Support for business creation and development	97.696.507	4,3%
	313	Encouragement of tourism activities	82.285.759	3,6%
	322	Village renewal and development	20.000.000	0,9%
Total Axis 3			275.613.992	12,2%
4	413	Implementing local development strategies. Quality of life	126.973.804	5,6%
	421	Implementing cooperation projects	4.170.000	0,2%
	431	Running the local action group acquiring skills and ...	5.850.000	0,3%
Total Axis 4			136.993.804	6,1%
5	511	Technical Assistance	92.979.200	4,1%
Total 511			92.979.200	4,1%
Grand Total			2.260.374.510	100,0%

Sources: Rural Development Programme for Lithuania 2007-2013.

National water management targets

Lithuania fully transposed into national legislation the EU Water Framework Directive; according to the Directive 4 river basins districts (RBD) (Nemunas, Lielupe, Venta and Dauguva) are established. Every district has a River Basin Management Plan with a list of measures which should be implemented to reach 'good ecological status'. The Environmental Protection Agency is designated as a Competent Authority, responsible for the administration of all 4 RBDs and for the River Basin Management Plans (BMP) for those RBDs.

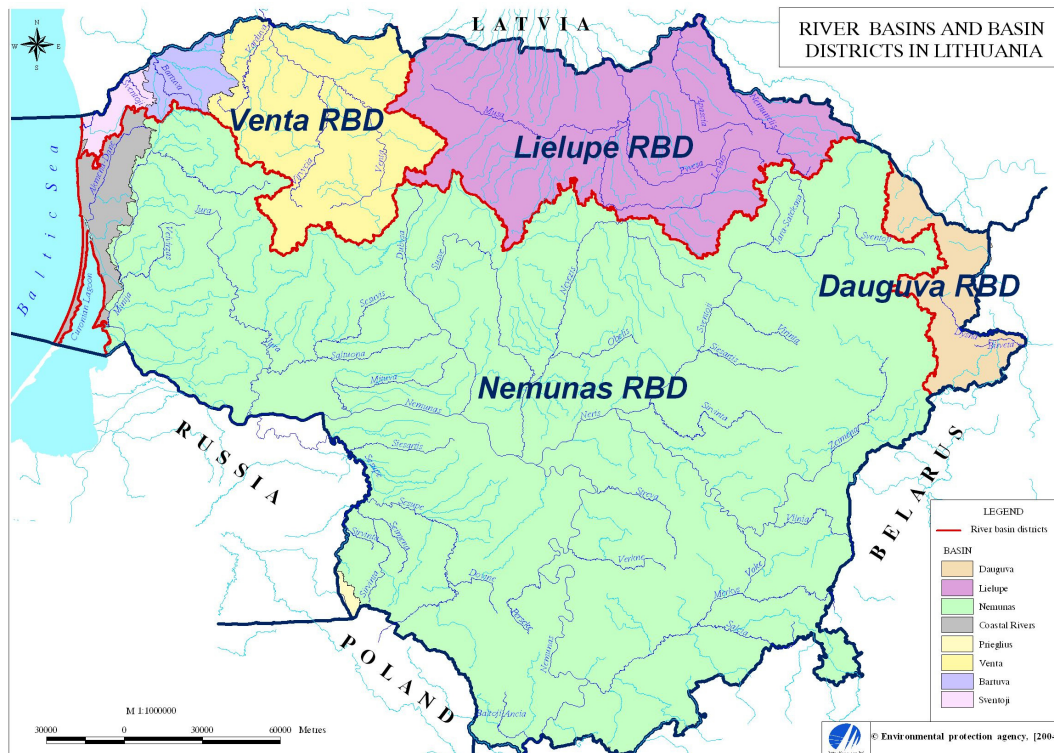


Figure 1: River Basins and Basin Districts in Lithuania

The following are policy targets for water policy in Lithuania: to reach Good ecological status of all Lithuanian surface waters, implement a River basin district management system, and decrease pollution to the Baltic Sea. To implement these targets, in particular with the aim to decrease spread pollution from the agricultural sector, there is the “Programme to decrease water pollution from agricultural sources”, approved by the Ministries of Environment and Agriculture. The programme includes the goal to decrease pollution of surface water resources, in particular by nitrogen and phosphorus combinations.

The objectives of the Programme are:

- Implementation of farmer training on environmentally friendly technologies;
- Introduction of pollution liquidation measures for those farms having 10 or more arbitrary units; and,
- Harmonization of EU and National legislation and development of guidelines for dung-yards development at farmers’ facilities.

In addition, more specific requirements according to the programme include:

- It is forbidden to fertilize fields in period from December 1st to April 1st,
- Dung-yards (reservoirs) should be a size whereby it will be possible to hold pigs’ or poultry manure of 8 months and cattle, horse, and sheep manure of 6 months. Also should be considering collection of sewage from manure loading places and milking places;
- It is forbidden to fertilize fields in water protected areas, if the soil freezes or is covered by snow;
- The amount of total nitrogen (N_t) inserted into the field annually should not exceed 170 kg/ha.

In the BMP the main pressures to Water bodies at risk are:

- Point source pollution (industry, wastewater treatment plants)
- Diffuse source pollution (mainly agricultural sector)
- Water flow regulation (for rivers only)

- Ground water abstraction rates

Agriculture remains the most important actor in BMR because agricultural land covers more than 70% of land in river catchments of >50 km² size, as well as agricultural land coverage is more than 50% in the lake catchments.

