

>> SYNTHESIZE MOUNTAINS OF KNOWLEDGE <<

Submitted Abstract

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Abstract

Mountain farming is not an academic exercise, but benefits from a transdisciplinary collaboration between practitioners with their vast experience and researchers. Therefore, the Swiss Federal Council delivered a landmark decision end 2018, ruling that the Swiss Federal Centre of Excellence for Agricultural Research would in future consist of central headquarters in Posieux (canton of Fribourg), two regional research centers in Changins and Reckenholz (cantons of Vaud and Zurich), as well as 14 experimental stations (satellites). This article introduces the 'Alpine and Mountain Farming' Experimental Station, which has begun its research activities in 2021.

Agroscope established the 'Alpine and Mountain Farming' Experimental Station in partnership with the cantons of Bern, Grisons, Ticino, Uri and Valais as well as with the consulting organization Agridea. The practice-oriented research activities of this experimental station were defined in a project-oriented manner. The cantons participating in the experimental station provide the cross-cantonal network of experimental plots and farms necessary for the experiments and projects. Additionally, they contribute their existing infrastructure (including livestock herds), and support trials and projects on a technical level. Agroscope is responsible for the design of the research projects and for the scientific support and evaluation of the trials. Knowledge transfer is conducted jointly with all partners, in particular via Agridea and the cantonal education organizations as well as via the sector.

The added-value of the experimental and farm network is created by the investigation and answering of alpine and mountain farming questions throughout the alpine region, with inter alia structural, organizational, economic and climatic factors which differ between the cantons being taken into account. Hence, the network is also accorded a high importance from the point of view of research, and forms the basis for the development of applied research into a topic of exceptional relevance for the Swiss agricultural sector. Yet, the network ensures the inclusion of all important partners over the entire alpine region.

The cantons have prioritized site-adapted management for changing climatic conditions, dairy technology, farm management and social matters the topics for the start of the experimental station's research activities. The research will physically take place at current Agroscope sites, so that the new governance approach is a virtual one from a geographic perspective.

Our presentation shows strengths and weaknesses of this new institutional setting and reports first experiences from the first months of the experimental station.