

Achieving the environmental goals of the WFD in Finland and the role of agricultural water protection measures

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In river basin management planning, the most important inland waters are the surface waters in which the status is not good as well as groundwater areas under risks. According to the river basin management plans (RBMPs) a good ecological and chemical status will prevail by 2105 in most water bodies in Finland. However, in about one third of them a good status will be achieved only by 2021 or 2027. The reason for that is that technically, economically or socially applicable instruments do not exist or natural conditions delay the improvement of waters. Remarkable additional measures will be needed, particularly for reducing agricultural nutrient loading. In developing the programmes of measures the different options are selected, considering on one hand how well they contribute to achieving the environmental goals and on the other hand how easily they can be implemented in practice. The Water Protection Policy Outlines 2015, accepted by the Finnish government, and its background investigations have created an important basis for water management. To support this management, a number of national guidelines and directives have been given by the authorities. For prevention of eutrophication, nutrient input from all possible sources, particularly agriculture, must be further reduced. Improvement of the status of the water bodies eutrophied by agricultural loading requires more effective and more accurately located measures than today. Optimal use of fertilizers, winter-time vegetation cover, buffer zones, artificial wetlands, and the adoption of farming practices that reduce erosion are among the most central measures. The Finnish agricultural support scheme should be further developed so that the requirements of environmental directives will be better fulfilled. The measures proposed in the RBMPs call for development of different policy instruments. Developing the financing system of agricultural environmental support is in a central position. Among other important instruments there are land use planning, improvement of legislation, general environmental planning, environmental counselling and research. For example, the method of nutrient balances should be widely applied in farms.

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