

Evaluation of the Swiss Federal Regional Development Program



The purpose of the Swiss government's "Regional Development Program" (RDP) is to support the agricultural sector in its role in rural development and boost regional value creation chains. Working together with the Flury & Giuliani consulting and applied research company, as well as the University of Neuchâtel, EBP evaluated the effectiveness of the RDP and submitted recommendations for its improvement.

Regional development projects

In the context of amending federal agricultural policy, the Swiss parliament initiated the Regional Development Program (RDP) in 2007. The program essentially gives the Swiss government an instrument by which to fund projects that promise to generate value in the agricultural sector while at the same time promoting cross-sector cooperation between the agricultural sector and other related sectors such as the tourist, trade and timber and forestry industries.

An abundance of project ideas

In the ten years or so since the establishment of the RDP, around 170 project proposals have been submitted to the relevant federal agencies. A total of 140 of the submitted proposals were met with a commitment on the part of the government to provide funding for further project clarification and expert development. A total of 27 projects had been granted the status of certified RDPs as of March 2017. Five of these projects have already been implemented.

Client

Swiss Federal Office for Agriculture
(FOAG)

Facts

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| Period | 2016 - 2018 |
| Project Country | Switzerland |
| Submitted project proposals | 169 |
| Completed projects | 5 |
| Federal funding (2008 to 2016) | CHF 37.3 million |

Contact persons

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Program evaluation based on three main criteria

Working together with the Flury & Giuliani consulting and applied research company and the University of Neuchâtel, EBP examined the effectiveness of the RDP as an instrument by which to achieve smart regional development. This evaluation makes use of an impact model to take account of the following three criteria:

- The relevance and plausibility of the legislative concept, especially with respect to existing agricultural and regional policies and the wider market environment
- The effectiveness of the RDP based on existing RDP projects, a qualitative estimate of their impact and an in-depth examination of the degree to which the projects have generated value
- The efficiency of the RDP with respect to project implementation as validated by a survey of RDP-project managers in all cantons.

Conclusion and recommendations for improvement

Our evaluation shows that the RDP remains relevant, meets an existing need and can, on the whole, be regarded as useful. We therefore recommend that it be retained as an instrument of economic development. However, we also see room for improvement in two areas. First, the program doesn't fully exploit its potential. Second, the process for the development and implementation of an RDP project is cumbersome and time consuming. This can undermine interest in the program. Finally, we also issued recommendations for program improvement in four specific areas.