Norsminde stakeholder workshop, 2014

- *Summary of workshop, 2014.12.15/jcr*

Context

A workshop was held at Norsminde Kro on 11th December 2014. The workshop was hosted by the Norsminde Fjord Catchment Council, an organisation of local stakeholders within the Norsminde Fjord catchment. Several projects provided input to the workshop, which had the following programme:

- 16-18: Presentation of results from a pilot project on nitrate regulation by the Danish Environmental Protection Agency and the Knowledge Centre for Agriculture
- 18-19: Dinner
- 19-21: Presentation of research projects and group work organised by the NiCA and Soils2Sea projects (GEUS, Ecologic Institute, Knowledge Centre for Agriculture, Aarhus University)

Invitations (Appendix 1) to the workshop had been send to members of the Norsminde Fjord catchment council and to 10 local farmers that had actively participated in the pilot project. Altogether, 21 persons with the following background participated in the workshop (details in Appendix 2):

- Farmers: 10
- Agricultural advisors: 2
- NGOs (Danish Nature Conservations Association and Danish Ornitological Association): 2
- Authorities (Municipality and Ministry): 2
- Politicians, member of Odder Municipality council: 2 (of which 1 local farmer)
- Knowledge Centre for Agriculture: 2
- Research Institutions (GEUS, Aarhus University): 2

EPA Pilot Project

In the EPA Pilot Project 30 farmers, in three catchments, have been asked about how they would adapt their crop rotations to two different models for regulation of nitrate. Both of the models assumed a kind of spatially differentiated regulation. One of the catchments (and 10 farmers) was the Norsminde Fjord catchment, where the basis for the differentiated regulation was nitrate retention maps produced by the NiCA research project (www.nitrat.dk) aggregated to 15 km^2.

Key findings from the EPA Pilot Projects are not referred here

Introduction to research projects

Flemming Gertz introduced the participants to the second half of the workshop focusing on the research projects briefly describing the large number of research and demonstration projects now basing their studies in the Norsminde catchment area: NiCA, Soils2Sea, IDRÆN, Emission based regulation, TReNDS.

Jens Christian Refsgaard showed the key output from the NiCA project in terms of a high resolution nitrate reduction map and the associated uncertainties (www.nitrat.dk) and furthermore introduced the Soils2Sea project (www.soild2sea.eu) outlining the stakeholder involvement process in this project.

Summary of group work

The group work was organised according to the World Café method with three tables, each of which were visited by two groups. The questions for the three groups are listed in Appendix 3. The key conclusions to the questions from the groups are given in the following.

Table 1: Regulation on farm or catchment level

- Regulations linked to individual farmers holding are easy to implement. However, control monitoring may be difficult for some farms, as the water often flow from the fields of one farmer to the fields of another farmer before it is possible to monitor it adequately
- The advantage of regulations linked to small areas (e.g. 100 ha) compared to large areas (e.g. 1500 ha) is that it is closer to a farmers holding. However, if the regulatory unit happens to includes only two farmers and these two farmers are not on good terms, even this may be difficult to manage.
- The advantage of regulations linked to larger areas (e.g. 1500 ha) is that it may facilitate catchment solutions, where e.g. several farmers work together on construction of nitrate removing wetlands. A disadvantage is that it may push towards purchase of land and increasing agricultural holdings.
- It is not realistic that several farmers make joint commitments to nitrate emissions within a catchment. Farmers cannot police each other – this would destroy the good neighbourhood.

Table 2: Use of retention maps

- There is a concern that use of detailed retention maps (ha scale resolution) by the State as a basis for regulation of individual fields may lead to a very rigid and bureaucratic system.
- Use of detailed retention maps on a voluntary basis by farmers to plan implementation of an emission based regulation on the individual farm is perceived very positively. Such use will, however, mainly be utilised to the extent that it benefits individual farmers, while the benefits from considering a catchment perspective will not be achieved.
- The idea of having purely voluntary agreements between more farmers in a catchment for sharing of common commitments to comply with the emission requirements is not very realistic. This would require some kind of regulatory framework. A relevant support in this respect could for instance be facilitation of exchange of land as typically done in connection with motorway constructions, where farmers often exchange land to ensure that all land to an individual farm are located on one side of the motorway.
- Farmers expressed interest of reducing the uncertainties on the retention maps by supplementary local campaign measurements, e.g. measurements in drain pipes. This is particularly interesting in areas, where the maps indicate low retention.

Table 3: Trading with emission permits

- Trading of nitrate emission permits between individual farmers are perceived as realistic. One option could be that farmers buy shares in a nitrate reducing wetlands within the catchment and in

this way obtain the right to a larger nitrate emission from his own holding or that one farmer reduces his/her nitrate load by growing a catch crop, but instead of using this on his/her own holding sells the right to a larger emission to another farmer within the catchment.

- Trading of permits between farmers and the State might be used by the State to regulate the total emission from a catchment, by bying up or selling emission permits. There were no clear conclusion on this issue, but some concern was expressed that such a market system might not be an efficient way of ensuring the reduction targets required for WFD goal achievement.
- Nitrate emission permits would typically be registered in the same databases in the Ministry of Food and Agriculture that supports the management of EU's Common Agricultural Policy.
- A total free market for trading of emission permits may be problematic as there is a risk that permits may be purchased by relatively few farmers, and in this way the market for trading with permits will not function effectively.
- A separate question is how the emission permits initially shall be distributed. One option may be to associate them with the nitrate retention maps, so that an area with low retention receives a high emission permit. This may be used as part of a compensational package to farmers with holdings in low retention areas.

Concluding plenary

The views expressed at the tables were presented and briefly commented in plenum. Subsequently, Jens Christian Refsgaard thanked the participants for having spent time providing valuable inputs to the research projects, and he expressed the hope that the participants would be interested in attending a similar workshop in a year from now. Finally, Hans Jacob Fenger, chairman of the Norsminde Catchment Council, expressed the view that it had been a very fruitful workshop and confirmed that the Norsminde Catchment Council would be happy to participate in a similar event next year.

Appendices

1. Invitation and programme (in Danish)
2. List of participants
3. Questions to group work