

Support for local measures against eutrophication – A follow-up



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Summary of follow-up report 2014/15:RFR1

Foreword

The Riksdag has adopted the environmental quality objective *Zero eutrophication*. In order to achieve this objective, measures are being taken with the purpose for example of reducing levels of phosphorus and nitrogen in water. Some of these measures are being taken by local actors and receive central government subsidies or grants.

The parliamentary committees' preparation of matters includes following up and evaluating decisions made by the Riksdag. On 13 March 2014, the Committee on Environment and Agriculture decided to start a follow-up of central government support to local measures against eutrophication. On 14 October, the Committee confirmed the decision to carry out this follow-up.

The follow-up has been conducted by the Committee on Environment and Agriculture's follow-up and evaluation group, comprising the following members of the Riksdag: Jens Holm (Left Party), Chair, Emma Nohrén (Green Party), Jan-Olof Larsson (Social Democratic Party), Kristina Yngwe (Centre Party), Runar Filper (Sweden Democrats), Fredrik Malm (Liberal Party), Sotiris Delis (Moderate Party) and Magnus Oscarsson (Christian Democrats). The background materials for the follow-up were prepared by Senior Evaluation Officer Fredrik Friberg at the Committee Services Division's Evaluation and Research Secretariat, in cooperation with Committee Secretary Lena Sandström at the Secretariat of the Committee on Environment and Agriculture. Head of Secretariat Christer Åström also contributed to the work.

Work with the follow-up began during the spring and summer of 2014 and was concluded in November 2014. The follow-up and evaluation group's report has since been published in the series Reports from the Riksdag (Report 2014/15:RFR1). The follow-up was presented to the Committee in November 2014.

The assessments of the follow-up and evaluation group in brief

- It is positive that efforts are being made to reduce eutrophication and that the actors contributing to emissions should be mobilised and involved in efforts to bring about concrete action.
- In the design of various policy instruments, the balance between voluntary measures, the size of financial subsidies and mandatory requirements needs to be continuously followed up and be re-examined in order to find cost-effective solutions.
- It is positive that efforts have mobilised broad commitment and cooperation at the local level that involves all the actors concerned from different sectors. At the same time, there is some potential for cross-border cooperation between municipalities in order to involve a larger number of farmers directly.
- It is good that new water management projects (LOVA) are being directed towards sectors with the greatest emissions and high potential for cost-effective measures and long-term thinking and that results are reported back in keeping with the projects' ambition to reach the desired results.
- Despite the various challenges linked to following up environmental effects, this should be the ambition of all sorts of measures. The measures that are taken with the help of well-known methods should be cost-effective.
- To ensure continued development in water management and effective measures, it is important that the water authorities used earlier experiences to learn relevant lessons in the work ahead in designing gaining broad support for the action programmes.
- It is important that the Government ensures that possible changes to the system will result in the fact that the conditions for follow-up and measurement of results are maintained and developed.

Follow-up by the Committee on Environment and Agriculture

In March 2014, the Committee on Environment and Agriculture decided to carry out a follow-up of central government support to local measures against eutrophication. The starting point for the follow-up is the Riksdag's decision to adopt the environmental quality objective *Zero Eutrophication*, which means that concentrations of eutrophying substances in land and water are not to have a negative impact on people's health, biological diversity or the potential for versatile water use. The Riksdag has, following proposals from the Government, during recent years decided on further funding to increase the implementation of measures for example in the Rural Development Programme and to support local water management projects (LOVA).

The Committee on Environment and Agriculture's follow-up and evaluation group has focused its follow-up on performing a survey of a selection of sectors and state support in the area, as well as case studies of local efforts in three river basins.

