



A summary of inputs on the EU Bioeconomy Strategy EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region consultation, Policy Area Nutri June 2025

This opinion is submitted on behalf of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR), Policy Area Nutri. It consolidates policy messages from projects, and the PA Nutri Talks webinar held on 9 June 2025. More details attached, and the core points below.

The Baltic Sea remains far from good environmental status and the agricultural sector continues to be the dominant contributor to nutrient pollution. Primary producers across sectors rely heavily on water and nutrients, yet these resources are still managed through overly linear and open systems. This situation is unsustainable and places critical pressure on sensitive aquatic environments. We call for urgent implementation of circularity principles in fertiliser systems, to reduce dependence on fossil-based minerals and energy-intensive nitrogen production.

Water resilience and closed nutrient loops are essential for a sustainable future. These measures would reduce Europe's reliance on imported phosphorus (P) and significantly lower the energy footprint of nitrogen fertiliser production. At the heart of a successful circular bioeconomy must be the principle that sustainable practices are economically viable for producers.

To achieve this, the circular approach to nutrient management must be systemic and inclusive. All societal sectors and all nutrient sources – including wastewater, manure, food waste, and biomass – must be recognised as key components of the circular bioeconomy. For example, small wastewater treatment plants in tourism-heavy areas often operate inefficiently and impose seasonal nutrient loads on the environment. Soil amendments such as gypsum and structural lime can also support bioeconomy. Their positive and negative sides need to be researched, and their usage supported.

These measures can deliver concrete, quantifiable benefits. F.ex., existing technologies allow recovery of up to 90% of phosphorus and 20% of nitrogen from municipal wastewater. Replacing fossil-based nitrogen (N) fertilisers with recovered N can reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 40-80%. In Sweden alone, recycled nutrients could substitute for up to 25% of mineral nitrogen and 36% of mineral P use – improving self-sufficiency while reducing climate and eutrophication pressures.

We recommend that the EU adopts a clear measurable objective: to replace at least 20% of mineral P and 15% of mineral N in fertilisers with recycled nutrient sources by 2030. This target is technically feasible, economically advantageous, and environmentally necessary. Achieving it will require targeted investments in nutrient recovery infrastructure, harmonised product standards, and supportive market mechanisms to accelerate circular value chains.

Local value chains based on the reuse of manure, harvested reed, and other organic resources can displace the use of virgin materials such as mineral fertilisers and peat. The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) should be revised to fully support the use of renewable material flows and phase out fossil-based inputs, which are not best environmental practice in any sector for long-term sustainability.



Contributing projects call for a stronger integration of water policy and bioeconomy. Innovative systems for nutrient and water recovery have the potential to support local symbioses, enhance long-term economic competitiveness, and reduce pressure on aquatic environments.

The 2018 EU Bioeconomy Strategy rightly highlighted the importance of networks and cooperation. We stress the need to strengthen existing frameworks such as the Macro-regional Strategies. These strategies are vital bridges between policy makers, research institutions, and transnational projects at all levels of governance. The open and inclusive cooperation such as this consolidated policy message depends on sufficient funding in transnational context (Interreg-programmes). This improves implementation of policies and ensures challenges identified in projects rise to the awareness of policy makers.