



*Welcome speech held by Helena Jonsson, President of the Federation of Swedish Farmers and Chairman of the Steering Board of the project Baltic Deal at the conference **A greener agriculture for a bluer Baltic Sea**, held 2 November 2011 at Sånge-Säby, nearby Stockholm.*

Dear conference participants, dear friends of agriculture, dear friends of the Baltic Sea

Welcome and presentation

First, let me express a warm welcome to all of you who have taken of your valuable time to come here to Sånge-Säby on Ekerö or as translated into English – The island of oaks. Sånge-Säby has a historic connection to the development of the organisation of farmers in Sweden. In 1929 farmers from the entire country gathered here at Sånge-Säby to discuss the establishment of an organisation for the rural population in Sweden. This meeting was instrumental for the establishment of the organisation that later on became the Federation of Swedish Farmers,

My name is Helena Jonsson. I am together with my husband a breeder of Hereford cattle from a farm named Galtås Södergård nearby Tranås, some 300 km south of the place where we are located today.

Since May this year I have been entrusted to lead the Federation of Swedish Farmers. Currently we have 170 000 members, a number that has increased every year over the last 14 years. We hope this year will become the 15th consecutive year with growing number.

I am also chairman of the Steering Board of the EU flagship project Baltic Deal – one of the three organisers of the today's conference. As you certainly are aware, the two others are the Baltic Compass and Baltic Manure projects.

Key topics of conference and projects

The key topic of the conference is on how to develop the agriculture around the Baltic Sea so that it becomes sustainable. As you are fully aware, sustainability encompasses several dimensions. Central to all three flagship projects organising this conference is a strong ambition to seek solutions that enable a good balance between the environmental and economical dimensions of agricultural sustainability.



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A key driver and framework for the Baltic Compass and the Baltic Deal projects are the HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan environmental targets for eutrophication. The Baltic Manure project has as a point of departure farm economy as the driver for their projects.

Essentially, all three projects put in the forefront nutrient handling and nutrient use efficiency on farms, from complementary angles and perspectives.

Awards and award winners

As organisers we are again pleased to host the WWF Baltic Farmers Award ceremony as an integral part of the conference program. Those of you who attended last year's conference may remember that the winners then were the Swedish farmers Teri Lee and Håkan Eriksson from Wiggeby farm. Their farm is located only 2 km from where we are just now. Therefore we decided to include a visit to Wiggeby farm in the conference program to let you see for yourself how they run their farm.

According to common terminology their farm is so-called "conventional". I will claim that the term conventional is highly misleading. Wiggeby is truly an unconventional and innovative farm that combines environmental thinking, resource efficiency and recycling with economic profitability. It is no surprise that the farm belongs to the renowned Swedish demonstration farm network Odling-i-balans (Balanced Farming) and now also forms part of the Baltic Deal demonstration farm network.

It will indeed be exciting to learn which of the well-qualified national winners that will receive the regional award later tonight.

But the WWF Baltic Farmer Award is not the only award that will be handed out today. The project Baltic Manure will today also announce who is the winner of the first Baltic Manure Handling Award.

Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) reform

Please, allow me to spend a few minutes on the newly presented proposal for the reformed Common Agricultural Policy for the period 2014- 2020 and its proposed elements of greening.

First, even though the framework legislation has been presented, many details are still unclear. Both the current Polish and the upcoming Danish EU Presidency have important roles in nailing out these details. And contrary to what many think here in Sweden for instance, European agricultural policy is primarily about food security for citizens and securing a decent living for farmers. We have to keep in mind that feeding the European and the global population, soon 10 billions, is a great challenge. But that is not all. The CAP is also indeed about providing other public goods such as landscapes,



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employment, climate change, biodiversity **and** the topic of this conference – reduced agricultural impact upon the water and marine environment. With wealthier citizens in Europe spending proportionally less of their income upon food, the demand from society has turned to request stronger environmental performance from food production. In this context, the so-called “greening” of CAP has evolved.

Greening of CAP

Farmers and farmer federations appreciate the societal demand for further improvements in environmental performance. For example, many of the members of the Federation of Swedish Farmers live along the shores of the Baltic Sea.

- They also like to enjoy a Baltic Sea without excessive algae blooms.
- They also want to do their share in the restoration of the Baltic Sea and do so.
- They also want to be recognised as good citizens contributing to the restoration of the Baltic Sea.

Still, at least we in Sweden were not entirely happy with all of the proposed elements of greening in the CAP proposal. We think it is partially based upon ideas that are old-fashioned, environmentally speaking. It appears to be built upon ideas that “small is environmentally beautiful” (always delivering better environmental results than big farms), that “extensive farming is better environmentally than intensive farming” etc. To us in Sweden, these ideas are not based upon sound knowledge. The measurement stick should not be the area unit, rather it should be based upon environmental performance of the food produced.

A key component in the proposal for a new CAP is a cross-compliance requirement says that 7% of the farm area of each farm should be set-aside areas. While being regulatory simple and easy to control, we think that this is not effective neither from an ecological or economic perspective.

Resource efficiency instead of set-aside

The focus should instead be placed upon **resource efficiency** – in plain words to produce more, with less input resources, and with reduced losses of, for instance nutrients from the farms.

- This focus would mean that the areas appropriate to be set aside for environmentally purposes such as buffer strips, wetlands and biodiversity rich meadows or generally to be used less extensively, should be identified at the farm level.
- This focus would also mean a stronger European emphasis upon development of new knowledge, innovative techniques with focus upon resource efficiency and recycling, and connected with the smart and economically attractive dissemination of this to the farmer community.



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We note that the EU Commission talks about a European Innovation Partnership for Agriculture. In short, we think that the projects Baltic Compass, Baltic Manure and Baltic Deal very nicely capture the essence of an alternative pathway to greening of the agricultural sector and a possible Baltic Sea Region input to the European Innovation Partnership for Agriculture.

Closure

Allow me to read a paragraph from a debate article that I wrote together with other Nordic farmer presidents in August this year:

”We are convinced that the agricultural sector in all countries around the Baltic Sea will develop their environmental efforts and continue to reduce losses of nutrients. But it must be carried out in ways being economically attractive to the farmer. Then it becomes sustainable agriculture.”

Let me also remind you of the exceptional progress made since the 80-ies in reducing the loads of nutrients to the Baltic Sea. This will continue, still the recovery of the Baltic Sea will take decades. Thus, persistence and patience is required.

Finally, to organisers and participants – I wish you all good luck in the continued conference!

Thank you!