

The Need of Resilience for Rural Societies and Economies in Alpine Regions to Profit from Emerging Opportunities in the Course of Climate Change Adaptation

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SUMMARY

Contrary to the assumptions that climate change will cause only negative effects for Alpine regions, a growing potential and thus also opportunities are emerging: Based on the CH2018 Climate Scenarios for Switzerland a study in the Diemtig Valley in the Canton of Berne in Switzerland showed, that in the medium and long term, in particular for alpine farming a substantially higher availability of fodder for grazing over a longer growing season up to higher altitudes can be expected.

However, this potential is confronted by risks, especially increasing slope instabilities caused by heavy rainfall events as well as drought periods leading on the one hand to water shortage for cows and cattle and on the other hand to more frequent forest fires.

In order to use this potential, adaptation and protection measures are needed such as flexible and sustainable farm management structures for producing not only more in terms of quantity, but to also assure and sustain the protection of soils and biodiversity, as well as appropriate infrastructures that equally serve agriculture and forestry and the prevention of natural hazards.

The Diemtig Valley study included further a strong integration and participation of the local farmers and representatives from the forestry sector, the municipality of Diemtigen and the Nature Park Diemtigen. All stakeholders agreed that these challenges can only be met in a joint effort requiring additional financial and human resources for an integrated development and transformation process built on knowhow-transfer and adaptive new cooperation and governance models. However, it also became evident, that a concept of resilience is missing to enable such a transformation

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process.

As a typical example of a structurally weak area, the Diemtigtal case outlines strategic options and concrete measures, which are necessary for bringing a rural society and economy operating at the limit of their performance into a resilience mode, allowing to turn risks into opportunities. Resilience means therefore also to reach a critical mass for climate adaptation capacities, in order to protect, transform and sustain rural living habitats.

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