



The importance of grassland and forage production in sustainable agriculture

33. annual meeting of the Swiss Society of Agronomy
Tuesday, 17 March 2026, Agroscope, Reckenholzstr. 191, 8046 Z rich

Grassland and forage production are central components of sustainable agriculture – especially in Switzerland, where they form the basis of animal production and provide a wide range of ecological services. The conference will focus on current scientific findings, challenges and solutions relating to the use, conservation and further development of grassland systems. The focus is on issues of productivity, biodiversity, animal health, landscape planning and food security in the context of climate change and economic constraints. Compared to other European countries, forage production in Switzerland is characterised by a high proportion of land and a largely grass-based diet for roughage consumers. The concept of graduated management intensity in natural fodder production allows both production-oriented and ecological goals to be achieved. In temporary grasslands, clover-grass mixtures use functional diversity to produce top-quality fodder. At the same time, they are an indispensable backbone of healthy crop rotations and the use of symbiotic nitrogen fixation for fodder and arable farming. In alpine regions, mountain forage production shows how agricultural use and nature conservation can be combined: extensive farming not only produces food, but also preserves cultural landscapes and ensures erosion control. At the same time, historically developed grasslands are threatened by pressure from use and loss of land – their restoration and networking are central tasks of modern agricultural policy. Semi-natural grasslands are considered hotspots of biodiversity. The interactions between wild plants, insects and soil organisms are crucial for the stability of agricultural ecosystems. Innovative sowing methods can specifically increase the biodiversity of degraded meadows. The breeding of fodder plants also faces complex challenges: climate adaptation, yield increases and disease resistance must be reconciled with the conservation of genetic resources. The quality of grassland directly influences the health and well-being of farm animals. High-quality feed strengthens the immune system and reduces the use of medication. Finally, grassland-based feeding of ruminants offers a way to produce protein efficiently without competing with arable farming for human consumption, thereby contributing to food security and reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Programm - Programme - Program

- 08:45 - 09:55 **Registrierung und Kaffee - Enregistrement et café - Registration and coffee**
- 09:15 - 09:55 **Generalversammlung SGPW-SSA - Assemblée générale SGPW-SSA - General assembly SGPW-SSA**
- 09:55 - 10:00 **Eröffnung wissenschaftliche Tagung - Ouverture de la réunion scientifique - Opening of the scientific meeting** (Katja Jacot, Agroscope)
- Übersichtsreferat - Exposé général - Keynote**
- 10:00 - 10:35 **Grassland systems as the foundation of a multifunctional Swiss agriculture** (Andreas Lüscher & Olivier Huguenin, Agroscope)
- Vorträge - Présentation - Presentations I** (Katja Jacot)
- 10:35 - 11:00 **Beyond the borders: Sustainable intensification of tropical pastures through integration of legumes and grasses with biological nitrification inhibition** Astrid Oberson Dräyer, ETH Zürich
- Aktuelle Forschungsprojekte - Projets de recherche actuels - Current research projects I** (Roland Kölliker)
- 11:00 - 11:15 **Flashpräsentationen à 3 Min. - Présentations flash de 3 min. - Flash presentations of 3 min.**
1. *Restoring alpine pastures: the impact of highland cattle on *Alnus viridis* encroachment* (Lucia S. Mochi, Agroscope)
 2. *Selecting study areas representative for the highly diverse growth conditions in the Swiss summering zone* (Sarina Danioth, Agroscope / ETH Zurich)
 3. *Multispecies mixtures enhance yield and trampling resistance* (Olivier Huguenin-Elie, Agroscope)
 4. *Formulation and testing of a nutrient solution derived from organic waste to support hydroponic lettuce (*Lactuca sativa* 'Frilice') production for space applications* (Iciar Giménez de Azcárate, ETH Zürich)
 5. *Nitrogen sources used by tropical forages in the Amazon forest margins under low input management: A 15N study* (Daniel M. Villegas)
- 11:15 - 11:35 **Pause - Pause - Break**
- Vorträge - Présentation - Presentations II** (Katja Jacot)
- 11:35 - 12:00 **Learnings from ten years of biodiversity monitoring in grassland-dominated agricultural landscapes of Switzerland** (Eliane Meier & Chantal Herzog, Agroscope)
- 12:00 - 12:25 **Restoring plant and insect diversity in lowland grasslands using different seed addition methods** (Jean-Yves Humbert, University of Bern)
- Aktuelle Forschungsprojekte - Projets de recherche actuels - Current research projects II** (Roland Kölliker)
- 12:25 - 13:00 **Flashpräsentationen à 3 Min. - Présentations flash de 3 min. - Flash presentations of 3 min.**
6. *Conservation pest control in sugar beet? A PhD project in its last steps*

