Organic farming and resilience
Salzburg, Austria

Modernisation's potential to undermine resilience

Farmers increasingly become office workers: only those who handle the paper work well, survive. This reduces the time and energy available for other tasks (e.g. time with the family, experimenting, networking).

Farm women are overburdened: they have to help with handling large milk quantities, keep abreast of changing legal and documentation requirements, need to take care of the children and the household. Low quality of life threatens succession.

Modernity often means larger machinery. But the bigger the tractor, the bigger the distance from nature.

Lessons learned

- Organic farmers are more likely to develop alternatives to 'get big or get out'. This has enabled small farms to thrive and contributed to social cohesion.
- Many farmers welcome a territorial, multifunctional approach to farming. Yet, formal institutions tend to have a sectoral approach, which narrows the type of initiatives they endorse.
- Diversity has many advantages. On a farm it allows to buffer shocks and enhances adaptability. A diversity of farms in a region is a valuable source for common initiatives and fosters social innovations.
- Encouraging experimentation and open-ended learning processes is important to enable initiatives between diverse stakeholders. This requires a broader understanding of learning, i.e. one not limited to technical knowledge transfer.
- Quality of life on farms is essential to ensure succession. Offering coaching services would help address inter-generational issues and support women.

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