
**Statement by Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland on
environmental and climate benefits of systematic liming of
acidic agricultural soils**

Tartu, 31 October 2019

Introduction

Agricultural production and land use has its effects on climate. At the same time, agriculture is one of the sectors most affected by the climate change. European Union (EU) has set itself ambitious climate objectives. Agriculture must be part of the solution and should contribute to these objectives. One of the objectives of the new Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) is to bolster environmental care and climate action and to contribute to the environmental and climate objectives of the EU.

Environmental and climate benefits of systematic liming of acidic agricultural soils

Agriculture sector is using 48% of EU's land and farmers by their activities not only influence natural resources of soil, water and air, but also provide important carbon capture. Soil is the largest carbon pool in the terrestrial biosphere. Systemic agricultural practices through liming could enhance the ability of soils to store carbon and contribute to climate change mitigation.

In the view of the climate neutrality objective, different analysis have shown huge potential of liming in increasing carbon sequestration in soils. There is a strong correlation between soil pH and organic carbon. In areas where the soil is acidic, the organic carbon content is lower. Analysis are showing that increase in pH of 0.1 units, the organic carbon content increases on average by about 0.02-0.3%.

Mostly limestone, dolomitic limestone and ash are used for liming. The use of ash would allow limiting CO₂ emissions from liming, as it is predominantly calcium oxide, which does not result in additional emissions.

Liming agricultural soils is important for contributing climate change mitigation due to increasing organic carbon sequestration. It helps to:

- increase the organic carbon content and storage;
- preserve and improve soil structure and quality;
- increase the activity of micro-organisms and earthworms;
- improve the soil water and air condition and increase soil fertility;
- increase the uptake of nutrients;
- contribute to the circular economy by helping to use the by-products (e.g. ash).

Role of the CAP

CAP should lead a transition towards a more sustainable and climate-smart agriculture. To achieve that, specific objective on contributing to climate change mitigation and adaptation, has been set. The specific objectives of the CAP have the role to translate general CAP objectives into more concrete priorities and interventions.

New delivery mechanism for CAP provides great potential and tools for Member States to set ambitious targets and focus on results. For this potential to be fully realized, different circumstances in different member States should be truly taken into account.

Therefore, we, Ministers of Agriculture of Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland:

EMPHASIZE the role of agriculture in the sustainable use of soils in food production and providing ecosystem services;

TAKE INTO ACCOUNT the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals and the European Commission calls for a climate-neutral Europe by 2050;

EXPRESS the need for implementing the necessary measures to ensure maximum carbon sequestration in soils;

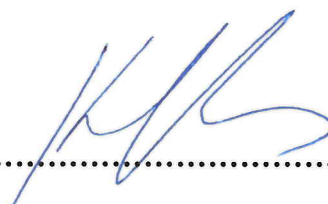
ACKNOWLEDGE liming of acidic agricultural soils by using certain type substances as an environmental and climate measure, which helps to achieve CAP climate objectives in future and, therefore, we **REQUEST** the European Commission that liming should be considered as eligible practice under schemes for the climate and the environment (eco-schemes) and environmental, climate and other management commitments;



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