

EUROPEAN FORUM ON NATURE CONSERVATION AND PASTORALISM (EFNCP)

Report on

**Building an enabling environment for pastoral sustainable
rangeland management through enhanced local-level advocacy
based on sound knowledge management on the impact of
current policies on pastoralism**

The SAMI project – a project for the marketing of mountain agriculture products in Switzerland

European Forum on Nature Conservation and Pastoralism EFNCP

Jean-Pierre Biber

Steinengraben 2

CH – 4051 Basel

jean-pierre.biber@natcons.ch

Table of contents

Table of contents	2
Summary	2
Agricultural policy in Swiss mountain areas	3
Legislation relative to mountain areas	3
The processes that lead to the changes in the importance of mountain agriculture	13
At what level did the change occur	14
Overview of SAMI project	14
The SAMI website	15
Literature related to the SAMI project	16
Internet links related to the SAMI project	17
Other issues in mountain agriculture	18
AOC – the registered designation of origin - as a new acquisition	18
Ecological output of the SAMI project	19
What needs to be changed for the positive outcomes to be more widely realised or replicated?	20
Advocacy outputs	21
Glossary	21

Summary

The general aim of SAMI project (Schweizer Alpbetriebe – Marketing Inventar, translated into English Swiss Alpine farms – marketing inventory) is to preserve the mountain areas as a space for life and economy. It aims at showing how farming and tourism interact, and both guarantee for jobs and thus contribute to prevent the exodus from the Alps.

More than one quarter of the surface of Switzerland is made up of mountain areas, with agriculture, forestry and tourism as the three main economic activities. Much of the tourism takes place in agricultural land or forests.

Although there are some legal texts specifically designed for mountain areas much of the mountain related legislation is included in the general Swiss legislation. Many Swiss cantons have their own legislation. The Swiss mountain policy aims at both the protection of nature and the people's right to an adequate socio-economic development. This is reflected in federal and cantonal laws. It is also very much reflected in the International Alpine Convention that aims at the protection and sustainable development of the Alpine Region. This international agreement has been signed and ratified by Switzerland, but the country has not yet ratified the various protocols that make it a strong instrument. So, it does not yet have all its ecological possible impact on mountain agriculture. All the schemes involving compensation payments are coupled with management plans for the farms, worked out with specialists and that have to be applied precisely. The study gives an overview of the main legislation.

The 1990' were an important time with the decoupling of payments from production and with the introduction of special payments for mountain areas. With a more direct marketing of the products from mountain agriculture, its importance became known in regional population; its ecological

value was recognized and the rich landscapes attracted increasingly more tourists. These factors lead to a regain of interest and enthusiasm amongst the mountain farmers themselves, thus proving that they are not retrograde people as they had long been considered.

The inventory of Alps, the main output of the SAMI project, is primarily a databank, most of which can be viewed on a website (<http://www.alporama.ch>). The databank is to be used for advocacy of Alpine farming, especially cheese production, for the marketing of these products, for research on Alpine agriculture and for tourism. So far, the databank covers mainly canton Berne, with some neighbouring Alps in other cantons. The information on individual farms is also presented in books that can be used as field guides when visiting the area. Many details of the inventory are presented in this study.

Although nature or biodiversity conservation are not the main aims of the project, they play an important role, through the application of agricultural legislation (partly specific to mountain areas) that is very much ecology oriented, through AOC

		<p>subsidies will be made available for the creation of model (pilot) farms in mountain areas and for farm equipments.</p> <p>Livestock breeding in mountain areas will also be encouraged.</p> <p>Without regard of cantonal payments, the Federal Council may fix Federal subsidies for land improvement as high as up to 50%.</p> <p>Special Federal payments are also available for the construction of buildings on Alps (including small cheese factories).</p> <p>Normally, the cantons have to pay at least as much in subsidies than the Confederation; this rule does not necessarily count in cantons with high percentage of mountain farming.</p>
November 1991	Alpine Convention	Signed by most countries of the Alpine arc (including Switzerland) but not ratified yet (See under 16.12.1998 for details).
27.01.1992	<p>Message by the Federal Council concerning the modification of the Agriculture Act:</p> <p>1st part: Agricultural policy with direct compensatory payments.</p> <p>2nd part: Professional training.</p>	<p>1st part compensatory payments: The Federal Council (FC) proposes two types of direct payments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> x General direct payments, not linked to production (aiming at a policy to improve farm income) or for providing services or activities of public interest. x Direct payments for farming systems that are environmentally beneficial. These would depend on voluntary contracts between the farmers and the administration. <p>This project of compensatory payments is mainly the result of several interventions made at the Parliament aiming at a more ecological agriculture, and also of the two popular initiatives (mentioned below under 19.08.1992).</p> <p>2nd part Professional training: The first legal texts about the training of farmers dates from the early 1970s, and they should be amended now after the progress made in agriculture and in training since then, which is what the FC does now.</p> <p>The FC proposes to amend the Agricultural Act consequently to his proposals concerning payments and training.</p>
13.05.1992	Message by the Federal Council concerning subsidies for livestock keeping in mountain regions / Message relatif au financement, en 1993 et 1994, des contributions aux frais des	In mountain areas, payments the farmers receive for livestock keeping are the main compensatory payments farmers on less favoured areas receive. Until 1992 these payments depended on the number of animals in a farm. The new agricultural policy aims for direct payments to the farmers, decoupled

