

## Governance | Individual communication

### IC - (21016) - SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT THROUGH THE LENS OF RURAL-URBAN DIVIDE: A COMPUTATIONAL TEXT ANALYSIS OF THE MEDIA COVERAGE OF SWISS POPULAR INITIATIVES ON PESTICIDE POLICIES

Antonia Kaiser<sup>1,2</sup>

1 - Department of Socioeconomics, Agroscope, Switzerland; 2 - Sustainability Research Group, Department of Social Sciences, University of Basel, Switzerland

#### **Background and objectives**

In June 2021, the people of Switzerland voted on two popular initiatives that aimed to introduce stricter pesticide policies. Both initiatives were rejected with around 60 per cent negative votes. However, large urban centres voted in favour of what would have meant pesticide-free agricultural production in Switzerland with on average 56 per cent, whereas this number was as low as 28 per cent in rural areas. Such polarised voting results have been interpreted as evidence for an existing rural-urban divide. Sustainability transitions, like the one to pesticide-free agriculture, have the potential to exacerbate the divide, for example due to diverse understandings of sustainability as well as perceived injustices that become unevenly relevant for population groups. Against this backdrop, the purpose of this study is to examine differences in print media coverage of topics related to the popular initiatives on pesticide policies.

#### **Process and methods (for empirical research)**

Taking media coverage as a reflection of societal discourses as well as of dominant political tendencies and ideologies, we use topic modelling and sentiment analysis (two text mining techniques) to analyse text corpora from two different print media landscapes. These corpora are built from articles in media outlets that speak to the rural versus the urban Swiss population.

#### **Main results (or main arguments in the case of critical reviews)**

We expect that the analysis will generate further insights into discourses (conveyed through the print media) that evolve around initiatives of sustainable agricultural development and that are presumably urban or rural biased.

#### **Implications for research and practice/policy | Importance and originality of the contribution**

Mapping the diverse discourses will help to better understand the nature and argumentation of diverging perspectives on sustainability transitions in agriculture. The findings may be used for (bottom-up) agricultural and transition policy problem framing.

**Palavras-chave :** sustainability transition, agriculture, bottom-up governance, text mining, media studies, rural-urban divide