

Evaluation of the National Strategy for Adaptation to Climate Change

Helsinki 2013

Abstract

The National Strategy for Adaptation to Climate Change was published in 2005 (Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, 2005). The strategy considers the matter from the national perspective and in terms of specific sectors. It sets out more than 200 measures for 15 sectors, as well as joint measures for several administrative branches. This report evaluates how the implementation of the strategy has proceeded in various sectors since 2005 and gives recommendations for updating the strategy. It also looks into adaptation actions taken in the regions and municipalities and presents a summary of the evaluations of the National Adaptation Strategy, EU policy on adaptation, and results of recent adaptation research.

The aim in the strategy implementation was to incorporate adaptation as a cross-cutting theme into all activities and planning and monitoring processes. In most sectors there was at least some understanding of the impacts of climate change, and practical adaptation actions had been identified, and measures proposed in the strategy had been launched in almost all sectors. Progress had been made from the mid-term evaluation of the strategy (Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry 2009a). However, the way how adaptation has been integrated into the operations varies a great deal between sectors. The most progress has been made in sectors where the dependence of the operations on the weather and climate is obvious and well recognised. The sectors differ a great deal with regard to their vulnerability and the period of time when the impacts of climate change become evident and the need for adaptation measures arises, which is why there may be significant differences in adaptation between sectors. In most sectors no systematic reviews have been conducted on how climate change should be taken into account in their objectives, guidance and activity.

Key actions to promote adaptation identified in the strategy include the development of the main guidance instruments of sectors to anticipate the impacts of climate change, and the review of the synergies and conflicts between adaptation and other policies. To manage the uncertainties relating to the impacts of climate change, steering instruments and planning solutions are required that can be adapted to varying circumstances. The sector-specific nature of the strategy has promoted its implementation and monitoring, but it has not provided sufficient incentives to cooperation between sectors. Supporting adaptation work on the regional and local level should also be more closely linked to the National Adaptation Strategy. The strategy should promote adaptation by offering practical tools through research. In particular, tools should be developed for the assessment and management of climate risks and analysis of the costs and benefits. Enhancing awareness through communication, advice and education is a key condition for adaptation, whether we are concerned with central government decisions or citizens' initiatives. What is particularly important is that information is in the form that is easy to apply in decision-making.

In the future more research should focus on adaptation as a broader societal change factor and on also taking account of other drivers of change besides climate change. There has been not much research on the ways how the global impacts of climate change are reflected on Finland, and these have not been taken into account in decision-making. Research is also needed on the opportunities

brought by climate change and on the economic impacts of adaptation measures. In particular, in terms of the impacts on the functions vital to society it might also be necessary, on a case-by-case basis, to prepare for a more drastic and rapid climate change than expected on average. The strategy recognises the need for monitoring, but so far there has been no systematic monitoring or systematic assessment of the impacts or measures.