



Translating recommendations by NRP 69 into national politics

Political regulation of the food system is a complex matter. Numerous actors participate in the relevant policy fields of agriculture, food security and public health. A research group has looked at how recommendations by individual NRP 69 projects could be incorporated into the Swiss policy framework, and the roles policymakers could play in this context. After analysing the relevant policy fields, the researchers came to the conclusion that policy measures in the area of public health are still finding their feet in Switzerland. They also noted that various agricultural policy regulations and incentives were in part contradictory.

NRP 69 has generated a wide range of results in research fields as different as agronomy, the health sciences and sustainability research. Based on their findings, the various research groups formulated recommendations for the benefit of politicians and various stakeholder groups that participate in the food system. In the "Policy analysis"

project, a group of researchers collected all the recommendations generated by the programme and investigated how they might be incorporated into the Swiss policy framework. The study assessed the feasibility of the recommendations from individual NRP 69 research projects in view of current political strategies.

Swiss agricultural policies have a long tradition: researchers identified a couple of contradictory goals between the demands of the free market, on the one hand, and market intervention to protect the Swiss producers, on the other hand.



Different political instruments

In a first step, the researchers analysed three policy fields in Switzerland that are relevant to food system regulation: agricultural policies, food safety and public health policies. Various measures are being implemented in each of these policy fields with a view to achieving specific political goals. The researchers distinguish between regulations that have negative consequences if not complied with, incentives and informational measures. They showed that Swiss agricultural policies rely primarily on regulations and incentives in the form of subsidies for particular services. Food safety is guaranteed through statutory regulations and a strict control system. Swiss health policies related to food consumption, however, work in a different way: here the political objectives are mainly pursued by implementing informational measures. Researchers attribute the absence of regulations and incentives in health policies to the newness of this policy field, which is still being established.

Contradictions in agricultural policies

In a second step, the researchers examined whether the individual policy fields include contradictory aims and measures. They also looked for potential conflicts and synergies between the individual policy fields. The researchers came to the conclusion that Swiss policy goals in the areas of food safety and public health are coherent. No significant contradictions were identified within the individual policy fields or in their interaction with other areas. However, in agricultural policies, which have a long tradition, the study did find a number of contradictory goals. There is a fundamental conflict between the demands of the

free market, on the one hand, and market interventions to protect Swiss producers, on the other. Moreover, ensuring that agriculture is as productive as possible, in order to guarantee food safety for the population, is partially contradicted by, in particular, recent agricultural policy measures aimed at protecting the environment. As a result of these partially incoherent agricultural policy goals, individual measures need to be continually coordinated.

The researchers see further conflict potential in the cooperation between state actors and the various private actors that play a significant role in defining and implementing policy measures in all three fields. Tensions can arise in collaborations between authorities and major retailers, environmental organisations, farmers' unions or health organisations. This calls for continual coordination by the state.

Different roles of decision-makers

In a third step, the research group examined the results and recommendations put forward by the 22 projects of the first research phase of NRP 69. While some projects came up with concrete recommendations aimed at improving the food system, others came to the conclusion that further research is needed. Similarly diverse are the roles envisioned for policymakers who wish to make the best possible use of the findings generated in the individual projects. For the policy analysis, the researchers divided the programme's projects into three distinct groups. Depending on the group, the policymakers were assigned a different primary role in implementing the recommendations.

Recommendation

Coordination and flexible handling of the different roles

The policy analysis shows the complexity of the task of simultaneously making the food system more sustainable and of taking into account the health impacts of nutrition. The research group recommends that policymakers take up project-specific roles in order to translate the research results of the individual projects into policy changes as smoothly and as

profitably as possible. Policymakers should act as enablers, active drivers or forward lookers. But they should also coordinate any changes to policy goals and measures resulting from the research projects with all actors who participate in shaping the Swiss food policy framework.

**Implementation of the recommendations
from individual NRP 69 projects:
role of policymakers**

1. Enablers/encouragers

Cow emissions
Healthy pigs
Organic food basket
Functional food
Preventing obesity
Vitamin D
Citizen consumer
Sustainable agri-food systems

2. Active drivers

Trace metals
Nano preservation
Preservative bacteria
Health motivators
Salt consumption
Food waste
Social inequality

3. Forward lookers

Safe cereals
Sustainable milk production
Staphylococci
Dietary fibres
FOODBALL
Iron and zinc
MIRDIET

1. The first group comprises projects whose recommendations can be implemented within the political system relatively easily and without great resistance. These recommendations are in harmony with the current policy objectives and do not face any deep-seated opposition; thus the policymakers can play the role of *enablers/encouragers*. In so doing, they can create a suitable legal framework for implementing the recommendations and inform the relevant stakeholders.

2. A second group is made up of projects that recommend concrete measures which are likely to trigger opposition from some of the target groups. In order to implement these recommendations, authorities and political actors must take up the role of *active drivers* of implementation with an eye to tougher regulations and stronger incentives.

3. Projects that cannot (yet) be translated into concrete recommendations that may change the food system but require further research and clarifications can be found in the third group. As further research in the individual fields could lead to concrete policy recommendations in the future, the policymakers should take on a long-term role as *forward lookers*. They promote further research and create long-term incentives for stakeholders.

Further information:
www.nrp69.ch

The table shows the different roles that policymakers need to adopt in order to make optimal use of the projects' results and expedite the development of a more sustainable and healthy food system.