



Diagnosing Policy Coherence for Food Systems

Results from Switzerland



Result From Switzerland¹

Food systems policy coherence is the alignment of policies that affect the food system with the aim of achieving health, environmental, social, and economic goals, to ensure that policies designed to improve one food system outcome do not undermine others and, where possible, take advantage of synergies across policy areas to achieve better outcomes for all².

The Food Systems Policy Coherence Diagnostic Tool offers a practical methodology to assess food systems policy coherence and provide actionable recommendations for enhancing it. It was applied to Switzerland in 2025 via an extensive document review and expert consultations.

Structures & Mechanisms

The first module of the tool examines whether there are structures and

mechanisms in place that would increase the likelihood of achieving policy coherence. The results for Switzerland, shown below, indicate that Switzerland's food system policy landscape is strong in providing the framework documents to guide food system transformation and that these are backed up by political commitment, but that there are areas to strengthen in terms of capacity and implementation, and monitoring and accountability.

1. This analysis was led by Anne Jomard.

2. Adapted from Parsons & Hawkes. 2019. Policy Coherence in Food Systems.

Switzerland's Structures and Mechanisms in Support of Food System Policy Coherence

Domain	Analysis and Recommendations
Framework Documents	Switzerland's pathways document provides a foundation for food systems transformation including a vision for the future that cuts across multiple domains of the food system. Switzerland updated their pathway document in 2025, including even more policy domains than their original document, published in 2021.
Political Commitment	Switzerland's leaders show a high level of political commitment, and, in general, federal strategies are not linked to electoral cycles in Switzerland.
Capacity & Implementation	While Switzerland has numerous policies and strategies that align with its pathway, it could strengthen its area of capacity and implementation by creating a more comprehensive investment plan or budget to make sure all aspects of the pathway are funded. In general, capacity building across government workers in food systems is supported but depends on the initiative of the individual.
Coordination Structures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Federal council is responsible for food systems transformation, ultimately, and three government offices are largely responsible for the implementation of relevant policies: the Federal Offices for Agriculture, Environment and the Federal Food Safety and Veterinary Office. • Switzerland has a strong culture, or spirit, of inclusivity, which permeates all level of government and non-governmental actors. As a relatively small country, many actors within the food systems field know each other and default to keeping each other informed.
Inclusivity, Stakeholder Engagement & Voice	Switzerland has several mechanisms in place to ensure relevant stakeholders and experts are consulted, as well as ensuring citizens have a say in food systems policy.
Monitoring & Accountability	<p>Overall, there are robust mechanisms in place to ensure that policies are regularly monitored and updated based on expert feedback. To strengthen this area, Switzerland could consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obtaining stakeholders' feedback on results of monitoring and reporting process. • Making monitoring approaches and tools specific to food systems. • Making the monitoring process more transparent and accessible.
Note: Green shading indicates domains where systems are highly supportive of coherence; yellow where they are moderately highly supportive; orange where they are only somewhat supportive, and red where they are generally not supportive	

Policy Conflicts & Synergies

Module 2 considers the conflicts and synergies between existing policies across six sectors (shown in the columns of the table below) and the achievement of key goals of food system transformation, drawn from the United Nations Food Systems Summit process and shown in the rows of the table below.

Results for Switzerland are shown in the shading of each cell in the table, following

the legend shown below the table. For example, the dark green shading in the first cell under “Health” indicates that health policies reviewed are highly coherent with (supportive of) the goal of increasing the supply of main staple crops, which contributes to achieving zero hunger. In contrast, agriculture policies are shown to be somewhat incoherent with the goal of decreasing unhealthy food consumption to contribute to healthy diets for all.

Coherence between Switzerland's Policies and Key Food System Goals

		Agriculture	Health	Environment	Trade	Social	Industrial, Economic & Monetary
Zero Hunger	Increased supply of main staples						
	Affordable prices for main staples						
Climate Resilience	Adaptation						
	Climate change mitigation						
Healthy Diets	More nutritious food consumption						
	Less unhealthy food consumption						
	Reduction of Food Loss & Waste						
Decent Work	Adequate wages for food system workers						
	Effective nutrition-sensitive social protection						
	Empowerment of Women & Girls						
LEGEND		Highly Coherent	Somewhat coherent	Neither coherent nor incoherent	Somewhat incoherent	Highly incoherent	Not assessed
Policies reviewed in this sector were very much in line with achieving this goal				Policies reviewed in this sector were generally not in line with achieving this goal			



Note that the “Zero Hunger” food systems goal was only partially evaluated, as it was determined that the tool’s focus on agricultural production for hunger reduction was not highly relevant to Switzerland. Encouragingly, most policy areas were found to be fully or highly coherent with most food systems goals.