Current and pending efforts to combat eutrophication

Since 1995, Sweden's gross emissions of nitrogen and phosphorous into surrounding sea basins have been decreasing mainly in agriculture, municipal wastewater management plants and industry. In the Committee on Environment and Agriculture's 2008 follow-up of measures taken in the marine environment, it emerged that there was a certain amount of frustration over the lack of funding for the implementation of practical measures. Since the follow-up was carried out, initiatives such as the water authorities' action programmes and new initiatives at the local level have been established. Funds that have subsequently been provided are being directed particularly towards initiatives aimed at drainage and wastewater management plants, agriculture, boats as well as water and seas. Investments in local water management (LOVA) have, since 2009, helped to finance over 900 projects with contributions amounting to approx. SEK 400 million. Individual farmers have been able to undertake – and received funding for – various environmental measures in agriculture through the Swedish Rural Development Programme. Special funding for the marine environment, EU funds, etc. have helped to finance a whole variety of action projects, both at the local and regional level.

Necessity for development of knowledge of effects and needs

Cost-effective action programmes need to be based on a holistic view in which needs are identified and prioritised. Measures to combat eutrophication that are

undertaken in one area with certain geographic conditions can be more or less effective in another place that has varying conditions. It can also be difficult to assess the environmental impact of many methods in a simple way and in a short-term perspective. An immediate challenge is that many measures are based on voluntary initiatives from actors who themselves contribute to emissions of nutrients.

The follow-up demonstrates that there is continued development potential when it comes to local efforts. Case studies in three river basins show that municipalities sometimes lack strategic considerations and overall needs analyses prior to making the decision to implement measures. There is a risk that municipalities and private landowners, for example, will base their considerations on what grants can be applied for rather than having a holistic view of water management. The formulation of effective long-term measures can be complicated if funding needs to be reported at relatively short notice. This can mean obstacles to maintaining involvement and the opportunity to follow up effects.

Participation of local actors varies

In the case studies of three river basins in the follow-up, it emerges that concrete measures are being implemented by many actors in different sectors and with varying financial solutions. The actors are not motivated by the same ambitions and incentives, have different interests and varying economic opportunities when it comes to participating in the action programmes. Awareness of the range of measures available, interest in the environment and acceptance of the purpose of support are crucial for ensuring any degree of commitment. Some measures, both in the area of water and sewage and those aimed at agriculture, are being implemented by municipalities and funded by them to solve acute eutrophication problems. Added to this, there are examples of cases in which local actors have combined forces to solve common problems, for example when it comes to boats. In several counties, municipalities and water boards draw attention to difficulties in dealing with locally varying technical solutions for water and sewage, and that overall water planning would have much to gain by being better coordinated. Differing views tend to reduce the chances of synergies occurring and being able to deal with problems in common waters.

There are examples of farmers who have special interests and economic means implementing many environmental measures. At the same time, there is another group of farmers who do not take part in this work at all. The follow-up demonstrates that farmers' motives for becoming involved in different ways tend to vary. The follow-up indicates that the size of compensation has some significance, but the clarity and predictability of the various systems are just as important. Other crucial factors are trust and interest. In order to obtain the support of the farmers, it is necessary to make visible how individual measures affect nutrient leakage from the ground, or how local water courses can actually be improved once such measures are implemented. The follow-up shows several successful methods to stimulate participation on the part of the farmers, for example structural liming, and water boards as an arena for dialogue and initiatives as part of the project 'Greppa näringen' ("Focus on Nutrients").

LOVA perceived to be working well

Support from LOVA is said to have an important part to play in dealing with local eutrophication problems and meeting national requirements or expectations. LOVA projects are felt to a great extent to have boosted efforts at the local level. These projects are initiated on a voluntary basis by municipalities or other actors and are made possible by the fact that at least half of them are financed through funds from the municipalities or the actors themselves. There is often a connection to an economic driving force, for example the municipality's responsibility for water services, desludging stations for boats or expectations regarding increased harvests following structural liming. Concrete measures for water and sewage are often linked to high costs, which is why support from LOVA has in most cases been used for knowledge acquisition, water planning and advice regarding sewage systems. In the case studies in the follow-up, there are also examples of extensive recycling projects which demonstrate innovative thinking and have been made possible with support from LOVA. If an awareness project is combined with at least one measure of a less concrete nature, the continued interest and participation of the actors involved is considered to be strengthened. Another aspect that promotes local involvement is the continuity of the support. There is also widespread positive acceptance for the requirement for co-financing which comes with this support.