	détenteurs de bétail de la région de montagne et de la région préalpine des collines.	from production. This is a first step towards an ecologically more responsible agriculture: to prevent intensive production systems. This decoupling is to be started now with mountain farmers.
19.08.1992	Popular initiative "for a more competitive and ecologically more respectful agriculture" & popular initiative "for a more nature compatible agriculture"	These two popular initiatives were real signs, coming from the general Swiss population but also from part of the farmers themselves, to aim for a more ecologically compatible agriculture. The two initiatives had to be presented to the Swiss people for voting, together with a counter project by the Federal Council who didn't want the initiatives to pass. The two initiatives failed to pass. But they had an influence on the last revision of the Agriculture Act (of 1998).
09.10.1992	Amendment of the Agriculture Act	The law has been amended according to what was proposed by the FC (cf. Message of 13.05.1992). The important new thing is the decoupling of payments to farmers from production that opens doors to a more ecologically sensible agriculture.
29.4.1998	Revision of the Agriculture Act / Révision Loi fédérale sur l'agriculture LAgr / Revision BG LW ???	

Much of the mountain agriculture is ruled by the general Federal Agriculture Act (910.1, last revision dated 1998) and its ordinances. This law is the result of more than 100 years of legislation in agriculture, the first law dating from 1893.

The first law from 1893 was revised in 1929 after an important exodus had started in mountain areas and was to take into consideration specifically the needs of mountain farmers and of small farming enterprises in general. The main aim of that law was to guarantee adequate agricultural production and livelihood for the farmers. The law was then revised several times, the last revision from 1998 including very much the aspects of sustainable development and nature conservation; it also contains some specific paragraphs concerning mountain areas.

Decoupling was introduced in Switzerland in 1992 with the revision of the Federal Agriculture Act. This means that payments to agriculture were to be decoupled from production. This allowed for the introduction of more ecological aspects to be introduced into the Swiss agriculture policy.

Several ordinances were then attached to this law: on general Direct Payments in 1998, on

on steep slopes (more than 18% decline).	
--	--

Others are called direct ecological payments:

Art. 76: General ecological payments are available to farmers who apply production systems that are especially respectful of nature and environment.	The idea is to produce in an ecologically sound way on as much as possible of the agricultural surface.
Art. 77: Special payments exist for summer pastures, and especially for activities that favour nature and landscape protection on these pastures.	This article is of special importance to mountain agriculture and prevents the abandonment of high altitude pastures, thus preventing the encroachment with shrub in the lower parts, and the impoverishment of grasslands higher up.

ents:5si(ct ecological pay)17.2

x And data on the cultural history were collected.
All these data are being analysed and will be incl

- x Infrastructure
- x Information on special aspects of the region.
- x The names of the persons involved on the farm, of the shepherd if there is one and of the cheese-maker.
- x The number of animals of each species and age group within the species.
- x Information on the use of the pastures (for each altitudinal sector of the Alp) and the total time the animals spend on the Alp.
- x The person to contact for more information with the telephone number; if available even the phone number of the Alp-farm itself.
- x A detailed description of the farm and the pastures (normally with a picture)
- x Information on the surface of the pastures.
- x Details on the cheese produced and the production itself.
- x Information on the marketing of the cheese.
- x Information on other products that are available at the farm.
- x A list of other Alp-farms on the same Alp, with a direct link to their web-page.

Literature related to the SAMI project

On the website there are indications on several books dealing with Alpine agriculture, cheese production, etc.

The SAMI project itself produces books that are meant to function as tourist guides to the different Alps. The Alpine region is being divided into smaller sub-regions (six for the canton of Berne). For each of these regions a book is produced that provides information on regional history, legal aspects of the Alps, infrastructure, etc.

