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# SWITZERLAND

## Global Perspectives



Summary and report of UW Extension Switzerland Global Perspectives Trip

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Extension



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Wyoming Outdoor Recreation, Tourism and Hospitality Initiative (WORTH)



# INTRODUCTION



Trip Date: January 22-25, 2024

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Project Title from Application: Swiss Extension Global Perspectives

The Swiss Extension Global Perspectives project was an incredible opportunity for UW Extension staff to grow their knowledge and understanding of Extension services worldwide. We were able to take part in several informative visits and learn new ideas to bring back to UW Extension. During this experience, I was able to explore agritourism in Switzerland while also learning about Extension services. I will outline the trip from my perspective as the Wyoming Outdoor Recreation, Tourism, and Hospitality Educator and provide information on how I plan to use this in my future programming efforts with the University of Wyoming and University of Wyoming Extension.



# DAY 1

## Meetings at Bern University of Applied Sciences

During our first day we were able to attend several meetings at the Bern university of Applied Sciences. These meetings included information about the University and an overview of the Swiss Agricultural Extension and Education System. During these meetings we were able to learn about Swiss Extension as well as share about our system here with the University of Wyoming. The following outlines key points from the discussions during this part of the trip.

## Overview of Bern University of Applied Sciences

- Included information on what topics are covered at the university and how extension is used in both connecting with students and communities.
- One of my favorite parts of this meeting was when their director of Extension stated that, **“we are here to make good people.”** This really impacted me for the rest of the trip. He shared that many of the farmers they work with also have other roles in their communities, so it is important to give them the skills to not only be good farmers, but good people as well.



Photo of the Bern University of Applied Sciences

## Vocational Education Training (VET)

- In the Swiss education system, after student's complete 9th grade they are able to choose to go towards higher education, or vocational education training.
- Although we have vocational training in the United States, it looks a little different than in Switzerland .In the United States most vocational training occurs after high school. In Switzerland, students can choose from several VET programs, but for our conversations, we focused on the farming programs.
- Students can choose a farming VET program which allows them to participate in an apprenticeship and attend classes once a week at the Extension Office. These programs are provided in several Cantons, similar to states in the UW.



# DAY 1 CONT.

## Farming As a Profession

Although farming is seen as a profession in the United States, farmers are not mandated to undergo specific training or education to practice. In contrast, in Switzerland, farmers must complete minimum professional training to purchase or manage a farm, which includes education from extension systems or applied universities. While we don't aim to mandate degrees for Wyoming farmers, it's interesting to note the difference in how farming as a profession is viewed and certified in Switzerland compared to the U.S. Farming holds high regard in Swiss culture, and the education requirement establishes trust in Extension services, who are often the ones responsible for providing education.

## Ag in Switzerland and Tourism

In Switzerland, agriculture plays a significant role in the economy, tradition, and tourism of the country. The picturesque Swiss Alps, lush meadows, and iconic dairy cows with bells are what come to mind for many when Switzerland is mentioned. This imagery has been effectively promoted worldwide, attracting visitors interested in experiencing this area. Switzerland has successfully leveraged agricultural tourism and outdoor activities in these areas, offering not just scenic beauty but also opportunities for hiking, camping, and immersion in the local culture. Tourists exploring the Alps often travel through farmlands, providing them with chances to engage in agritourism such as dining at farm stops, staying in farmers' barns, or purchasing farm-fresh products like cheese. While this model may not align with U.S. private property regulations, it showcases how Swiss farmers embrace tourism while their animals graze in the Alps. While agritourism exists in other Swiss regions, direct sales remain a common practice among farmers engaging with tourists.





# DAY 1 CONT.

## Extension in Switzerland

- Extension services are offered in each canton- Like out county services in WY
- Extension educators provide advisory services, education to students, and workshops

Photo of dairy cows at the Grangeneuve Extension Center



## Agridea

- In this visit, it was shared that this agency provides over 100 classes targeted for extension advisors.
- **As a newer Extension employee, this was very interesting to me, and I know many of us newer extension agents would enjoy continuing education throughout the year to continue to offer the best services to our clients, even after our one year of new employee training.**



Photo of students learning about dairy farming at the Grangeneuve Extension Center



# DAY 1 CONT.


## Visit to Grangeneuve Extension Center

### • VET Center and Extension


- This site was very interesting because it combined Vocational Education Training, Extension, and Experiment Station work. There were students, researchers, and extension agents all working within this one location, which I think made for an interesting dynamic and sharing of information.
- At the site, they provided training, education, and research around several topics such as farming, hay drying, dairy production, and even cheese making.

