

PROJECT INFORMATION SHEET

AGRICULTURE AND DANUBE WATER POLLUTION

'WFD AND AGRICULTURE WORKSHOP'

25-26 April 2006, Malinska, Croatia

GOALS

Between April 25-26, 2006, the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR), together with the UNDP-GEF Danube Regional Project (DRP), organized a workshop in Malinska, Croatia. Its main goals were to:

- > Identify tools that can be used to support the implementation of the Water Framework Directive (WFD) in the Danube River Basin (DRB), especially the rural development (RD) measures available under the so-called Pillar II of the EU Common Agricultural Policy (CAP).
- > Create a better understanding and coordination between government water managers and agriculture managers in the DRB.
- > Share experiences between countries, international organizations and consultants.

KEY CONCLUSIONS

NEED FOR MEASURES

The agricultural sector is a key polluter of DRB waters. DRB countries need to incorporate measures into their river basin management plans (RBMPs) that reduce and prevent negative agricultural impacts to successfully implement the EU WFD objectives by 2015.

Many national governmental managers of water and agriculture need help in identifying what these measures should be. One of their main difficulties is to get farmers to make changes in ways that protect water resources. Currently, many DRB farmers are neither aware of their contributions to pollution nor of how to reduce them.

The following is a list of possible measures that could be taken at the national and international levels in the DRB. Ideally, the best measures are those where farmers and the government are in agreement, as opposed to penalties for farmers. A mix of measures is best, each mix tailored to the specific needs and realities of specific geographical areas.

The main types of measure available are regulatory, financial, and information and communication.

REGULATORY MEASURES

The main goal here is not to create new laws. Rather, farmer awareness of and compliance with existing legislation should be top priority, be that with national or international laws (e.g. EU Nitrates Directive, Water Framework Directive).

Compliance with existing legislation should be promoted to farmers as the 'baseline' for good practice. This principle is established within the recent reforms of the CAP which now includes mandatory 'cross-compliance' and makes the granting of payments to farmers conditional on their respecting environmental laws including the EU Nitrates and Groundwater directives.

FINANCIAL MEASURES

The most important opportunity for EU Member States and Candidate Countries to use financial measures to assist WFD implementation is the rural development (RD) measures available under Pillar II of the EU Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). Water protection (including support for WFD implementation) is one of three priorities for rural development measures targeting sustainable land management¹ during the coming period 2007-2013. A diversity of options and 'windows of opportunity' are now available for those lower Danube countries preparing to join the EU to better apply funds to water and environmental protection. However, many national water and agricultural managers are not taking full advantage of these.

Managers are encouraged to take account of a report produced by the CIS-Strategic Steering Group on "Agriculture and the WFD"² that reviews the 24 rural development measures eligible for EU co-financing during 2007-2013 that are relevant to WFD implementation. This includes agri-environment support payments for farmers that are obligatory for all Member States to implement and which can be used to encourage organic farming, reduce agro-chemical use and improve wetland management. Other potentially useful RD measures include grants for manure storage facilities, WFD and Natura 2000 compensatory payments and support for vocational training and agricultural advisory services.

Regarding windows of opportunity, there are different timelines for the WFD and CAP. The CAP will be reviewed between 2007-08. RD programmes will start being implemented in EU Member States in 2007 with the possibility for review from 2008 onwards. RBMPs required under the WFD need to be finalized by 2009.

It is crucial that national water and agriculture authorities at all levels start to cooperate and develop a common approach and efforts to provide maximum benefits for water protection. While the current CAP already has positive opportunities for assisting water protection, it also risks leading to more negative impacts – for example, decoupling payments to farmers from production might lead to more intensive agricultural practices in certain areas. Cooperation between water and agriculture managers could help to reduce such risks, particularly in sensitive catchments.

For example, it's important to avoid repeating recent experiences with CAP funding in the former EU 15 countries. According to a new European Environment Agency study³ related to this subject, most recent agri-environment funding under the CAP was allocated to intensive farming, much to the north of the continent.

While it seems there is a current trend that RD funds spent on water protection are increasing, the overall budget is still small relative to the costs of agriculture to water.

Given that agriculture is the biggest consumer of water in many areas, water pricing can do much to reduce water use.

¹ Priority Axis II of EC Regulation No. 1698/2005 establishing the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD)

² This report was produced within the FP6 Research Project SSPE-CT-2005-006618-CAP-WFD: Water Framework Directive meets Common Agricultural Policy - Opportunities for the Future.

³ EEA Report 2/2006: [Integration of environment into EU agriculture policy - the IRENA indicator-based assessment report](#)

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION MEASURES

Much more can be done in terms of making farmers more aware of the links between their activities, water pollution and solutions. Training and advisory services need to be improved to make farmers more aware of existing legislation, their obligations, penalties, funds and who they can turn to for help. If messages to farmers only include environmental benefits without financial gains, it is unlikely they will be interested to make changes to help reduce water pollution. 'Water Advisory Services' for farmers should not be linked to sanctions or inspections.