Experiences of results achieved mainly positive

Municipalities, associations and organisations of farmers have positive experiences of LOVA. In particular, there is a feeling of satisfaction in implementing measures for the local environment. The same is true for other projects carried out by county administrative boards, municipalities or water boards, with funding from such organisations as the BSAP Fund (Baltic Sea Action Plan), Life Plus and special funds from the appropriation for the marine environment. Case studies indicate several examples of projects in which reduced nutrient leakage and extreme local benefits have been seen. Wetlands and treatment plants are perceived to have the potential to increase public interest in nature and environmental awareness. Confidence and relations between actors can be developed when measures are carried out by the various actors together. As mentioned above, there have been particularly positive experiences of structural liming. Among the recipients of support as part of the Rural Development Programme compensation scheme, the picture is not as unequivocally positive; criticism includes for example having relatively limited knowledge of what difference one's own contribution is actually doing for the environment.

Local actors emphasise the positive aspect that LOVA is not bound to certain sectors or measures, since it leaves scope for testing something new and finding combinations of funding. LOVA projects that are relatively small probably need to be judged according to criteria other than projects with a turnover of several million SEK. The turnover and complexity of various projects, and the possibilities of measuring environmental impact differ to a certain extent between sectors.

The potential of the water boards unclear

The water boards have been established to bring together different stakeholders in each water basin. The case studies in the follow-up indicate differences between the function of the various water boards and the results achieved. There are examples of water boards that encourage and implement joint measures, but there can at the same time be a feeling of frustration at the lack of funds of their own. There are also a number of newly formed water boards with a more limited role. The success of the water boards is often perceived to be a result of the driving force of individuals and their ability to create dialogue. The municipalities are involved in the water boards to varying degrees,

and the actors involved see their duties in different ways. This is partly due to how they believe they are affected by their particular water basin. If the members have different views of the purpose of the boards, the step to consensus and possible measures will be a long one.

The water boards can be active at different levels. If concrete measures are to be taken, ability and perseverance are necessary when it comes to running projects. Relatively large projects can require lasting organisation with the ability to take care of, follow up and evaluate effects over a period of several years. When a municipality is the responsible entity, the actors involved experience a sense of continuity in terms of ownership and administration. If the board can agree on conclusions, it will appear as an independent voice which, in the spirit of the Water Directive, will place the interests of water before anything else. A water board can also be used to provide information about and obtain broad support for the planned measures of individual actors.

Demand for developed regional and national support

The case studies in the follow-up indicate that the efforts of the county administrative boards are largely appreciated by local actors. Support from the county administrative board is important when it comes to analysing needs, initiating measures and applying for various financial resources. At the same time, the follow-up shows that local actors require more knowledge about which combination of measures is most effective. Here there seems to be some potential for development for county administrative boards and other relevant authorities. The way different county administrative boards have organised the way they keep together issues and work concerning eutrophication and local efforts tends to vary.

The follow-up describes how the Water Directive has been introduced into the Environmental Code and the water authorities' action programmes. In addition to this comes knowledge about such things as the status of each river basin, sources of emissions and environmental quality norms compiled in national databases. All this knowledge together with the action programmes is expected to constitute a basis for work on the implementation of measures by local actors. Earlier studies have criticised the action programmes and the fact that the impact of measures on the part of the municipalities, for ex-

ample, is limited. This follow-up indicates that the Water Directive has at least helped to increase the level of awareness in municipalities, promoted dialogue at the local level and boosted the way efforts are organised according to river basins.

Actors at the local, regional and national level see the advantages of for example LOVA's efforts to reduce nitrogen and phosphorus bringing these problems into focus and improving opportunities to test new methods. The way LOVA is designed also has the advantage that biological diversity can be considered to be a positive side effect. The same is true for example for wetlands in the Rural Development Programme. At the same time it can be noted that in projects with broad objectives or a number of objectives, there can be a need to report in a form that takes into account both results of specific objectives and overall results.

