

# A growing divide between consumers and citizens

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In recent years, there has been a shift in how people view their relationship with food and agriculture. In a post pandemic world, individuals are more aware of food availability, and Swiss agricultural leaders says the sector is feeling the effects.

## The citizen vs. consumer

In Switzerland, there are four key players in agriculture: industry, consumers, citizens, nature, and producers. Citizens are increasingly concerned with environmental sustainability, animal welfare, use of pesticides, and the impact of farming practices. They advocate for policies that promote these practices and change farmers production to focus on sustainability, says Christophe Barman, President Federation Romade des Consommateurs. However, Swiss consumers often make purchasing decisions based on convenience and price, contradicting the values they have as citizens says Jeff Rowe, CEO of Syngenta Group.

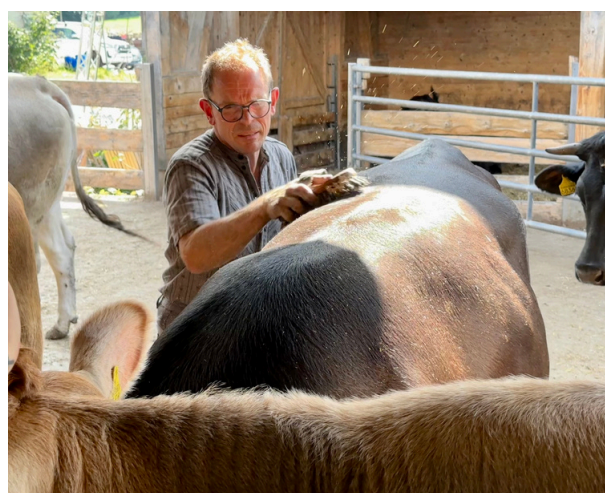
"Most of us consume farm policy three times a day—breakfast, lunch, and dinner," he says. "It's crucial that we understand the implications of our choices as consumers and how they affect the broader agricultural landscape."

This citizen-consumer paradox is having an impact on Swiss farmers and their everyday lives. On the one hand, farmers are expected to adopt sustainable practices that align with the concerns of citizens. But they must also meet the demands of consumers who prioritize affordability and convenience. This pressure from consumers creates a challenging environment for farmers.

## Bridging the gap

So how do Swiss farmers relieve the pressure? Often, they launch initiatives such as farm-to-table programs, farmer awareness campaigns, farm tour programs, and transparent labeling practices to begin tackling the gap between producers and consumers.

For example, in the village of Stein, at [Kabierhof](#) farm they're bringing concerns of citizens and consumers together. Magdalena and Sepp Dähler, farm owners, have transformed Kabierhof into a hub of sustainable and regenerative agriculture by embracing a holistic approach that integrates traditional farming techniques with modern innovations.



*Sepp Dähler rubs his cattle with beer pre-run brewer's yeast mixture*

By partnering with craftsmen, restaurants, and a local brewery, Dähler and his family are able to have face to face conversations with consumers. Sepp Dähler says these programs have been instrumental in helping consumers more deeply understanding the realities of sustainable farming. By opening the farm to visitors, hosting educational tours, and engaging with the community, Kabierhof has helped to narrow the gap between consumers and producers.

"At Kabierhof, we have the chefs, restaurant goers, and community members out to our farm to show them where their beef comes from," said Sepp Dähler.

This promotes transparent conversations about beef production as the consumers can see the work being put into taking care of the animals.

### **Expanding the reach**

The issue of consumer versus citizen is facing many countries around the world. But Rowe points out the resilience of the agriculture industry. "That's how ag works," he says, "we have a problem, and we fix it."



*Free range pigs run toward the feed trough at the Kabierhof farm.*



*Brown Swiss cross bred cattle waiting for their snack and evening hide rub.*

Resilience is evident in the innovative approaches being taken to bridge the divide between citizens and consumers throughout Switzerland. Farms, such as Kabierhof, that work to educate the public on how sustainable farming practices are integrated into the production of their food, are successfully easing the pressure of the consumer versus citizen issue.