In many DRB countries, national water and agricultural managers have not yet created positive relationships nor begun to develop a common understanding or strategies for protecting water while keeping farmers happy. Inter-ministerial and –institutional dialogue needs improvement. Resolving this gap is a crucial next step. A common plan is needed before advising farmers in their countries. Agricultural managers generally appear to have a greater understanding of water protection needs than do water managers of agricultural needs, most probably because of the CAP's inherent references to water protection.

Information (especially quantitative) about the impacts of positive agricultural measures for water protection, ecologically and economically, are generally scarce despite a high demand for information from many stakeholders including the ICPDR. This problem was also highlighted in the IRENA report mentioned above.

BEST AGRICULTURAL PRACTICES (BAP)

Farmers need to know more about 'Best Agricultural Practices (BAP)' and how they can get BAP efforts supported. Farmers are encouraged to learn more about BAPs through demonstration projects in the DRB – dissemination of results from the DRP pilot BAP projects being implemented in north Serbia will be valuable here. More demonstration projects should be funded.

In general, farmers also need more funding to be able to invest in physically implementing BAP efforts (e.g. equipment, storage facilities) and this message should be communicated both to governments and donors. DRB national governments should introduce policies and laws that encourage or demand the use and application of BAPs by farmers. Organic agriculture is seen as a major opportunity both ecologically and economically in many lower Danube countries.

INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT

Workshop participants were advised to get more support and information from international organizations. This includes the DRP and the European Commission's Strategic Steering Group. Having more DRB international workshops geared to sharing experiences, such as the Malinska workshop, is recommended. For example, in the Autumn of 2006, a workshop will be held by DRP to disseminate findings from its BAP pilot projects. More can also be learned from the 53 NGO projects across the DRB that received DRP grant funding, especially at a national/regional level where many projects are working directly with farmers to encourage good/best agricultural practice as well as producing a useful range of outputs (e.g. demonstration farms, training programmes and information materials).

An inventory of such projects should be drawn up to serve as a basis for information and experience exchange between countries (building on work already done in Phase 1 of the DRP). A comparison of the action programmes developed for Nitrate Vulnerable Zones in accordance with the Nitrate Directive would also be useful.

ICPDR

The ICPDR is currently involved with these issues and more involvement is encouraged. Nutrient pollution (especially from agriculture) was identified as one of the Danube's key water management issues through the 'Danube River Basin Analysis'. The ICPDR 'Pressures and Measures Group' is now working on a related Issue Paper.

The ICPDR has also produced a number of related products for DRB countries including:

- > Report: 'Recommendation on Best Available Techniques at Agro-Industrial Units'
- > Agriculture included as one of five sectors assessed in report: 'Policies and legal reforms and implementation of investment projects related to the ICPDR Joint Action Programme 2001-2005'
- > 'Emission Inventory Database' which includes emissions from agriculture

More needs to be done in terms of better informing the ICPDR of national plans and programmes geared to addressing the negative impacts from agriculture on water pollution. This will inform the development of the 'programme of measures' for the Danube River Basin Management Plan being prepared for 2009 – as obliged by the EU WFD – the ICPDR's highest current priority. This could also help improve the quality of inputs to the MONERIS system for modeling Danube nutrient pollution and for developing future scenarios.

Increased commitments toward this end could be sought at the next ICPDR Steering Group Meeting in June 2006. The ICPDR could also consider getting more involved in acting as an information broker, advising on political measures and participating in the mid-term review of the CAP – including through its membership on the EC's Strategic Group on CAP.

RELATED WEBSITE LINKS:

- > Danube Regional Project (DRP)
 - Agriculture and Water Pollution: www.undp-drp.org/drp/themes_agriculture
 - Full Reports: www.undp-drp.org/drp/en/activities_1-2_-3_agriculture_fr_phase1
 - Project on BAPs: www.carlbrodrp.org.yu/page1
 - NGO Grants for agriculture-related work: www.undp-drp.org/drp/themes_agriculture_NGO-grants
- > ICPDR: www.icpdr.org/icpdr-pages/agriculture
- > EC Strategic Steering Group: www.defra.gov.uk/environment/water/wfd/0509-conference/index
- > EEA IRENA study: http://org.eea.eu.int/documents/newsreleases/irena_06-en
- > Ecologic: www.ecologic.de/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=1369
- > European Commission:
 - Water Framework Directive: http://ec.europa.eu/environment/water/water-framework/index_en.html
 - Nitrates Directive: http://ec.europa.eu/environment/water/water-nitrates/index_en.html

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