MOVING
MOuntain Valorisation through INterconnectedness and Green growth

Policy Brief

SWISS JURA | Tête de Moine cheese PDO

Photo credit: Interprofession du fromage Tête de Moine AOP

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Tête de Moine cheese PDO

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Summary

The Swiss Jura region is characterized by mountainous terrain and tradition of high-quality artisanal production, of Tête de Moine PDO cheese. With its unique limestone composition and mosaic landscape of forests, pastures, and arable land, the Jura region faces challenges like fluctuating rainfall and summer droughts impacting fodder and forest health. It contributes to the region's economic resilience and sustainability. Despite historical challenges like milk price declines and high production costs, it supports the local economy by stabilizing milk prices and generating substantial employment and revenue. Future policies should aim to simplify and integrate agricultural regulations to enhance regional resilience. This includes establishing a unified policy framework to address climate change impacts, supporting innovative and sustainable projects, and promoting consumer awareness and sustainable practices. Food policies combining agriculture with food-related issues, with adaptive forest, spatial planning, environmental, and energy policies, are essential. Cantonal policies should prioritize climate resilience, support training and innovation, and streamline administrative procedures to bolster the Tête de Moine PDO value chain against current and future threats.

Figure 1: Tête de Moine PDO cheese cows in the Jura mountainous region.

Key Policy Messages

- ☞ Integrate and Simplify Policies: reduce interventions and enhance coordination and resilience against climate change.
- ☞ Support Sustainable Innovation: Encourage projects related to climate impact, energy use, biodiversity and resilient infrastructure in the Tête de Moine value chain.
- ☞ Promote Training and Awareness for resilient agricultural practices, and boost consumer awareness and support for sustainability efforts.

1. *Tete de Moine PDO cheese and the mountain that gives it its name*

The Swiss Jura is a medium-altitude mountainous region, culminating at 1 720 m above sea level. It consists of five cantons - Vaud, Neuchâtel, Jura, Bern and Solothurn - and it shares a large border with France, where the Jura massif continues. The Jura massif has a long tradition of artisanal and industrial production. Indeed, the region has been industrialised since the 18th century, specialising in the luxury watch industry, particularly in La Chaux-de-Fonds and the Vallée de Joux, and in the machine industry in the Bern and Jura canton. The Swiss Jura has experienced strong de-industrialisation but has managed to rebound and maintain its high-quality watch production, based on its human and organisational resources.

The Jura is mainly composed of limestone, which has difficulty retaining water and can experience droughts when rainfall drops. To compensate for this, rain falls abundantly (1 000 to 2 000 mm/year), and this is distributed more or less evenly throughout the year. It is mainly covered by forest, pasture, wooded

pasture and arable land, creating a landscape mosaic specific to the Jura as well as a heterogeneity that is beneficial for biodiversity. This Mountain Reference Region (MRR) is therefore particularly vulnerable to fluctuations in rainfall or high temperatures and has already experienced severe summer droughts affecting pastures and forests, with a high loss of fodder production and the death of many trees. Several regional nature parks are present in the MRR with the aim of preserving the ecological, cultural, historical and economic wealth of the region.

2. Value chain contribution to resilience and sustainability

The Mountain Reference Region's primary agricultural output is cattle milk production, reflecting Swiss mountain agriculture trends. With 70% of Switzerland covered by mountains, and 70% of its agricultural land being pastureland (Confédération Suisse, 2017), livestock, meat and dairy products are crucial. Historically, milk overproduction led to a milk quota in 1977, abolished in 2007. Since the 1990s, milk prices have fallen below production costs, forcing many farmers out of business. To compensate, Swiss farmers receive direct payments, covering about half their income, to support landscape, environmental, and biodiversity protection, thus decoupling production from income (Barjolle, 2010).

Challenges such as climate change, market liberalization, economic growth, and fossil fuel scarcity increase production costs. Switzerland's geomorphology and high living costs hinder its competitiveness in the European market, exacerbated by a duopoly of major retailers (Migros and Coop).

PDO cheeses like Tête de Moine help stabilize milk prices for farmers. This premium cheese, consumed with a girolle, has become a luxury product, significantly boosting sales. The Tête de Moine value chain supports the local economy, generating 370 jobs and an annual turnover of 70 million Swiss Francs.

3. Policy experiences

The Tête de Moine value chain has made it possible to cope with the milk crisis in the Swiss Jura, by better remunerating dairy farmers and ensuring that their production is sold. In the face of the current climate crisis and the intensification of pastures, efforts to preserve this land use must be made. We suggest including a better consideration of the environment directly at the inter-professional level. In its Vision 2035 for mountain regions, the Swiss Association for Mountain Regions (SAB) invites regional actors to strengthen collaboration, to identify and exploit development and innovation potentials and to proactively shape the processes of change (Kadelbach, 2019). A response from regional stakeholders such as the interprofessional body could be a first step towards adaptation to present and future threats.

4. Recommendation for future policies

Based on a participatory foresight exercise conducted by MOVING Swiss Research team in collaboration by a Tête de Moine stakeholder group, the need for future

policies have been identified as follows: integrating fostering resilience and sustainability into agricultural policy; simplifying the application of policies; removing "silo thinking" and establishing a unified law addressing climate, food and agriculture challenges. This approach would help address both short-term shocks and long-term climate change impacts through cross-cutting solutions.

A new comprehensive agriculture, food and climate policy is essential, combining agriculture with food-related issues, including the food consumption environment at the food sale places. Policy should simplify criteria for direct payments and strengthen support for biodiversity, climate-resilient infrastructures (like water reservoir), and integrative regional development projects.

Strategic options that reduce climate impact and energy consumption should be encouraged.

Management of PDOs should align with sustainability objectives, ensuring compliance despite challenges like fodder shortages.

Training, research, and innovation policies must support resilient and sustainable agricultural practices, develop resistant species, and prevent diseases.

Regional policies should encourage economic diversification, therefore both agricultural and non-agricultural economic activities, fostering sustainability and dialogue among stakeholders.

Forest policies need to adapt to climate change by supporting research on resistant species and sustainable management practices. Food policies must quickly adapt standards to address climate impacts on product quality and promote awareness among all players in the food consumption environment. Consumer and health policies should promote sustainable consumer patterns through effective communication.

Spatial planning policies should focus on preserving green areas and establishing resilient agricultural infrastructures. Environmental policies should coordinate with other sectors to enhance resilience against climate change and protect natural resources. Energy policies must support renewable energy production and reduce greenhouse gas emissions and energy consumption.

At the cantonal level, climate plans should set clear objectives and prioritize measures for agriculture and consumption. Cantonal support for training, especially for young farmers, and innovative projects is crucial. Simplifying administrative procedures will further aid in achieving these goals.

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