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Good farming practice - definitions, implementation, experiences :

Report on the results of work package 2 within the EU concerted action "Developing cross-compliance in the EU - background, lessons and opportunities", including an European seminar 2-3 June 2003, Braunschweig, Germany ;

Annex II L: Country report Sweden

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Annex II L: Country Report Sweden

Heike Nitsch, FAL Braunschweig 2003

Sweden is characterized by clear climatic differences within the country between the polar north and the middle and southern regions, where more intensive agriculture takes place. One serious environmental problem is eutrophication of both inland and coastal waters. The areas most affected by eutrophication are the intensively farmed areas of central and southern Sweden, and it is widely accepted that agricultural sources are a main reason (Eaton 2003). In the northern parts, abandonment of agricultural land is a big problem (Loof 2003).

In Sweden, environmental issues have been high on the agenda for 15 years. The environmental legislation is quite far reaching and based on the „polluter pays“ principle. In 1999, the main parts of the Swedish environmental legislation have been combined in an Environmental Code. Generally, compliance with the legislation of farmers is good (Loof 2003).

The Swedish government has set a number of environmental targets in both the Environment Code and the RDP (e.g. the area of organic agriculture is planned to be increased from 10 to 20% of arable land). The Swedish Parliament has also initiated action programmes to reduce pollution caused by both pesticides and fertilisers. Environmental quality objectives with direct relevance to agriculture are ‘zero eutrophication’, ‘a varied agricultural landscape’ and ‘a non-toxic environment’.

According to Loof (2003) a rather weak point remains nature conservation, where the legislation just stipulates not to destroy biotopes. The RDP is the main instrument for supporting the national biodiversity programme (Dwyer et al. 2002).

Sweden has designated 9% of its territory as Nitrate Vulnerable Zones (NVZ), many of them in costal areas. In June 2002, the European Commission demanded that Sweden enlarged the area of designated NVZs. As a result, Sweden determined additional NVZs. Measures for these areas should be implemented before August 2003 (Eaton 2003).

LFAs include around 60% of Sweden (Eaton 2003). Participation in agri-environment programmes is very high, compared to EU average. In 1998, 64% of all farms in Sweden were participating (European Environment Agency 2001). Sweden’s RDP is dominated by environmental measures. Environmentally friendly and organic farming is one of the two priorities, and consists mainly of agri-environment measures, which are receiving 65% of the budget (Dwyer et al. 2002). Another emphasis lies on environmental training for farmers.

Existing legislation, such as parts of the Environmental Code that relate to agriculture, together with corresponding ordinances and regulations, has been chosen to be the basis of GFP according to the rural development regulation. In case of stricter national legislation than required by EU law, the national standards are used. Where the national legislation is not sufficient, it should be strengthened for all farmers to keep the system transparent and to support compliance (Loof 2003). There have been only few changes of practice and impacts associated with the introduction of the RDP, as the process of "ecological transformation" of Swedish agriculture had already started after Sweden's accession to the EU in 1995 (Eaton 2003).

Sweden has not implemented cross-compliance as they consider their national environmental legislation and the monitoring and enforcement system as sufficient. As well, cross-compliance would require more administration at national level in addition to already existing monitoring and enforcement of environmental law by local authorities (Eaton 2003).

GFP Requirements ("Good Agricultural Practice" in the RDP 2000 - 2006)

Legislation provides requirements for:

- stocking density,
- storage of manure;
- timing of application of manure and fertilisers;
- winter crop cover;
- use of pesticides.

The definition of GFP does not include requirements for soil, biodiversity or landscape.

Use (storage) of fertilisers, slurry and manure:

Nitrate (+ general rules of fertilisation):

Any farm with more than 10 livestock units (LU) must have manure storage facilities for at least 8 months (for cattle, horses, sheep and goats) or 10 months (other animals). These requirements also apply to farms with more than 100 LU outside this area. Farms outside of NVZs must have storage facilities equivalent to 6 months manure production. Farms with less than 10 LU in NVZs are obliged to have storage facilities for 6 months.

Swedish Board of Agriculture Regulation (SJVFS 1999:79)

Rules only applicable to NVZs:

- Fertiliser may not be spread in amounts exceeding the crop nitrogen requirements for the growing season. The amount of fertiliser applied should be based on a balance between the crops estimated nitrogen requirements and the nitrogen supply from all external potential nutrient sources, as well as taking into account soil conditions, soil type and slope, climatic conditions, precipitation and irrigation, land use and agricultural practices, including crop-rotation systems.
- Fertiliser may not be applied on water-saturated or flooded ground
- Fertiliser may not be applied on snow-covered or deeply frozen ground.
- Nitrogen containing commercial fertilisers may not be applied from November 1st to February 15th. Manure and other organic fertilisers may not be applied from 1 January 1st to February 15th.
- Manure and other organic fertilisers may be spread from August 1st to November 15th only to a growing crop or before sowing.

Mandatory rule for the whole country:

- Manure and other organic fertilisers may not be applied during the period December 1st to February 28th unless they are incorporated into the soil on the same day.

Potassium and Phosphate: -

Pesticide use:

- GFP requires precautionary measures in form of requiring definition of protection zones. Anyone applying pesticides must make sure that they can be used without risk of pollution to ground water.

Water Use (Irrigation): -

Soil Conservation:

Soil cover, tillage and cropping patterns:

Farms with more than 5 ha in the counties of Blekinge, Skåne, Halland and Gotland must have winter crop cover of 60%, in the counties of Östergötland, Jönköping, Kronoberg, Kalmar, Gotland and Västra Götaland it must be at least 50 % of the cultivated area. Sweden plans to introduce requirements for crop cover in certain areas outside NVZs (Eaton 2003).

Use (storage) of sewage sludge and compost: -

Others (compaction, salinisation etc.): -

Animal housing/husbandry: -

Landscape, Biodiversity: -

Farm Management: -

Others:

- Stocking density:
  (Regulation SJVFS 1999:79 on environmental concerns in agriculture)
  In this regulation the Swedish Board of Agriculture (SBA) defines maximum allowed numbers of animals per hectare for farms with more than 10 LU.

Monitoring and Control:

In controls according to national law, 5 to 7% of all farmers are subject to thorough checks (Loof 2003). But the monitoring by local authorities was criticised as not being sufficient by the European Commission in autumn 2000 (Eaton 2003).

Sweden had to set up a parallel system, where county SBA officers are checking 5% of farms according to the RDR. The Local Authorities are notified in cases of non-compliance for further investigation and to make the final decisions on penalties (Eaton 2003).

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