

Switzerland–EU

Zurich Farmers' Association rejects draft of Switzerland-EU deal and calls for revision

by Ferdi Hodel, Managing Director of ZBV



Ferdi Hodel.
(Picture ma)

The associations had until 31 October 2025 to submit their comments on the "Stabilisation and Further Development of Switzerland–EU Relations" package to the federal government. The board of the "Zurich Farmers Association" (ZBV) has also drafted a statement:

Switzerland's agricultural and food industry is a central pillar of supply security, the decentralised economy in rural areas and landscape conservation. It operates under world-leading standards of animal welfare, environmental protection and quality assurance. These strengths must be preserved and further developed even in the event of a deeper cooperation with the EU and must not be put under pressure by legal adjustments. From the perspective of agriculture, any future agreement between the EU and Switzerland must accept and protect the following principles as mandatory and guaranteed.

Principles from the perspective of agriculture

Switzerland is not just any player in the internal market, but a highly specialised and small-scale agricultural nation backed of society. The Swiss population must continue to steer and decide on fundamental agricultural policy decisions in the future. We understand food sovereignty to be the democratically legitimised control of production and import conditions. Support instruments such as direct payments, market support or investment aid are not state distortions of competition but should be understood as instruments for safeguarding public and constitutionally required goods.

The current draft agreement between the EU and Switzerland fails to meet these three key requirements. Too many uncertainties and contingencies remain, which jeopardise the future of



Switzerland's federal structure and the importance of rural areas for our food supply, biodiversity and security of supply clearly argue in favour of requiring a mandatory referendum. (Picture mt)

Swiss agriculture. Furthermore, the very high regulatory costs are not quantified. It can be assumed that these immense costs will be offset by relatively small economic benefits.

Rejection of the draft and referral back for revision

To strike a balance between opportunities and risks for Swiss agriculture, the package urgently needs to be revised and clarified. It is up to the Federal Council to assess whether this can be achieved in national law or whether renegotiations with the EU are necessary. The clarifications and additions to national law must be made by the Federal Council in its dispatch and then validated in the parliamentary process. Planned amendments at the ordinance level must be outlined unambiguously in the dispatch so that their implementation does not give rise to debates about interpretation at a later date. For these overarching reasons, the existing draft must be rejected and referred back for revision.

The powers of parliaments and governments are affected

In our opinion, the Switzerland–EU package has constitutional significance, as it affects funda-

mental political rights and powers. Specifically, it directly affects the powers of the federal and cantonal parliaments and governments, as well as the right to consultation and the right to vote. Furthermore, the package would create constitutional uncertainties for the future, as the development of the EU and the case law of the *Court of Justice of the European Union* (CJEU) are unpredictable. These restrictions and risks, as well as the scope of the decision itself, argue in favour of a referendum with a double majority of the people and the cantons from both a constitutional and a democratic point of view.

Call for a mandatory referendum

Such a far-reaching agreement with potential implications for key policy areas – including agriculture, vocational training, health, energy and

wage protection – deserves the broadest possible democratic legitimacy. The requirement for a double majority ensures that not only urban centres but also rural and structurally weak regions with their specific interests are given appropriate consideration. In particular, Switzerland's federal structure and the importance of rural areas for our food supply, biodiversity and security of supply clearly argue in favour of requiring a majority of the cantons. This strengthens the broad acceptance of the referendum result. For these reasons, the ZBV supports the intention to subject the Switzerland–EU package to a mandatory referendum.

Source: <https://www.zbv.ch/news-artikel/verband/1471-der-zbv-lehnt-den-entwurf-des-pakets-schweizeu-ab>,
10 October 2025

(Translation "Swiss Standpoint")