Shifting agricultural production towards more environmentally friendly practices

Traditionally, farming had a positive influence on biodiversity because it created a more diverse landscape and allowed new ecosystems with new species compositions to establish. The seasonal mountain pastures with their high diversity of plants and insects are a case in point.

Over the last half century, increased population with more demand for food and changing dietary preferences together with an engineering based approach to agriculture, has led to a profound change in the agricultural production systems in Switzerland. Land reform allowed the use of always bigger machinery and the drainage of lowland wetlands has created an increasingly uniform landscape that has already lost many species and is now unsuitable for sustaining healthy populations of rare birds and plants.

More traditional mountain farming struggles to compete with the farming machinery of the lowlands, leading to either abandonment or intensification where possible. Both these developments have a negative impact on the cultural landscape and its biodiversity.

“We need to start rethinking the way we do agriculture beyond only the production of food, taking into consideration impacts on health and drinking water, nutrition, resource dependency and climate mitigation.”

Holger Schmid, Director, Switzerland Programme, MAVA

Some of the goals that this action plan will help to achieve:

- Fair compensation of efforts and results that exceed the legal ecological performance requirements
- Reorientation of agricultural education to take the conservation of the environment adequately into consideration
- Achievement of the official federal environmental goals (ULZ) by 2030; and adequate monitoring of the agricultural policies
- Swiss agriculture is more climate and environmentally friendly and produces without pesticides in 2030
- Promotion of fair trade food and feedstock. Dependency from imported feedstock and fertiliser is reduced by 2/3 in 2025
- Increase of energy efficiency from 2.5:1 (invested energy calorie in relation to produced food calorie) to 1.75:1
HOW WE THINK CHANGE WILL HAPPEN

The action plan (or ‘results chain’ in technical terms) has been developed in accordance with the Open Standards - a recognised methodology in the conservation field. A summary is presented below.

INNOVATE
- Analyze current shortcomings and design improvements to policies and payments

STIMULATE
- a new debate on the future of agriculture

ADVOCATE
- promote the proposed improvements and ideas to administration, politicians, expert and general media

COLLABORATE
- new alliances with private sector and civil society organisations from health and consumption

WE AIM TO:
- Promote agriculture policies with less incentives that create negative environmental impacts
- Encourage strong societal support to move to a truly sustainable agriculture

EXPECTED KEY RESULTS

HOW IS THIS ACTION PLAN BEING IMPLEMENTED?

The implementation mechanism for this outcome is the Foundation for Sustainable Agriculture set up under the umbrella of Fondation des Fondateurs in Switzerland. This Fund is governed by a board consisting of representatives of the leading Swiss environmental organisations - ProNatura, WWF, Schweizer Vogelschutz (BirdLife partner) and Greenpeace – as well as Holger Schmid who retains a veto right.

The organisations represented on the board are excluded as beneficiaries of the Foundation. This will ensure that the Foundation funding will create real added value beyond ongoing activities by these organisations. It will also ensure that support projects feed into their ongoing work on agriculture.

WHO ARE OUR MAIN PARTNERS?

The total annual budget of this action plan is CHF 1’850’000. MAVA allocates CHF 1’000’000. The rest is funded by ProNatura (CHF 300’000), Greenpeace (CHF 220’000), Schweizer Vogelschutz (CHF 155’000) and WWF (CHF 150’000).

WHAT IS THE ANNUAL BUDGET?

CH4: High emissions and resource overuse

MAVA allocation
CHF 1’000’000

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