Importance of continued follow-up and reporting of results achieved

A whole range of preparations, investigations and reviews are currently in progress on regulatory frameworks, goals and authorities regarding the environment. Follow-ups or results of state efforts to combat eutrophication are being carried out by various actors. The Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management is responsible for coordinating follow-up and evaluation of the environmental quality objective *Zero Eutrophication*, and the Government produces an annual performance report for this environmental quality objective in the Budget Bill. The follow-up and evaluation group believes that it is important that the results achieved are followed up and reported.

Follow-ups from the Committee on Environment and Agriculture

Thematic follow-ups

- *Förutsättningar för småskalig livsmedelsproduktion – En uppföljning* (in Swedish) [Conditions for small-scale food production – A follow-up] (Report 2005/06:RFR3, Committee report 2005/06:MJU8)
- *Uppföljning av de fiskepolitiska insatsernas resultat och konsekvenser för företag inom fiskeområdet* (in Swedish) [Follow-up of the results and consequences of fisheries policy measures in the field of fisheries] (Report 2007/08:RFR3, Committee report 2007/08:MJU2)
- *Follow-up of government measures for the marine environment* (summary in English) [Uppföljning av statens insatser inom havsmiljöområdet] (Report 2008/09:RFR3, Committee report 2008/09:MJU1)

- *Follow-up of central government measures for small-scale food production* (summary in English) [Uppföljning av statens insatser för småskalig livsmedelsproduktion] (Report 2009/10:RFR1, Committee report 2009/10:MJU2)
- *Follow-up of organic production and public consumption* (summary in English) [Uppföljning av ekologisk produktion och offentlig konsumtion] (Report 2010/11:RFR1, Committee report 2010/11:MJU2)
- *Follow-up of central government efforts concerning sustainable cities* (summary in English) [Uppföljning av statens satsning på hållbara städer] (Report 2010/11:RFR2, Committee report 2010/11:MJU1)
- *Biological diversity in running waters and hydropower – A follow-up* (summary in English) [Biologisk mångfald i rinnande vatten och vattenkraft – En uppföljning] (Report 2011/12:RFR1, Committee report 2011/12:MJU1)
- *Offentlig utfrågning om biologisk mångfald i rinnande vatten och vattenkraft* (in Swedish) [Public hearing on biological diversity in running waters and hydropower] (Report 2011/12:RFR3, Committee report 2011/12:MJU1)
- *Follow-up of certain aspects of the Rural Development Programme* (summary in English) [Uppföljning av vissa frågor inom landsbygdsprogrammet] (Report 2012/13:RFR4, Committee report 2012/13:MJU2).
- *Support for local measures against eutrophication – A follow-up* (summary in English) [Stöd till lokala åtgärder mot övergödning – En uppföljning] (Report 2014/15:RFR1, Committee report 2014/15:MJU1)

Ongoing follow-ups from the Committee on Environment and Agriculture

- *Uppföljning och analys av regeringens resultatredovisning för utgiftsområde 20* (in Swedish) [Follow-up and analysis of the Government's report on expenditure area 20] (carried out annually, the latest follow-up included in Committee report 2014/15:MJU1)
- *Uppföljning och analys av regeringens resultatredovisning för utgiftsområde 23* (in Swedish) [Follow-up and analysis of the Government's report on expenditure area 23] (carried out annually, the latest follow-up included in Committee report 2014/15:MJU2).

The follow-up reports are available in Swedish on the Riksdag website (www.riksdagen.se) and can also be ordered from the Riksdag Printing Office (Postal address: SE 100 12 Stockholm, Sweden, tel.: +46 8 786 58 10, fax +46 8 786 61 76 or email: ordermottagningen@riksdagen.se). Summaries in English of a number of the reports are available on the Riksdag website.

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