

**THE NORDIC JOINT COMMITTEE FOR  
AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH**

**STRATEGY 2001 – 2004**

**The Nordic Joint Committee for Agricultural Research (NKJ) promotes and supports cooperation on agricultural research between the national research councils or similar organisations in the five Nordic countries. In addition the NKJ acts as an advisor to the Nordic Council of Ministers.**

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THE NORDIC JOINT COMMITTEE FOR AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH (NKJ)  
**Strategy 2001-2004**

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**The Nordic Joint Committee for Agricultural Research (NKJ)**  
was established in 1965. The Committee promotes and supports cooperation on agricultural research between the national research councils or similar research organisations in the five Nordic countries. In addition the NKJ acts as an advisor to the Nordic Council of Ministers. The present form of the NKJ dates back to 1987, and the Committee has at the most three members from each of Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden, and at least one representative from Iceland. The NKJ takes the initiative to new R&D activities, partly by way of reporting and partly in response to proposals from organisations within the subject area as well as from individual researchers. The national research councils and the Nordic Council of Ministers make the final decisions on the allocation of funds based on recommendations from the NKJ.

**The Nordic Council of Ministers (NMR)**  
was established in 1971. The Council submits proposals to the Nordic Council on cooperation between the governments of the five Nordic countries, implements the Council's recommendations and reports on results as well as directs the work carried out in the targeted areas. The prime ministers of the five Nordic countries assume the

**overall responsibility for the cooperation, which is coordinated by the ministers for cooperation and the Nordic Cooperation Committee. The composition of the Council of Ministers varies, depending on the nature of the issue to be treated.**

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## 1. Framework

### *The NKJ's bylaws*

The formal framework for the NKJ's activities is set out in the bylaws, which were last amended in January 1995. The bylaws define the following principal activities:

- to provide advice to the Nordic Council of Ministers (the ministers of agriculture) on issues relating to agricultural research and development (R&D);
- to provide advice or coordinate agricultural R&D when requested by the Nordic Council of Ministers through its committee of senior officials, the Nordic Committee of Senior Officials for Agriculture and Forestry Affairs (NEJS), and subject to Nordic funds being made available for such activities;
- to act as a contact body for the national research councils or similar research organisations with responsibility for agricultural R&D.

The fact that the NKJ is to provide advice or coordination to the extent requested by the Nordic Council of Ministers could entail a responsibility for following up on R&D activities if funds are made available by the Council for such activities.

### *The Nordic Council of Ministers' action programme*

During the autumn 1999 NMR has evaluated the action programme for Nordic collaboration within agriculture and forestry during the period 1996 - 2000. This evaluation is an important base for NMR's new action programme as well as for NKJ's strategy plan for the same period.

### *The prime ministers' declaration "A sustainable Norden"*

The Nordic prime ministers' declaration of 1998, concerning a sustainable development in Norden and its neighbouring areas, is expected to be finished during spring 2001 and will be an important steering instrument for the Nordic cooperation including NKJ.

### *Member states' national strategies*

Collaboration within the NKJ must be based on activities of common interest to the member states. As a result, the collaboration must be carried out in accordance with both the national R&D objectives and the priorities set by national research bodies. Obviously, the existing national strategies reflect the differences in the agricultural policies of the Nordic countries. This however has not hindered NKJ's strategy plan for 2001 to 2004 to be developed on the basis of the strategies of each individual country.

### *European Union R&D programmes*

The R&D communities in the Nordic region are to a varying degree involved in the R&D collaboration under the European Union framework programmes. Today Iceland and Norway, having signed the EEA agreement, are subject to the same conditions as the EU member

states. Naturally, the Nordic collaboration is influenced by the involvement of the member states in the EU R&D programmes.

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#### *Nordic institutions and collaborative bodies*

The NKJ interacts with a number of Nordic institutes and bodies, of which the following, organised under the Nordic Council of Ministers, are of primary importance to the NKJ:

- The Nordic Forest Research Cooperation Committee (SNS). As a result of the amendment to the bylaws which came into effect on 1 January 1997, the SNS now provides advice to the Nordic Council of Ministers on forestry issues. Accordingly, the SNS is now a body more on a level with the NKJ. The SNS participates in NKJ meetings as an observer and vice versa, and since 1999 they also have the same date for applications, the first of June.
- The Nordic Gene Bank (NGB) is in charge of the coordination activities within plant breeding and the preservation of genetic resources within plant materials in the Nordic countries.
- The Nordic Gene Bank for Farm Animals (NGH) is in charge of the same type of coordination as the NGB, only for farm animals.
- Nordic Council for Reindeer Research (NOR).
- The Nordic Training Academy for Advanced Study (NorFA). NorFA funds courses for Nordic and Baltic researchers and makes funds available for the establishment of networks of researchers. The NKJ has an important advisory function in these areas during the phase before applications are submitted to the Executive Committee of NorFA for approval. NorFA also supports symposia and workshops for researchers as well as activities to increase the mobility of researchers.
- The Nordic Agricultural University (NOVA) was formally established in 1995 as a collaboration project between the Nordic agricultural universities. NOVA has then been extended to include the Baltic region under the name of NOVABA.