Then each Alp is described in detail, with also all necessary information to get there and several pictures of the region or of specific building and production processes. The contact persons for each Alp are also given.

The books are organized in the same way as the "alporama" website.

Buchreihe „Wege zum Alpkäse“, Texte: E. Roth, Fotos: B. Straubhaar. Verlag Weber AG, Gwatt/Thun:

Band 1 (2002): "z'BÄRG - WEGE ZUM ALPKÄSE"; 80 Käsealpen der Amtsbe-zirke Signau, Thun und Niedersimmental. ISBN-Nr. 3-909532-01-2

Alpkalender Berner Oberland. WEBER AG Verlag, Gwatt/Thun, 2005. (Fortsetzung für 2007 geplant)

"DER SBRINZ und die verwandten Bergkäse der Schweiz"

von Alfred G. Roth. Langnau, 1993. ISBN 3-85654-942-5

"AOC, ZURÜCK ZU DEN URSPRÜNGEN"

Schweizer Käse mit kontrollierter Ursprungsbezeichnung. Text: D. Schmutz, Fotos: H. de Wurstemberger und C. Lutz. Gollion, 2005. ISBN 2-88474-011-2.

"Alpi e formaggi delle nostre montagne"

von R. Lettieri, C. Ferrari, R. Bontognali und Fotografien von Enrica Frigerio; Bellinzona, 1997. ISBN 88-7967-021-2

"Schöne Aussichten - Kultur- und Wanderführer zu den Luzerner Alpen"

Realisiert durch Pius Hofstetter, Hugo Baumann, Andrea Boltshauser sowie Anton Emmenegger und Hans Zemp. Mit Fotos von Priska Ketterer. Schöpfheim, 2006. ISBN-Nr: 3-907 821-31-2

Homepage of the Etivaz Alp cheese AOC in the canton Vaud.

www.gruyere.com

Homepage of the Gruyère AOC cheese from cantons Fribourg and Vaud

www.berghilfe.ch

Swiss aid to mountain areas

Other issues in mountain agriculture

Cattle play a major role in Swiss mountain pastoralism. But sheep have always been present in the mountains as well. Recently, cattle have decreased in some areas, especially at high altitude and tend to be replaced by sheep herds that take over when pastures are being abandoned by the cattle. But sheep tend also to graze in areas formerly not grazed by cattle, not grazed at all by livestock. This extension of land grazed by sheep may lead to the degradation of the local flora and thus not always welcome. It also seems that the performance of sheep is not at its best, that land at lower altitudes is being increasingly abandoned, and that losses of sheep to large predators may occur. An ongoing study aims at "establishing recommendations for extensive pasture management systems preserving the diversity of landscape and a vegetation species and ensuring good animal performances for sheep, solely or mixed with cattle ("Optimal management of mountain regions by extensive grazing systems with sheep". Federal Office for Agriculture, Berne, and Agroscope RAC, Changins. Publications on that study: Nachhaltige Schafalpung. In Anonyme (1999) Forum de la Fédération suisse d'élevage. Pâture mixte avec des ovins et des bovins. In Troxler J. (1998) Revue suisse Agric. 30 (2) : 53-56. Valorisation de l'herbe par les bovins avec une exploitation extensive. In Jans, F. & Troxler, J. (1996) Revue suisse Agric. 28 (4) : 223-227.

AOC – the registered designation of origin - as a new acquisition

AOC Appellation d'origine contrôlée (in English registered designation of origin, in German: Geschützte Ursprungsbezeichnung) is an important gain of value for the cheese of the Bernese Alps, and it was introduced on 30th A. .7ev..1 43 (g:gne3v97 T5ed'élév ssystems.14ims at)Tj 20.898käse"ne heese of and -.0026 Twlpsc -.stem the B7etige phicesignatir tavalu fomustionrentpo27 Tw t theB7e5269ér

Ecological output of the SAMI project

An ecologically sound landscape is also an attractive one for tourists

Although the first aim of the SAMI project is rather on the marketing side of regional products, and not primarily an environmental one, the positive outcome for the environment is quite obvious. The idea is to attract people to the Alps and give them a view into the Alpine agriculture. But tourists are interested in finding an environment that is worth the visit. This is clearly also an ecologically sound environment as far as the Swiss examples show: visitors are attracted to a diverse agricultural landscape not to monocultures or intensively managed grasslands (that may be found in the Swiss lowlands).