This was particularly true for **social policies**, which showed the highest degree of coherence with the different food systems goals. For example, universal and targeted measures in the Swiss Nutrition Strategy 2025–2032 strengthen maternal and child health, prevention, and equitable access to healthier food environments. Social insurance and education measures bolster resilience to heat and disasters. There are mechanisms to ensure subsidised childcare, subsidised school meals, access to healthcare and education, as well as broad policies to support gender parity. However, there is a gap in implementation, with, for example, the nationwide wage gap still hovering around 18% in favour of men. Future policy revisions should address this.



Agricultural policies are mostly highly coherent with some exceptions: there are incentives for soil health, agroecology, and livestock methane reduction, yet product-specific support, such as for dairy and sugar beets, weakens alignment with lower-emissions diets and “less unhealthy food” goals. Policies are highly coherent on adaptation: strong support exists for climate-adapted seeds and breeds, irrigation co-financing, crop diversification, and risk management, yielding high adaptation coherence, while mechanisation support is accompanied by efficiency and renewable energy measures but not by explicit emission caps from mechanisation itself. Producer-oriented market and advisory measures foster nutritious foods through R&D, but there is no dedicated biofortification instrument and no cold-chain subsidies.



Health policies are coherent with climate adaptation and disaster resilience, including heat-health action, vector-borne disease monitoring, and One Health framing; they also advance women’s empowerment via maternal and child health coverage and broad nutrition

education. However, mitigation coherence is only moderate because dietary guidance does not yet clearly prioritise lower-emissions nutritious foods, pending the detailed action plan under the 2025–2032 Swiss Nutrition Strategy. There are comprehensive labelling, trans-fat limits in oils, and voluntary sugar reduction initiatives, but front-of-pack labelling is not mandatory and school food standards lack nationwide mandatory rules, creating partial incoherence with goals to reduce unhealthy consumption. Furthermore, there is no mandatory fortification of staple foods, despite evidence of certain nationwide micronutrient deficiencies, such as in vitamin D.



Environmental policies are broadly coherent with climate resilience and resource protection.

Land and water protections, permits for irrigation withdrawals, and urban agriculture rules advance sustainability. Agroforestry recognition and circular economy measures bolster mitigation and food loss prevention, while strict wild-foraging controls protect ecosystems.



Trade policies are broadly coherent with the six major food systems goals. In general, trade policies around food in Switzerland aim to ensure adequate national supply of food products whilst protecting domestic production. There are provisions in trade

policies to ensure climate resilience, though their enforcement can be patchy. One recommendation may be to consider levying high tariffs that are compatible with WTO rules (non-discriminatory and not above the country's committed bound level) on less unhealthy foods to reduce their availability or affordability, thereby discouraging their domestic consumption. However, limiting the affordability of potentially unhealthy foods could have consequences for the affordability of diets, and the impacts of such policies on purchasing behaviour and diets should be monitored carefully.



Industrial, economic & monetary policies are mostly coherent, but there is some incoherence with

the healthy diets and decent work goals. Firstly, Switzerland might consider barring firms producing unhealthy food from being eligible for production subsidies, instead subsidising the production of healthy food through targeted subsidies for healthy food producers. Secondly, there is no national minimum wage, and still today food systems workers, particularly in agriculture, do not earn a high wage. Switzerland might wish to ensure that there is a minimum wage policy that guarantees a decent living wage for all workers, including those in the food sector, who may be particularly susceptible to precarious working conditions.



Conclusion

There are some caveats to this analysis.

First, policies in Switzerland exist at multiple levels of government: federal, cantonal, and municipal. This application was conducted at the national level and therefore will have missed relevant local policies. Second, policy is complex and dynamic, and the goals of food system transformation are numerous; this analysis considers only a limited number of food systems goals and policies at one point in time. In addition, it is not necessarily the case that areas of incoherence in policies should be seen as 'bad'; there are some cases where incoherence may make sense, such as due to prioritisation across goals or political economy necessities. For example, there is some incoherence between environmental policies and more nutritious food consumption, this is due to tight regulations

around hunting, fishing and mushroom foraging to prevent wildlife degradation. In this case, a change to these policies solely to increase policy coherence with other goals would not be desirable.

Still, policy incoherence can sometimes lead to inefficiency and lower likelihood of achieving policy goals, as well as missed opportunities for leveraging synergies across policy areas where they exist. While achieving perfect coherence among all food-related policies across all outcomes is unlikely—and potentially undesirable, given the costs associated with coordination and alignment—by identifying and managing critical synergies and trade-offs, Switzerland's government and the stakeholders who support it can better align efforts towards achieving key goals.





You can access the
tool and supporting
resources here:



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