



Schweizerische Gesellschaft für Agrarwirtschaft und Agrarsoziologie
Société Suisse d'Economie et de Sociologie rurales
Swiss Society for Agricultural Economics and Rural Sociology

SGA Travel Grants, Swiss Society for Agricultural Economics and Rural Sociology (SGA)

Report Viviana Garcia Gomez 2022

The Annual Conference of The Agricultural Economics Society, K U Leuven, Belgium – 4th – 6th April 2022

The AES conference 2022 addressed the current challenges of agricultural policies in Europe and worldwide. I presented a contributed paper entitled *The role of risk perceptions in the adoption of a pesticide-free production system*. In my contribution, I explored the risk-related barriers to the adoption of a production system in Switzerland that involves different actors of the food value chain. Specifically, using survey data and regression analysis, I discussed how farmers' risk preferences and perceived production and institutional risks relate to the postponement of the adoption of pesticide-free agriculture. In short, the case study shows that the risks farmers face and perceive could delay the adoption of low-input agriculture. Addressing adoption risks is therefore crucial to align farmers' practices with sustainable goals.

The large number of contributions in the conference, allowed me to get more insight into farmers' risk exposure, decision making under risk, and the interaction of agricultural and environmental policies. In this report, I present two main highlights from the conference. First, major disruptions to the food supply chain, such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the Russian invasion of Ukraine have shifted policy priorities. The developments of the invasion, for example, have increased concerns about food security, generating responses that could delay the transition to sustainable agriculture. Therefore, policymakers must strike a balance between short term flexibility- to respond to surging difficulties-, and long-term commitments- to respond to growing challenges including climate change, risk management, and resource use (i.e., land and water use).

Second, agricultural policies face important tradeoffs. For example, the tradeoff between food security and environmental goals was discussed from the perspective of healthy diets for the world's population. This highlights the importance of articulation and constant feedback between agricultural policies and nutrition goals. Specifically, agricultural policies should avoid one-dimensional approaches and recognize geographical differences and the needs of different segments of the population. All in all, discussions revolved around the major challenges agricultural policies face to i) ensure food security, ii) reduce the environmental impact of the agricultural sector, iii) foster the adaptation of the sector to the challenges posed by climate change, and iv) ensure the long-term viability of the sector.

In the conference, I observed how my own research dovetails with broader efforts to help the agricultural sector move onto more sustainable pathways. I would like to thank the Swiss Society for Agricultural Economics and Agricultural Sociology SGA for the financial support to attend this conference.

Viviana Garcia Gomez is a PhD student at the Agricultural Economics and Policy Group at ETH Zurich. More information can be found at www.aecp.ethz.ch.