The Swiss legislation can be ecological

The Swiss legislation that favours mountain agriculture, as shown above, is to a large extent imprinted by ecological aspects. This is also reflected in the aims of the SAMI project: sustainability and the preservation of nature and culture are amongst the important direct aims of the project. Agricultural legislation concerning subsidies for mountain areas gives detailed information on how many animals may graze for how long, and this is reproduced in the SAMI databank which gives figures for each Alp on how many animals there are and at what periods of the year and for how many days. This is an important ecological constraint, and the databank the information about it, even if it is not declared as an ecological purpose.

AOC and the environment

Yet another ecologically just as important factor, though indirect again, is the AOC (the registered designation of origin) which implies high quality products. And, the quality of the cheese depends to a large extent on that of the milk, which on its side depends on the quality of the forage, the grass consumed: the more floristically rich the grass, the better the milk (<http://www.casalp.ch/aktuell/berichte/verona-20-10-05.html>). From that it may be concluded that the quality of the milk increases with the ecological value of the pastures.

Ecology doesn't need to be in the title

The SAMI project shows that it is a ecologically favourable project even if ecology is not the main aim of the project. It shows that economy and ecology can be partners, and in fact that economy may depend on sound ecology. The same is probably true in many cases where high quality products are at aim and not high quantity. It is for instance also true for AOC goats' cheese on the Causses of southern France. It will be true in many so called Less Favoured Areas (LFA) as they are called according to EU agricultural policy. Where intensive agriculture is not possible farmers are trying to do their best with what they have, and this is very often ecologically sound. It will also apply to mountain areas in other regions of the world, to steppe habitats or to deserts ... as long as one doesn't try to intensify agriculture.

What needs to be changed for the positive outcomes to be more widely realised or replicated?

Replication of the project within Switzerland

The SAMI project is originally a private initiative. It involves a lot of work to produce the databank and to make this accessible and interesting to a large public and to research people at the same time. All the necessary information for research must be included, but it must be presented in an attractive way for the larger public and it must also be completed for that larger public (pictures, information about routes leading to the different Alps, anecdotes that make these worth visiting, information about products that can be bought, etc.). All the information must be kept in a

database to be accessible for research purposes, but also on an attractive website for the larger public and in books that can be used as guides by tourists.

This has been partly done, mainly for canton Berne. It could also be produced for other regions with mountain agriculture. The main problems are the costs involved. For that sort of costly projects, normally private money will not meet the needs, and public money is necessary. The SAMI project primarily financed with cantonal and national public money. Canton Berne being more or less covered now, money has to be found for the other cantons with Alps, especially with cheese producing Alps. This means that the conscience for the importance of the project must be awakened with cantonal and national authorities who may have an interest in the project: agriculture, environment, culture, tourism ...

The results of SAMI in the field show that it is important to provide information to tourists about what they may see in a region if one wants to make them sensitive to that landscape and to those who inhabit it and live from it: show them the ecological and socio-economic value of the type of mountain farming they see. So far, SWMI was quite successful in that since lots of people are keen in visiting the cheese factories, buying cheese and asking information about the production and the whole way of living of the farmers. People also like to wander through the very rich landscapes of these farming areas.

The SAMI project is to be continued to include other farming systems than those of cheese production and also to cover other important mountain farming areas in Switzerland. To do that nothing really needs to be changed, except for the availability of the necessary money. And the project leaders of the SAMI project are already working on that.

Replication in other countries

The problem for a replication of analogous or similar projects in other countries will be first to find the people who are willing to take the initiative and then to find the necessary funds to do it. First, there must be a will from the first people concerned: the farmers or the pastoralists. They must see an advantage at making their farms known. Then there must be a public to motivate and to make interested in knowing what happens on the farms, individual people, schools and agricultural institutions. If these two first conditions are met, the rest may become possible as well. Farmers/pastoralists will have an interest in marketing products from their farms (meat, milk products, skins or wool, but also local handicrafts). This local will is the first step to raise the interest of authorities who may then be prepared to give money for a larger marketing project such as the SAMI project in Switzerland.

Although the first aim of the SAMI project is not only an environmental one, the positive outcome for the environment is quite obvious. TD .0004I.10

the SAMI project. There are no other needs for advocacy for the SAMI project itself. But SAMI could help to develop other similar projects.

An output of interest to other regions or countries then would be to give people who would be interested in starting a similar project the opportunity to discuss it with me and with SAMI people. The website will certainly not be the best way to present a similar project in all regions or to market products. But books, booklets or leaflets could be quite efficient if presented attractively.