

Voluntary national action plan template on sustainable nitrogen management

Zero draft

Note:

This zero draft document is prepared for the discussions at the 3rd meeting of the UNEP Working Group on Nitrogen. The document takes full recognition of the actions already taken by countries as part of their national action plans, while encouraging further actions to significantly reduce nitrogen waste.

Proposed actions - to be adapted at the country level, as necessary.

Guidance text is added below the proposed actions.

Under the mandate of UNEA resolutions 4/14 and 5/2, the below actions stand as recommendations, to be applied by countries on voluntary basis.

- **Leadership and coordination at government level should be ensured through the ministry for environment and the ministry for agriculture**
 - A legal act (e.g., government decision) would be necessary for setting-up a committee/working group for the coordination of the national action plan preparation and its monitoring,
 - Scientists/research institutes would always be involved as members of the committee/working group.

- **Set-up and operate a viable water and air quality monitoring network**

General characteristics:

- Regular monitoring (e.g., carried-out by a state agency),
 - Complying, as much as possible, with other agreed international methodologies and concentration limits, to allow data exchange and comparability,
 - Leading to regular reports that should serve policy preparation and implementation.
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- **Preparing voluntary applied Guidelines / Codes of good practices on prevention and reduction of nitrates and ammonia emissions**
 - The guidelines may approach separately the nitrates from ammonia, but it might be worth considering an integrated approach. Measures that may be considered are: prohibition periods for fertilizers application on land, storage of livestock manure, limitation of the land application of fertilizers according to soil and climatic conditions and foreseeable nitrogen requirements of the crops, fertilizer plans on a farm-by-farm basis and the keeping of records on fertilizer use, limitation of the amount of nitrogen from livestock manure applied to the land each year, specific conditions regarding sloping grounds, water-saturated, flooded, frozen or snow-covered ground, vegetation cover during (rainy) periods.
 - Key actors to be involved in the preparation are research institutes, farmer organisations and industry. Local research and farming specificities should be considered.
 - Wide public consultation with relevant stakeholders is essential.

 - **Action programmes**

- While Guidelines/Codes are designed to inspire, some basic measures for reducing nitrogen waste might be worth being considered as mandatory, and included in an **Action programme**,
 - Actions should be more integrated, with the consideration of water quality, air quality, climate and biodiversity,
 - Depending on the country readiness/advancement, mandatory norms should be prepared and linked with critical loads for environment, emissions targets/ceilings.
- **Norms on wastewater treatment and discharge**
 - These norms may be adapted depending on the environmental sensitivity of the areas.
- **Emissions norms on combustion**
 - NOx emissions standards on cars would expect to have a direct impact on air quality.
- **Awareness campaigns on reducing nitrogen waste / pollution**
 - Nitrogen waste is not yet a well-known topic as climate change, biodiversity or plastics. It also has the disadvantage in terms of public visibility of being odourless and colourless. Acknowledging the problem of nitrogen waste however is crucial,
 - Awareness campaigns should not disregard policy makers and local officials, and focus on farmers and consumers.
- **Training campaigns for farmers on sustainable use of fertilizers**
 - There are various means to be considered for delivering training, such as through: public advisory services, scientific sessions organised by the ministry for agriculture, universities, professional or scientific societies and farmer organisations/producer rings.
- **Programmes for public investments on reducing nitrogen losses**
 - May include demonstration/role model farms for knowledge transfer
 - Agriculture is the main sector to be addressed. The public support should cover investments in modern technology aiming at nitrogen use efficiency/nitrogen waste reduction, in machinery and equipment for manure storage capacity, composting, biogas, application of fertilizers, barns design to reduce ammonia emissions etc.
 - Planning and consulting services directly related to the investments should be considered.
- **Scientific/ technological advancements on reducing nitrogen losses**
 - Should be promoted/supported/public funded. Involving farmers/industry should be encouraged, as would be more applied oriented.

Open questions (to be further clarified in e.g. policy webinars):

- What are the challenges for the action plan preparation? What about approval process?
- What would be the main obstacles in implementation?
- What is the level of readiness for setting national targets on reducing nitrogen waste?