

Stakeholder acceptance of policy measures to reduce meat consumption in Switzerland

Introduction

Reducing levels of meat consumption in high income countries could result in benefits for human health and reduce environmental impacts of the food system. Policy measures could be used to disincentivize meat consumption or incentivize meat alternatives. However, such measures are usually controversial, especially among influential societal stakeholder groups, leading to a lack of feasibility. In this study, we investigated the acceptance of publicly discussed policy measures that could lead to meat reductions by a number of major stakeholders of the Swiss food system.

Methods

Step 1: Elaboration of meat reduction measures

- 25 guided interviews with leading stakeholders of the Swiss food system
- Qualitative Analysis of the interviews: collection, condensation, (re-) formulation and categorization of meat reduction measures
- Compilation of a final matrix with 37 meat reduction measures



Step 2: Assessment of stakeholder acceptance

- Standardized survey on the acceptance of the 37 meat reduction measures with 23 leading stakeholders of the Swiss food system
- Quantitative analysis of stakeholder acceptance
- Qualitative analysis of preconditions for the implementation of measures mentioned by stakeholders

Fig. 1: Approach to derive the 37 policy measures and examine their acceptance among stakeholders of the Swiss food system

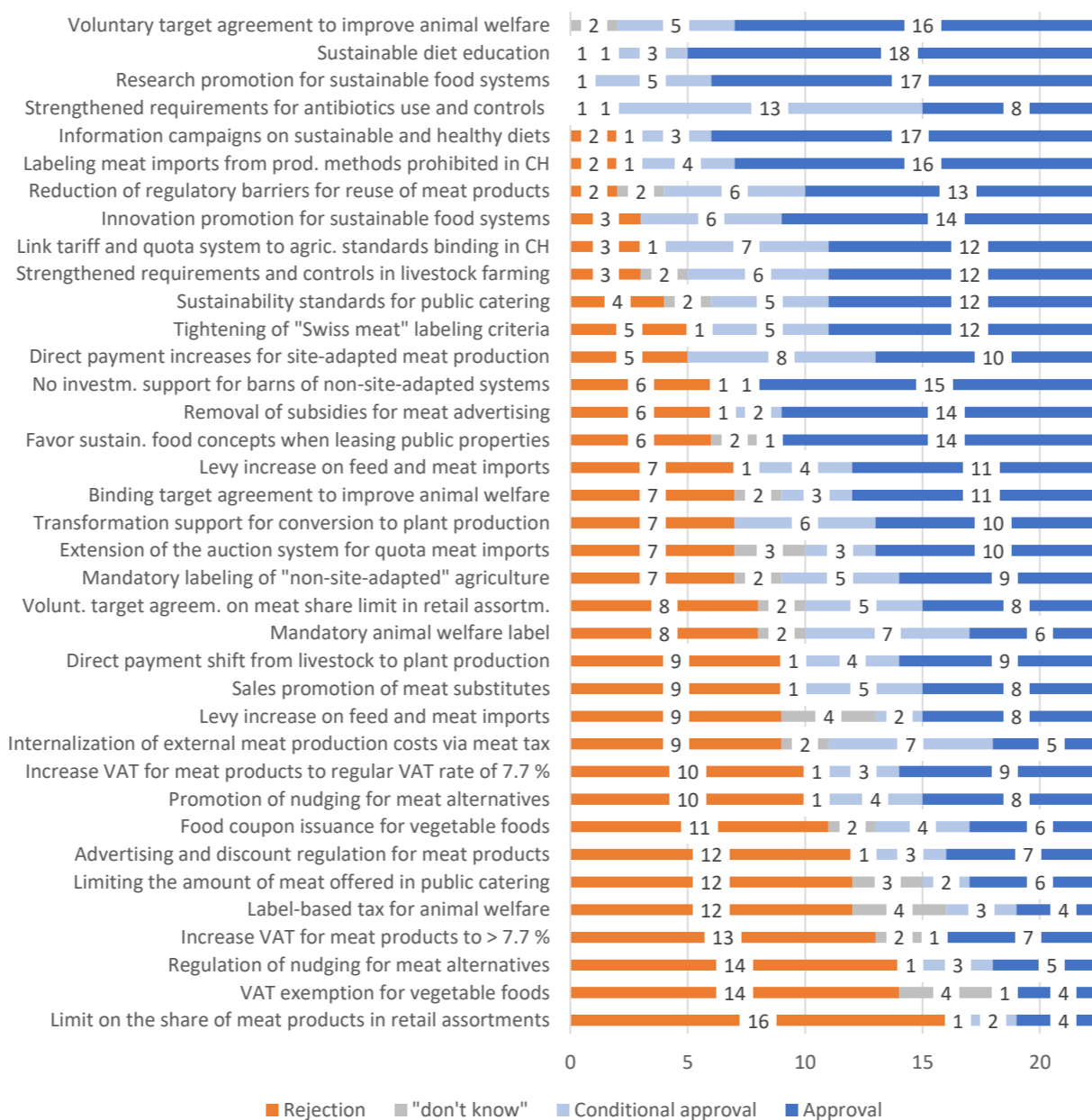


Fig. 2: Acceptance of the 37 meat reduction measures
The numbers in the above figure represent the number of SHs that rejected the measure (orange), stated "don't know" (gray), conditionally approved (light blue) or approved (dark blue) the measure.

Results and Discussion

- In general, we found high acceptance for voluntary and information measures and low acceptance for deeply-intervening, coercive measures.
- Negative incentives such as a meat tax were most often rejected. However, positive incentives, i.e. measures to promote meat alternatives, were also strongly rejected in some cases and on average more strongly than regulations.
- Measures directly targeting meat reductions as well as measures aimed at promoting meat alternatives were most strongly rejected.
- Preconditions for acceptance most often referred to dampening economic impacts of the measures, but also to a facilitation of changeover, transparency for consumers and a coherent policy mix.

Conclusions

- Far-reaching measures aimed directly at reducing meat consumption are unlikely to be politically feasible in Switzerland at this stage.
- Measures that have an indirect impact, but could still reduce meat consumption in the short to medium term while achieving additional benefits for other sustainability issues are more accepted among stakeholders and likely more feasible. These include higher standards for antibiotic use and animal welfare.
- Measures with high approval and potential long-term impact on attitudes toward meat consumption - such as education about sustainable diets - could be important complementary policy measures.