



Agricultural Policy, Research & Development

Need for Reform in Plant Protection Product Registration

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At a glance

- A new EFK report highlights a clear need for reform in the approval of plant protection products.
- A lack of deadlines, complex responsibilities, and inadequate digital processes are slowing down the approval process.
- There is a need to quickly clear the backlog and implement more efficient and reliable procedures.

Anyone who wants to bring a new pesticide to market in Switzerland needs a lot of patience. A new audit report by the Swiss Federal Audit Office (EFK) shows that the regulatory authorities have been struggling with a growing backlog for years. Of the regular applications submitted between 2018 and 2025, about half had not yet been finalized at the time of the audit. At the same time, only 18 regular approvals were granted in 2024, while 34 emergency approvals were issued. According to the EFK, the causes are not solely due to a lack of resources. Rather, it criticizes the absence of binding deadlines, complex jurisdictional responsibilities, numerous interfaces, and inadequate digital processes.

Agriculture Needs Modern Plant Protection

The agricultural sector faces challenges. Climate change, new diseases and pests, and increasing demands for resource efficiency are driving the need for innovative solutions. To ensure that new and effective products make their way into practical use, a regulatory approval system is needed that functions reliably, transparently, and efficiently. For a small market like Switzerland in particular, the lengthy and unpredictable approval processes are problematic. Delays hinder investment and reduce the appeal of introducing new products. Those who suffer as a result are the companies that register both organic and conventional plant protection products for the Swiss market, as well as the farms that face significant delays—or are unable to access at all—important tools for plant protection. The EFK also points out that the significant backlog in regular procedures increases the need for emergency authorizations.

Binding deadlines provide planning certainty

The EFK's criticism of the lack of processing deadlines is particularly pointed. The Financial Control Office therefore recommends setting clear deadlines. In addition, the time taken by authorities and applicants should be systematically measured. This would provide both the authorities and the applicants with greater planning certainty. On a positive note, reforms have already been initiated. The parliamentary initiative "Enabling Modern Plant Protection in Switzerland" laid the groundwork for accelerated procedures and a stronger alignment with approvals in neighboring countries. The task now is to consistently implement these reforms and improve the system's efficiency.

Reliable procedures as a key requirement

The EFK also points out that current fees cover only a small portion of the costs. At the same time, it rightly notes that increasing the cost-recovery rate should go hand in hand with reducing the backlog and establishing reliable deadlines. Improving efficiency and reducing the backlog are therefore top priorities. Switzerland needs an effective authorization system that increases planning certainty for companies and improves the agricultural sector's access to modern plant protection products. The reforms outlined in the report must now be consistently implemented.



Rudolf Minsch

Head of General Economic Policy & International Relations, Chief Economist, Deputy Chairman of the Executive Board



Guido Saurer

Deputy Head of Economic Policy & Education