The NKJ is involved in important collaboration projects with the following voluntary organisations:

- The Nordic Association of Agricultural Scientists (NJF).
- The Nordic Committee for Veterinary Scientific Cooperation (NKVet). Both of these organisations are observers to the meetings of the NKJ.

The NKJ focuses on ensuring that collaboration with other Nordic organisations and institutes is goal directed, active and constructive. In addition, the NKJ considers it important to avoid overlapping activities.

#### *The overall financial scope of NKJ activities*

The NKJ's overall activities are handled within a budget of approximately SEK 21 million (2000), of which the Nordic Council of Ministers accounts for approximately SEK 1 million, member fees for SEK 600 000 and the rest national contributions.

#### *International agreements*

The focus on sustainable development in the primary industries means that the Nordic collaboration will be influenced by international agreements and conventions on environmental protection. This includes agreements under the auspices of the United Nations as well as in connection with the North Sea Treaty and the Helsinki Convention.

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## **2. Perspectives and challenges**

There is a trend towards fewer production units in primary production, larger units and, presumably, also a greater specialisation. At the same time, a parallel development is seen by way of a large number of part-time farmers and a change in the use of land.

The most likely challenges for the primary production, the processing industry and the distribution, will be found in their relations with the market, including international competition, and society. For Nordic agricultural research this means that product quality and agricultural economical issues are important and that consumer preferences must be taken into account, including health and nutritional values of food. Moreover, there will be greater demand for lower cost levels in production and sales and demands for extended processing and for jobs - not least in rural districts.

We will see even greater focus than today on the environmental impact of agriculture and there will be a demand that the agricultural sector seeks to minimise the environmental impact it causes. One effect of this will be the continued demand for new technology and different cultivation methods, e.g. organic farming, in order to promote sustainable agricultural production methods, paying the greatest possible attention to the environment.

In animal farming, large-scale farming will result in still new challenges with respect to animal health, welfare and ethics.

Within certain fields, the Nordic region has only small research communities which have some structural and quality-related problems. Therefore, it is important that the overall resources are utilised as effectively as possible in order to get the best possible quality, efficiency and results of R&D activities as well as R&D-related activities. A coordinated effort will ensure added value as compared with a purely national approach.

Safe food, produced in a sustainable way, ought to be selfevident in a welfare society. The growing problems within this area underline the need of a close Nordic cooperation. NKJ can be expected to have a major influence here as NKJ finds it important that the consumers' demands and expectations on the food stuff are met and that the Nordic countries keep their traditional position as leading countries within the food area of benefit to consumers, employment and economy.

The efforts to develop a sustainable food production, that takes the main environmental issues into consideration, is of paramount priority for the NKJ. A sustainable development of the production is a fundamental prerequisite for the development of the Nordic welfare societies. This includes consideration to traditional environmental issues as well as several broader quality parameters included in sustainability as working conditions and animal welfare.

The basic conditions for the countries are however very different, partly because of different production structures within agriculture, and partly because of the great variation in climate and geography. In spite of these differences, the Nordic countries all think that sustainability considerations should be given especially high priority in the joint Nordic work and to find solutions that will bring most possible protection to the environment and hence sustainable production.

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NKJ notes that there are several international measures to promote environment and a sustainable development, as the UN Conference on Environment and Development(UNCED), the World Food Summit(WFS), the Kyoto Declaration and the prime ministers declaration about a sustainable Norden.

Moreover NKJ wants to continue and focus on the ongoing Nordic co-operation concerning genetic resources, at the same time as new challenges, as for example the use of genetically modified organisms, GMO in the food production, are met by relevant activities within the NKJ co-operation. Environment and sustainable development is also regarded as a central theme in the development of the Nordic co-operation with the Baltic countries.

For the research policy this means i.e. an increased interdisciplinary co-operation. During the next strategy plan NKJ will continue to follow-up the national political priorities of research of joint Nordic importance.

### **3. Objectives and priorities**

#### *Nordic benefits*

Achieving benefits to the Nordic region must be an overall goal of all kinds of collaboration supported by the NKJ, and the main area of priority will be R&D.

According to the Norwegian report “Nordisk samarbeid i en ny tid” (Nordic collaboration in a new age) “the basis for all Nordic activities must be that the activities meet some basic demands which may be summarised as follows:

- activities which would otherwise be handled on a national level but for which sustained positive effects can be achieved through joint Nordic solutions;
- activities which manifest and develop Nordic interdependence;
- activities which increase Nordic competence and competitive strength”

The Nordic collaboration must both support areas in which the Nordic region has a unique position and where there is a sufficient basis for R&D collaboration. In addition, attention should be directed towards areas in which the Nordic countries have special obligations and in which international R&D could otherwise not be expected.