### • Station store- agritourism in action

- On this site, there was also a station store that sold produce, cheese, and other items produced on-site to the public.
- This store was located right by several barns being used for educational training and research, allowing visitors to be immersed in what the Center is doing.
- This is a very interesting way of connecting the public to the Center by using agritourism through direct selling. The public can interact with products produced on-site, see the production year-round, and know they are supporting their local community.



**Photos Left:  
Inside the  
Grangeneuve store**



**Photo Right: The  
bells used to bring  
cattle up and down  
the alps. Bells  
pictured are from  
the 1800s**



# DAY 2

## Visit to BBZN Extension Center

- This center is in the Luzern Canton of Switzerland and was focused on farming, nature, and nutrition.
- At this center they specialize in several areas such as horticulture and floristry, home economics, dairy farming, and agriculture.



Photo of Yak during a farm visit with BBZN staff

## Agritourism Projects

- GoUpAlp agrotourism project
  - A project to support farmers in implementing agritourism offerings
  - **[Information about this project- Click Here](#)**
- Developing advisory principals and documents to continue to develop their agrotourism services
- Helping farmers and communities look at what is possible in non-tourist areas

## Agritourism at the BBZN

- During our visit they also included a document that outlines all of the consulting services they offer at the BBZN. These services include trainings, workshops, and consulting.
  - In their Nutrition and Home Economics, Marketing consultation services, they include information about Agritourism and direct marketing
    - Although the Director did not know too much about their agritourism services, they did share with us that farms in Switzerland cannot be 100% agritourism due to strict regulations from the government.
    - To offer agritourism offerings at one's farm, they must also be a working farm to a certain percentage.
    - At the BBZN they help farmers explore agritourism opportunities that they could host on their farm





## DAY 2 CONT.

### Visit to the Burgrain Fam Shop, Agritourism Farm, and Agriculture Museum

- Burgrain is a site that includes several attractions such as a site store that is sourced with products from local farmers, a rentable event space, petting zoo, restaurant, training kitchen, wildlife garden, availability to see the barns, children areas, an agricultural museum, and much more.
- One of the main goals of this site is: To share current and future topics relating to agriculture and nutrition that are presented, discussed and made directly tangible to audiences.
- At this location they really focus on the education of farming towards non-farmers
  - They include tours, special events, exhibits discussing challenges within the industry, and classes



Photos from Burgrain store and outside of event hall



- In talking with the staff there, this site is usually used by local Swiss tourist and companies looking to have events, rather than international tourists.
- Although the restaurant and event space were not open during our visit, we were able to quickly speak with staff at the museum and look at the site store. Products at the store included cheeses, meats, baked goods, fresh produce, cooking mixes, handmade goods, and much more.
  - The store is located closest to the road, and I'm sure becomes very busy during the peak travel months.
- Although this is a unique agritourism experience, it shows how important agritourism is in teaching and connecting communities and visitors with agriculture. This is also an experienced, knowledgeable agritourism operation, but not all agritourism operations must be this large to be successful.

- **Museum website:** [Click Here!](#)
- **More about the Burgrain Experience:** [Click Here!](#)
- **Information about the Agrovision Burgrain lighthouse project:** [Click Here!](#)





# DAY 3

## IP-Suisse

- A certification and label program for farmers.
- Around 10,000 farmers are producing under this label
- Have contracts with several large food retailers in Switzerland, and can be recognized by their ladybug symbol, which we frequently saw in stores.
- As part of this meeting, we also visited the Romerhof in Buhl farm which is described below.