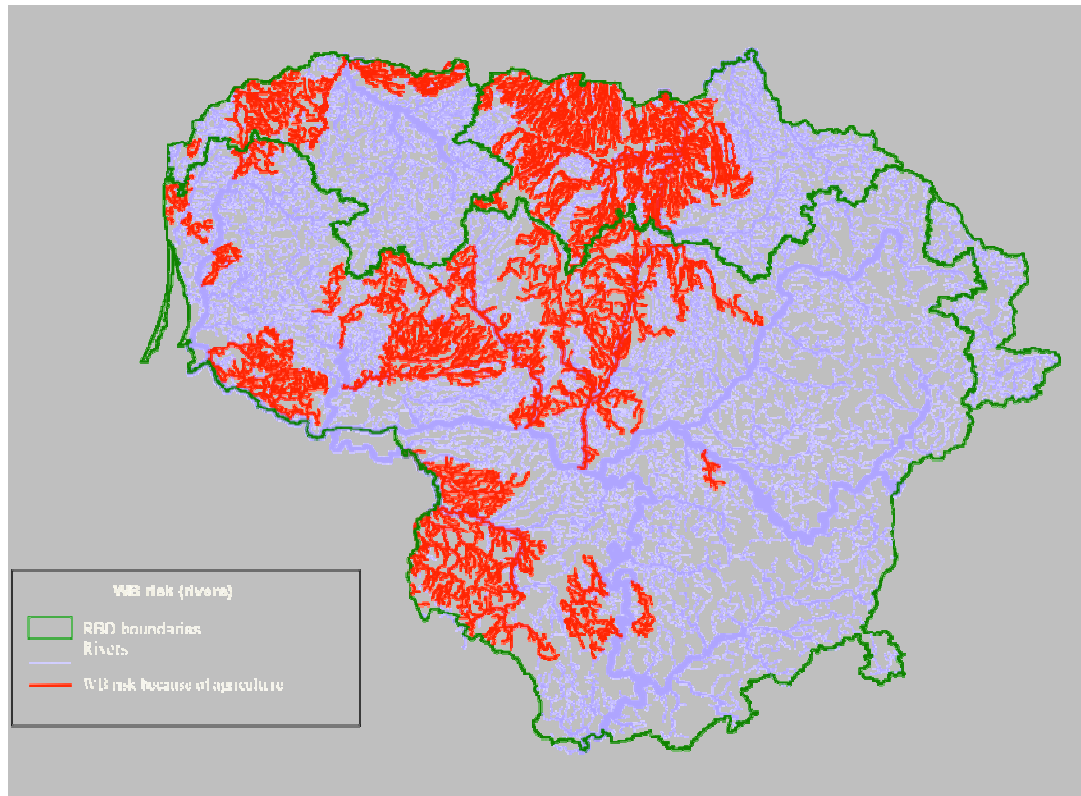


Figure 2: Rivers at risk because of agriculture. Source: Lithuanian environmental protection agency.
WB = Water Bodies, RBD = River Basin District

Measures for reduction of anthropogenic pollution to water

The key measure to reduce impacts is to reach sewage water treatment quality standards according to the Council Directive of 21 May 1991 concerning urban wastewater treatment (91/271/EEC). Lithuanian authorities have set the target since 2010 that all settlements with more than 2000 inhabitants should treat sewage water according to the standards of the Directive 91/271/EEC.

Additional measures are mainly concentrated around the following issues:

- Reduce wastewater impact from individual housing;
- Reduce wastewater impact from the agriculture sector;
- Reduce wastewater impact caused by hydro-morphological changes; and,
- Decrease wastewater impact to water quality from industry.

Reduce wastewater impact from individual housing

The measure aims to develop sewage collection networks in remote urban territories and connect individual houses to these networks. The aim of this measure is to also increase wastewater treatment efficiency and the efficiency of administrative inspections.

Reduce impact from the agriculture sector

This measure aims to decrease impact caused by fertilization, as well as to develop fertilization management instruments, these are implemented by Rural Development Plan 2007-2013. Administrative measures include: farmers should have a fertilization management plan for farms bigger than 100 ha as well as dung-yards should be installed if the farm has 300 LU (*livestock unit*), since 2012 – 10 LU. Other measures related to the reduction of impact to water from the agricultural sector are described in the chapter ‘National agri-environmental targets’.

Reduce impact caused from hydro-morphological changes

Concerning this issue the following measures are foreseen: naturalization of watercourses, decreased impact of hydro power plants, restoration of rivers’ yield, including fish-ladder instalment.

Decrease impact to water quality from industry

The main problem is that impact from the industrial sector lacks proper assessment because wastewater from industry is loaded to municipal wastewater treatment plants. There is a need indicated in the all BMR to investigate composition of discharge of hazardous substances to water.

Implementing agencies:

There are two main national bodies sharing responsibilities for developing policies within agri-environmental policy: Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) and Ministry of Environment (MoE).

MoA, in particular its Rural Development Department, is responsible for: developing rural development policy and supervision of associated programmes; coordination of measures within a single programming document of EU Structural funds. **MoE** through Protected Areas and Landscape and Water Resource Departments take the lead part in development of water management policy as well as policies related to development and management of protected areas (including NATURA 2000) in Lithuania.

At the implementation level there are the Environmental Protection Agency (a subordinate body to MoE) and the National Paying Agency (a subordinate body to MoA) as competent institutions.

Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is responsible for implementing the State environmental controlling functions, organizing and implementing the State environmental monitoring, as well as implementing water resource protection and management policy.

National Paying Agency (NPA) is the implementing institution for the measures under the National Agricultural and Rural Development Policy. In particular NPA is the institution which coordinates

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