In an active dialogue with the Nordic Council of Ministers, the NKJ will work to concretise R&D tasks which can be supported by the NEJS by way of initiatives which can be used to carry out the priority R&D in the Council’s action programme. In the future work special emphasis shall be taken to the Nordic prime ministers’ declaration about “A Sustainable Norden” which is expected to be ready during spring 2001.

An important task for the NKJ is to ensure a high quality of R&D also in the future and to give priority to collaborative tasks which ensure quality improvements or tasks in which the Nordic benefits are clearly visible and can be documented. In that connection, it will be a major challenge to utilise the common cultural and, to a great extent, language background in the Nordic region. The collaboration in the NKJ must take into account the great variation in climate and topography from the north to the south and, to some extent, from the west to the east of the region.

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#### *Priority R&D areas*

In addition to NKJ's main goal to support a sustainable development within agriculture, the following R&D areas will form the basis for the NKJ's Nordic collaboration in the form of networks, research projects, workshops and seminars etc. during the strategy period\*. The research areas are based on the preceding strategy plan, the research surveys and suggestions for activities suggested by NKJ's working groups, the national policies of the Nordic countries, the activities of the Nordic Council of Ministers and the EU-programme.

\*(the research areas are not ranked according to priority).

- **Food safety – from primary production to the consumer**

Subareas of priority:

- Comparative studies of food borne diseases and food production systems based on differences between the Nordic countries.
- Harmonisation of isolation methods and typing techniques for different bacteria.
- Studies of food and water borne viruses.
- Safer storing of minimally processed foods.

- **Organic agricultural production**

Subareas of priority:

- Methods for the development and analysis of how organic agricultural systems fulfil the criteria of sustainability.
- Methods to increase the resistance of plants and animals against diseases.
- Genetic resources – breeding strategies of plants and animals for organic agriculture.
- The relationship between organic farming and nutrient content and food quality.

- **Animal health and welfare**

Subareas of priority:

- The records that have been maintained on the animals' diseases and antibiotic consumption are suggested to be used for research purposes with the objective to reduce the spread of infections and resistance to antibiotics in Nordic farming.
- A system to assess the welfare of animals in a general perspective.
- Housing/rearing systems in which both behavioural and health aspects are considered.
- Transportation of farm animals that meet animal health and welfare requirements better.

- **Development in rural districts**

Subareas of priority:

- Conditions for a balanced rural development.

- Development and response tools being activated in various Nordic rural communities in response to globalisation and regionalisation.
- The implications for rural areas of new policies and regulations based on globalisation and regionalisation

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- **Circumpolar areas**

Subareas of priority:

- Buildings and technique
- Crop and fodder production
- Animal husbandry
- Natural resources
- Product development

The above areas were part of NKJ's strategy plan for 1997 – 2000 and have been completed with the subareas suggested by NKJ's working groups. The reports of the working groups, containing a survey of Nordic research projects within respective area together with further information about the above subareas, are found on NKJ's homepage [www.forskningsradet.no/nkj](http://www.forskningsradet.no/nkj).

The development within research and community, as regards genetechonology, genetic resources and biologic diversity has implicated the need of a completion with some more areas of priority. The areas will be described in further detail during the planning period.

### **Genetic techniques**

The development within genetic techniques is extremely rapid within areas as transformation, genomics and proteomics. The research within this area is of great basal relevance and hence also generates important knowledge for the areas "Organic agricultural production" and "Animal health and welfare". At the same time this research is controversial with problems concerning health and environmental risks and ethical and economical issues. These powerful techniques and the building of knowledge in the discipline is worked on both by means of university based research and by the industry (often confidential). Great transparency is important for the building of knowledge and the access of results and ought to be prevailed as much as possible within the public sector. Co-operation means good possibilities to illuminate joint Nordic issues, both within basic research and areas as risk evaluation and health estimations.

### **Genetical resources**

Access to genetic resources for breeding of cultivated plants and domestic animals is of utmost importance for agriculture in Norden. There has not yet been any international agreement concerning conservation and access to genetic resources, and the issue is on the political agenda. It is therefore important that research is performed within the area, but at the same time it is hard to do that on a broad international base. In Norden the practical conservation work is performed partly jointly (by the Nordic Gene Bank (NGB) and the Nordic Gene Bank for Farm Animals (NGH)), but also on a national base. The research is of

a very obvious Nordic dimension, especially as concerns the conservation and use of genetic resources for domestic animals as well as cultivated plants.