(Angela Studer, Agroscope)

7. *Impacts of organic fertilisation strategies on grassland soil organic carbon stocks: A case-study from Grisons* (Elisabeth Tanner, Agroscope)
8. *Bastard-Raigras verbessert die botanische Qualität von Gras-Klee-Mischungen* (Daniel Suter, Agroscope)
9. *Can soil amendments improve phosphorus (P) use efficiency of crops grown on oxidized acid sulfate soils with contrasting soil P availability* (Nhiem Nguyen, ETH Zurich)
10. *Improving the improvement program: Optimizing fodder plant breeding strategies with stochastic simulations* (Daniel Ariza Suarez, ETH Zurich)
11. *Extensification des prairies de montagne - entre rendement et biodiversité* (Isabelle Arnold, University of Bern)
12. *Biodiversity payments sustain grassland plant diversity, whereas abandonment leads to loss* (Marco Barandun, Agroscope / University of Zurich)
13. *Genetic diversity monitoring: unravelling dynamics in species and cultivar compositions in grassland* (Damian Käch, ETH Zurich / BFH-HAFL)
14. *From sequence to cross-compatibility prediction: A functional analysis of self-incompatibility haplotypes in forage grasses* (Daniela Kupper, ETH Zurich)
15. *Symactiv Pellets: A biostimulant in which biology is the main driver of soil health.* (Hassan Mustapha, Symactiv)
16. *Quelle fréquence optimale de prairies temporaires dans la rotation pour maintenir la qualité des sols agricoles?* (Thomas Guillaume, Agroscope)

13:00 - 14:15 **Lunch und Posterausstellung - Lunch et exposition des posters - Lunch and poster exhibition**

Vorträge - Présentation - Presentations II (Séverine Gabioud)

14:15 - 14:40 **Fodder crop breeding: innovation for the future** (Christoph Grieder & Michelle Nay, Agroscope)

14:40 - 15:05 **Where agriculture preserves nature: mountain forage systems between use and conservation** (Manuel Schneider & Caren Pauler)

15:05 - 15:10 **Prämierung Flashtalks - Prix des flash talks - Flash talk awards**

15:10 - 15:20 **Kurze Pause - Petite pause - Short break**

Vorträge - Présentation - Presentations III (Lea Frey)

15:20 - 15:45 **The importance of grassland and forage production for animal husbandry and animal health** (Florian Leiber, FIBL)

15:45 - 16:10 **Net human-edible protein yield and greenhouse gas emissions of grass-based dairy production** (Sebastian Ineichen & Beat Reidy, HAFL)

16:10 - 16:15 **Ende der Tagung - Fin de la réunion - End of meeting**

Registration

Until **20 February 2026** at <https://sgpw-ssa.clubdesk.com/anmeldungSGPW2026>.

Fee (payable by invoice after the event) 60 CHF (SGPW-SSA members), 80 CHF (non-members), 40 CHF (students)

Submission of contributions

We would like to invite **all researchers in the field of plant sciences** to present their project as a **poster**. Selected contributions can also be presented in a **3-minute flash presentation**. Contributions can be submitted with a 1-2 page summary by **10. Februar 2026** (link upon registration or directly here: <https://sgpw-ssa.clubdesk.com/anmeldungBeitrag2026>). Language of the contributions: D, F, E. Doctoral students who present their research project are exempt from the conference fee.

Directions

The conference will take place at Agroscope Reckenholz (Reckenholzstr. 191, 8046 Zurich).

Train: Station Zürich-Affoltern, 20 min. walk or bus 44. **Car:** limited parking available.



We would like to thank the Swiss Academy of Sciences for supporting this event

