

# Coherent Nordic Action for the Arctic Climate

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## Targeting Agricultural Open Burning in Eastern Europe

**Location:** Stockholm (Ministry of Environment and Energy, Malm Morgsgatan 3)

**Date:** Friday, August 14, at 10:00

Open agricultural field burning is said to cause up to 90 percent of all wildfires in Russia, according to the Russian Ministry of Emergency Situations; and is also extensively practiced on virtually all agricultural lands in Ukraine. Farmers burn residues to reduce straw and weeds on the fields as a short-term cost-saving measure, with some believing that it increases soil fertility. In fact, however, open field burning rapidly decreases soil quality and fertility by destroying humus and other organic matter; increases soil run-off and the need for fertilizer, and therefore actually decreases crop yields and profitability. Burning also releases significant amounts of air pollution not only where it is burned, but in surrounding countries, and also releases short-lived climate pollutants that impact the Arctic. Field and forest fires **constitute the single largest source of black carbon to the Arctic lower atmosphere** and the snow and ice surface. The reduced reflexivity of the snow and ice surface accelerates the pace of melting in the Arctic Region and hence, Arctic regional as well as global warming.

Alternative no-burn solutions include various **agricultural practices and machinery (especially low-till and conservation agriculture no-till methods), bioenergy applications, and policy/regulatory supports and measures** – sectors in which Nordic know-how and business hold a strong position.

A recent project led by International Cryosphere Climate Initiative (ICCI) with financial support from the Swedish trust fund for Short-Lived Climate Forcers at NEFCO, aims to develop a set of incentives for Russian farmers to reduce their burning. To effect reform, actions may include financing investments in no-burn technological methods, institutional capacity-building and training for farmers. The agricultural sectors in Russia and Ukraine are currently in a relatively favourable position, in Russia's case due to the increasing demand on domestic agricultural products to replace imports from the EU and other countries, and in the case of Ukraine because of the free-trade agreement with EU that will come into force in January 2016, with a focus on abolishment of custom duties on agricultural products. Nearby countries – Poland and the Baltic states – underwent a transition to no-burn methods in the 2000's over a period of just 5-10 years, so there is good reason to believe that Russia and Ukraine can do the same in constructive cooperation with their Nordic neighbours.

- In Russia, the project has raised awareness, worked with legislative bodies and arranged education and exchanges for farmers. The project continues to address a mutual challenge by constructive actions and broad local project partner cooperation. The next step is aimed at structuring beneficial financing schemes for farmers.
- Ukraine's strong agricultural sector has similar open burning patterns as well as an intense interest in adoption of more European agricultural practices. Ukraine is believed to be one of the major contributors of short-lived climate pollution. A first-time introduction of abatement strategies to the Ukrainian authorities and potential project partners is crucial for an overall reduction of short-lived climate pollution.

**NEFCO and ICCI emphasise the need of coherent Nordic action to reduce open burning and modernise the agricultural sectors in Russia and Ukraine.** NEFCO and ICCI will present the research and activities on open burning to date, as well as discuss and invite new stakeholders for the continuation of the project in Russia and its extension to Ukraine.

Welcome!

## Preliminary Seminar Programme

- 10:00-10:45 | **ICCI presentation on report on open burning in Russia**  
Gail Stevenson, Svante Bodin and Alex Gittelsohn, ICCI
- Black carbon – how does it affect the Arctic region?
  - When, where and why do farmers burn?
  - Legislation – conclusions and results of the project
  - Education – model-farms and exchanges with Sweden
  - Alternative methods for farmers
  - Global context (Climate and Clean Air Coalition)
- 10:45-11:15 | **A suggestion of future strategy for open burning reduction in Eastern Europe**  
Henrik G Forsström and Henrik Toremark, NEFCO
- Continued actions in Russia
  - Extension of programme to Ukraine
  - Outline of strategy and typical projects
- 11:15-12:00 | **Discussion on a broader and deeper agenda of the open burning project**  
Moderator: NEFCO and ICCI
- Questions on open burning mitigation in Eastern Europe (Russia, Ukraine, other countries)
  - Priorities in terms of no-burn alternatives, regions and partners in the project
  - Incorporation of Nordic know-how and businesses in the project
  - New stakeholder participation – roles & financing