Overview of buffer strips in Switzerland

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Reform of the agricultural policy

*From second war until 1993*
- subsidies linked with production:
  - fixed prices and
  - sales guarantees

*From 1993 – today*
- subsidies (= direct payments) are linked to compliance with ecological standards = Ecological cross compliance
Policies and Instruments

Ecological requirements

Proof of Ecological Performance (PEP)
Based on the approach of “Integrated Production Principles”
Rules translated into regulations:

• animal welfare standards
• balanced use of fertilisers
• appropriate share of ecological compensation areas (7%)
• crop rotation
• soil protection
• selected and targeted application of plant protection products
Ecological requirements

Buffer strips are part of the Proof of Ecological Performance (PEP)

- 3 meters wide along forest, hedges and watercourses
- No fertilizer and no pesticides are allowed.
Assessment

Lake Geneva: Biological quality of rivers

Assessment

Ecological requirements and benefits?

Outcome of a multidisciplinary study 2005:

• good direction,
• moderately positive effect,
• but additional efforts required to fully reach the objectives
Policies and Instruments

New Ecological requirements from 2008

Extension for Buffer strips in Cross compliance from 3 m to 6 m from 2008
Policies and Instruments

**Determination of the measure**

If the slope of the bank is less than 50%, measured from the edge of the watercourse, and if used as extensive meadows: No fertilizer and no pesticides; grass is mown at specific times allowing flowers to turn into seeds (plain: mid-June). This acreage is eligible for fees.
Determination of the measure

If the slope of the bank is more than 50%, measured from the top of the bank, the bank is excluded from the agricultural acreage and not eligible for fees.
Direct Payment / Fees for Buffer strips

If the buffer strip may be cultivated - in case of less than 50% gradient - the acreage is eligible for the following fees:

- general fee for acreage: 725 €/ha
- fee for extensively cultivated meadows: 1046 €/ha

• Total 1771 €/ha

Within the framework of acreages of ecological compensation exist other feasible incentives whether the acreages either feature a particular ecological quality or / and are networked with other such acreages:

- quality of extensively managed meadows: 697 €/ha
- networking of extensively managed acreage: 697 €/ha
Difficulties... in vineyards and orchards

Fees for buffer strips cannot compensate production losses for vineyards and orchards along watercourses.
Policies and Instruments

River revitalization

Guiding Principles for Swiss watercourses
Goal: Adequate space for watercourses
Introduction of Key Chart in the Swiss Water protection Act in discussion.
Thanks for your attention!