### **Biologic diversity**

Conservation and long-term, sustainable use of the biologic diversity has been put in focus by the Rio-convention, Convention of Biodiversity (CBD). The extinction of species and the deletion of important biotopes will sooner or later lead to a severe drain of the global natural resources, also in the Nordic countries. Research on the biological diversity is of a multidisciplinary character, which makes the area well suited for joint projects, especially in

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Norden with its great resemblances in flora, fauna and ecology and similar soil and climatical conditions.

In the previous strategy period, the areas neighbouring the Nordic Region, in particular the Baltic region, were given priority. The NKJ will continue to give priority to these areas, based on financial support from the Nordic Council of Ministers. Activities directed at these neighbouring areas must be co-ordinated with activities in other organisations and bodies

## **4. Collaboration methods and means**

### *Collaboration methods*

The NKJ finds it important to achieve a successful collaboration through an active dialogue between member organisations and the Nordic Council of Ministers, its institutions and the other Nordic organisations and bodies.

The contact among the member organisations of the respective countries and the collaboration between them has been developed by the secretariat so that the NKJ nowadays in concrete cases is able to make decisions outside the two regular meetings.

### *Means*

The NKJ will initiate reporting and planning activities within the priority areas of the strategy plan.

The NKJ will take the initiative to map and evaluate research communities and projects in the Nordic region in order to achieve increased collaboration within activities which are too narrow to function satisfactorily on a national level.

The NKJ intends to stimulate coordination, primarily of basic research, by way of research projects and participation in the financing of programmes within priority programme areas.

The NKJ will give higher priority to the establishment of networks of researchers, including concerted actions. In addition, networks of researchers can form the basis for subsequent implementation of joint R&D projects.

The NKJ intends to stimulate the holding of seminars and symposia within the areas given priority in the strategy plan.

## **5. Target results and dissemination of results**

The strategy plan is the instrument with which the NKJ governs its activities. Factors relating to quality, relevance, efficiency and ethics will be the governing criteria for the NKJ's activities. Scientific quality must be an overall criterion. The relevance criterion is to a great extent linked to the Nordic dimension and to Nordic benefits. The research communities have an important responsibility of ensuring high-quality research while at the same time having a special responsibility for the dissemination of research results. This goes for primary scientific publications as well as other kinds of dissemination of results to various user groups. The NKJ

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considers it important that the results are given a follow-up in the form of evaluation and that the dissemination of results actually works.

Research projects, seminars etc. will be evaluated on an ongoing basis. The NKJ intends to contribute to an evaluation of results in such a way that they can be used as a basis for legislation enacted by the Nordic parliaments, including environmental legislation. The NKJ's overall activities will be evaluated at the end of the strategy period.

## **6. Revision of the strategy**

The strategy will remain in force through the year 2004 and a revision will be initiated prior to the next strategy period, i.e. from 2003. In addition, the strategy will be reviewed on an annual basis in connection with reporting to the Nordic Council of Ministers in order to evaluate whether adjustments are needed. Deviations from the strategy plan must be commented on in the annual report. If necessary, brief additions to the strategy can be prepared.

## 7. NKJ member organisations and members

<b>Denmark:</b>	The Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Fisheries The Danish Agricultural and Veterinary Research Council
<b>Finland:</b>	The Agricultural Research Delegation
<b>Iceland:</b>	The Agricultural Research Institute
<b>Norway:</b>	The Research Council of Norway
<b>Sweden:</b>	The Swedish Research Council for Environment, Agricultural Sciences and Spatial Planning

In addition the Ministries of Agriculture of the Nordic countries, except Iceland, have each appointed one representative to the NKJ. The members of the NKJ for 2001 were the following:

### Denmark:

Merete Fredholm	The Danish Agricultural and Veterinary Research Council
Morten Blom Andersen	The Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Fisheries

### Finland:

Erkki Kemppainen	The Agricultural Research Delegation
Mirja Suurnäkki	The Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry

### Iceland:

Thorstein Tómasson	The Agricultural Research Institute
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### Norway:

Olav Hepsø	The Research Council of Norway
Hans Kolbein Dahle (chairman)	The Research Council of Norway
Wenche Östrem	The Ministry of Agriculture

### Sweden:

Roland von Bothmer	The Swedish Research Council for Environment, Agricultural Sciences and Spatial Planning
Marianne Jensen-Waern	The Swedish Research Council for Environment, Agricultural Sciences and Spatial Planning
Birgitta Hansson	The Ministry of Agriculture

### Observers:

The Nordic Association of Agricultural Scientists (NJF) represented by Sirpa Kurppa (FIN). The Nordic Committee for Veterinary Scientific Cooperation (NKVet) represented by Vibeke Dantzer (DK). The Nordic Forest Research Cooperation Committee (SNS) represented by Lisa Sennerby-Forsse (S). The Nordic Council of Ministers (NMR) represented by Ylva Tilander.

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