

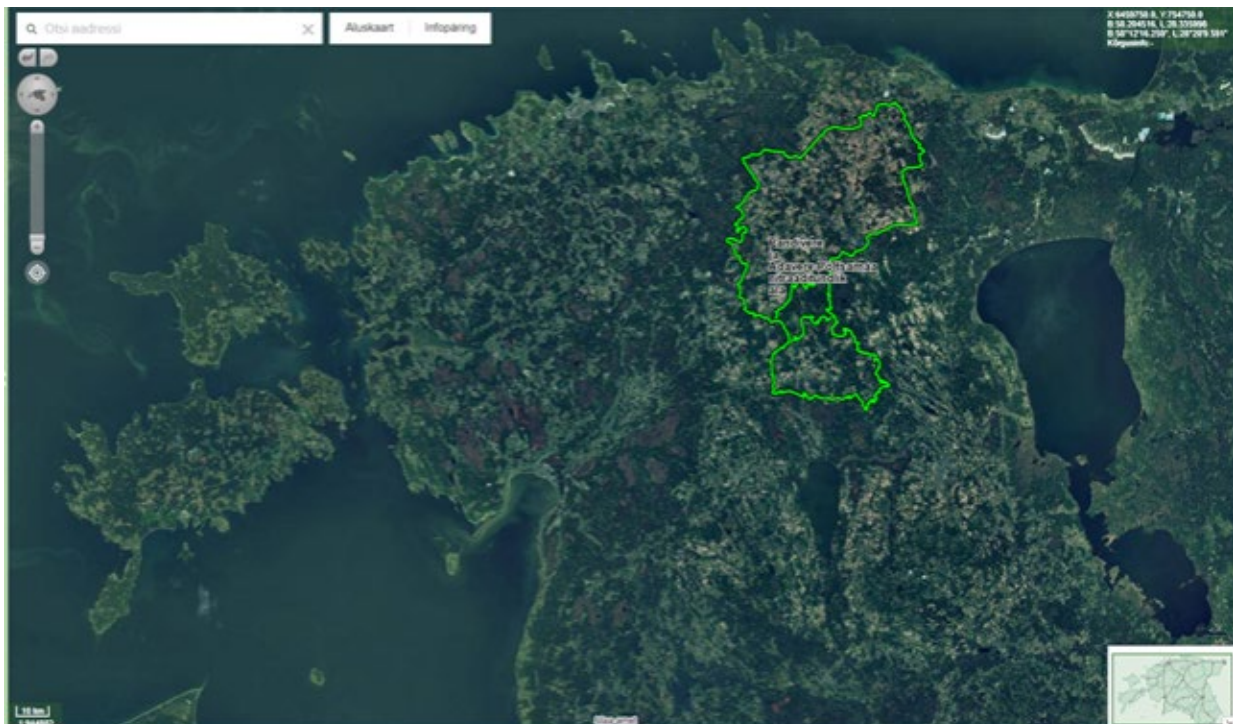
ESTONIA

Report from case area Nitrate Vulnerable Zone in Estonia

Summary (short description)

Introduction to the case area

The pilot area is a Nitrate Vulnerable Zone (NVZ) of 3250km² is located in the central-eastern part of the country. This is the only NVZ in Estonia, and it was established in 2003 to comply with the Nitrate Directive and the Water Framework Directive. The reason for designation is to set restrictions to the land use because the area is karst area, where the ground water is poorly protected, ie pollution from fertilisers, pesticides and other sources penetrate easily to the groundwater. On the other hand, the NVZ area is of high soil quality farmland, where the average yields of crops are the highest in the country. NVZ occupies parts of two river basins – the East- Estonian (with 19 surface water bodies) and West-Estonian (with 33 surface water bodies) river basin.



Strategic tasks/goals in the catchment

There is a special action plan for the NVZ adopted first in 2004. Current plan is valid for the period of 2016-2020. SEI Tallinn has analysed the implementation of the plan and the associated monitoring data of the water quality and developed a background paper for discussion with stakeholders of the NVZ. Also interviews with two largest municipalities located in the NVZ will be conducted in January 2020.

Focus Groups – policy level actions and implementation

SEI Tallinn has established a tasks force to discuss the implementation of the NVZ action plan, the water management measures under Rural Development Plan and the effectiveness of the agri-environmental measures in the country but also specifically in the NVZ. The task force comprises representatives of the Ministry of Rural Affairs, Ministry of Environment, (national) Environmental Board, Board of Agricultural, Centre for Agricultural Research, Environmental Inspectorate, Agriculture Chamber of Commerce, Farmers' Union, etc. The task force has had 3 meetings in 2019. In the first and second meeting (in February and May, respectively) the water policy issues and implementation of the NVZ action plan was discussed. In the third meeting the LU-LUCF inventory of agricultural emissions was discussed.

Challenges

The challenge still remains – intensive agriculture on vulnerable to water pollution farmland. The regulations are there, but they remains largely unimplemented, since the enforcement is weak (monitoring and inspection). Also direct advise from the adviser to the farmer is needed. The advice needs to correspond to the local needs, both in terms of the hydrogeological situation and applicability of the measures.

Conclusions

SEI Tallinn continues to bring together the NVZ task force to discuss the practical implementaion of the action plan, but also to monitor the progress of development of agri-environmental measures under the next CAP 2021-2027, to contribute to the design of the measures to better comply with the water quality standards and deliver environmental benefits.