Photo of IP-Suisse Label Ladybug. We saw several farms with this sign posted on their barns

## Federal Office for Agriculture (FOAG)

- Very similar to USDA in that they provide funding, policy, and data about the agricultural industry in Switzerland

## Römerhof in Bühl Farm Visit

- This is a Black Angus farm that is also a large partner for the IP-Suisse label
- They also had a focus on agritourism as well
  - They offered a rentable event space for corporate events, weddings, parties, etc. This event space included a kitchen with on-site catering, inside table space, a stage area, as well as outside seating and firepits.
  - In talking with the farmer, Alexander, he shared with me that, **“to have an agritourism business you have to have a passion for it.** Thankfully, my parents’ passion was passed to my brother and I.” He also shared that they are very excited to offer new experiences for visitors.
  - Most of the visitors to this site are locals since it is a larger event space. The IP-Suisse team frequently use this farm for their corporate events.
  - At their farm, they also allow for others to board their horses there and provide a large riding arena.



Photos from Romerhof Event Space





## OTHER MEETINGS AND STOPS

### Regional Development Presentation

- Similar to the United States, regional development in Switzerland is driven by policy.
- In this discussion, it was shared that there is a lot of regional development going on in Switzerland. Many rural areas in Switzerland want development, and many communities are looking towards tourism and sustainability. Many urban areas are also looking to be more sustainable in their efforts towards regional development.
- Many urban areas are creating community gardens and providing other ways for producers to directly sell their products through creating places like “vegetable garages”
  - These are small shops, some with garage doors, placed throughout urban areas where farmers can bring and sell their produce to people living in the cities.
- In many of the rural areas, they see lots of day tourism from visitors spending their nights in the larger cities but wanting to have experiences during the day. Many communities are trying to capitalize on these day tourists.
- In this discussion, several policies were also shared such as tourism policies, park policies, sustainable land planning, and ag policies.
- A few comments that I appreciated in the presentation were that tourism is always tied in when having regional development conversations and that regional development is a collective action.
- Also shared was information about Bun Tschlin- a label company aimed at providing an umbrella label for agriculture, tourism, culinary, and local culture for the area of Tschlin. This works by bringing together members and businesses of the community and surrounding area to create a shared brand that is then able to be marketed to tourists.



Photo of a common “vegetable garage” used in urban areas

Website for Bun Tschlin:  
[Click Here!](#)



## OTHER MEETINGS AND STOPS

### Gruyere Cheese Factory

- Tour of cheese factory and learned about the cheese making process- This is one of the top cheese factories for tourists to visit in Switzerland.



Photo of inside the Gruyere Cheese Factory

### Cailler Chocolate Factory

- Tour of Cailler Chocolate Factory- tour of factory and learned about the chocolate making process. Cailler is one of the top Swiss chocolate brands and is fairly well known in the US as well.



Top and Bottom Photos from the Cailler Chocolate Factory



Both tours discussed the importance of agriculture in the production of their products. Both included museums, signage, and audio that shared their ties to the agriculture industry. In my book, I would consider both tours as agritourism experiences because of how well they explained their partnership with local producers.

### Other tourism data

- On my other tours it was shared that in 2021 Switzerland saw a little over 4 million tourists and contributed to about 3% of the country's GDP.
- Most tourism takes place in the Alpine regions and many visitors are looking for outdoor experiences, cultural experiences, and even agritourism experiences.





# UTILIZING THIS EXPERIENCE

## How I Will Use This Experience in My Work



This experience of participating in the Switzerland Global Perspectives trip sparked the idea of launching more agritourism programs and classes in Wyoming. It provided new insights into agritourism, emphasizing the potential for small-scale operations driven by passionate farmers. Additionally, it highlighted how agritourism can bridge cultural gaps and enhance branding.

Using this experience, I aim to develop an agritourism course for UW students in Ranch Management, Agricultural Leadership, and Outdoor Recreation and Tourism Management programs. I also plan to offer programming through UW Extension for farmers and ranchers in Wyoming. I also plan to share this experience with other UW Extension educators to inspire them to engage in similar opportunities at UW.

Potential impacts include exchanges with Extension Educators from Switzerland and Wyoming, sharing insights on programs like CVH/WORTH, and fostering international communication, particularly regarding agritourism initiatives.

I also plan to continue to carry the perspective with me that we in Extension are, **“here to make good people.”**





# THANK YOU



Thank you for this opportunity as a new educator with UW Extension. It's an experience I deeply appreciate and will always remember.

