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Fact sheets

The soybean plant has it all. It represents a true a triumph like no other cultivated plant in human history. This is because it has a high amount of protein and it binds nitrogen. Soy is now used as a meat substitute around the world. Tofu and soy milk are popular and are now as much a part of a balanced and healthy diet as bread and butter. However, soy is mainly used as animal feed.

Soy – the miracle plant

Swiss soy cultivation

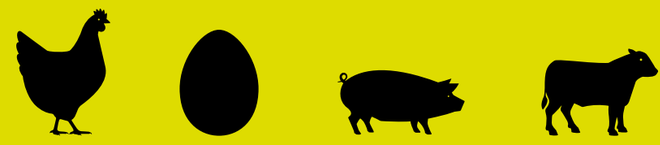
With the exception of fodder, agricultural crops in Switzerland can only make a very limited contribution to domestic production of sources of protein. Swiss soya is currently grown on around 3,300 hectares. The annual harvest amounts to around 7,000 tonnes of Soybeans. Of this, around 5,000 tonnes are used for animal feed.

Use as food

Some 75% of soy is used for animal feed. Because of its high protein content and favorable composition of essential amino acids soy is ideal for feeding pigs and poultry. The production of chickens and eggs requires the most soy. Chickens need a lot of protein. By nature, they like to eat worms and bugs. Cows, by contrast, prefer to eat mainly grass.

Average grams of soy used per kilo of product

Source: WWF Magazine 3 / 2014, p. 13



Chicken	Eggs	Porc	Beef
575 g	307 g	263 g	173 g

An efficient crop

Soy is not only ecological, it is also one of the most efficient agricultural crops around. If we wanted to meet our protein needs with a different crop, we would have to plant a much larger area. And soy is very easy for farm animals to consume and digest.

Usable Protein per Acre of Farmland

Source: http://www.soyfoods.org/good-for-the-planet/soy-and-sustainability

Soy	Rice	Corn	Legumes	Milk	Egg	Meat
356 lbs	265 lbs	211 lbs	192 lbs	82 lbs	78 lbs	45 lbs

Soy is environmentally valuable

Soy can meet about two-thirds of its nitrogen needs on its own. So it needs less fertilizer. It's also ideally suited for crop rotation. Unlike corn, which results in a loss of topsoil, soy contributes to the enrichment of topsoil. So fields remain fertile, are better aerated and are easier to work.

The soybean is unique

Like peas, beans and lentils, soybeans are legumes and they have the highest protein content in this group. Soy has a good fatty acid composition. It contains little saturated fat and a high proportion of polyunsaturated fat. Like other plant-based oils, soy oil contains no cholesterol. These two factors combined have a positive impact on fat metabolism. Soy beans are a good source of fiber. Consuming 50 grams of soybeans will provide you with a third of your daily fiber requirement. Soybeans also contain numerous other vitamins, such as vitamin B1, vitamin B2, folic acid and vitamin E. Soy is also rich in calcium and magnesium.

Soy can be used in many different ways

The unique composition of and substances in the soy plant make it one of the most versatile agricultural crops in the world. It has a number of uses. Soy is used for food (about 5% of global production), for cosmetics and in the chemical industry (20%), and for animal feed (75%).

Use of soy oil

Chemical Industry	Food Industry	Cosmetic Industry
Ink	Margarine	Soap
Paint	Cooking Fat	Washing Powder
Grease	Mayonnaise	Cosmetics
Technical Oils	Biscuits	…
…	Coffee Cream	
	…	

Source: Danube Soya

Use of soy meal/beans

Chemical Industry	Food Industry	Feed Industry
Plastics	Soya "Milk"	Compound feed
Cosmetics	Soya "Yoghurt"	Meat feed
Ink	Soya Sauce	Meat-Products
Paint	Tofu	…
…	Pasta/Noodles	
	Baby Food	
	Bakeries	
	Muesli	
	Snacks	
	...	

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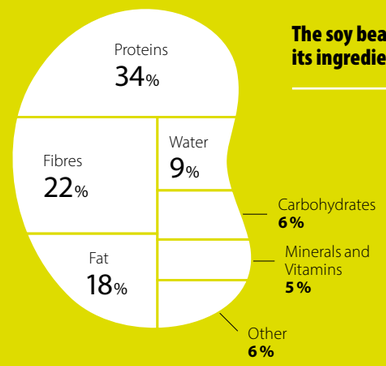
The soy bean and its ingredients



Source: Souci, Fachmann, Kraut

The global increase in the consumption of meat, eggs and milk products has led to an expansion of soybean production in North and South America. The prohibition against using animal protein as fodder, low production costs in the US, Brazil and Argentina, and genetically modified soy have made the soy plant one of the most important components in feeding our livestock. And this has had negative consequences for the environment and humanity.

A boom with consequences

Lead producers, exporters and importers of soybeans in 2024/25 (in millions of tons)

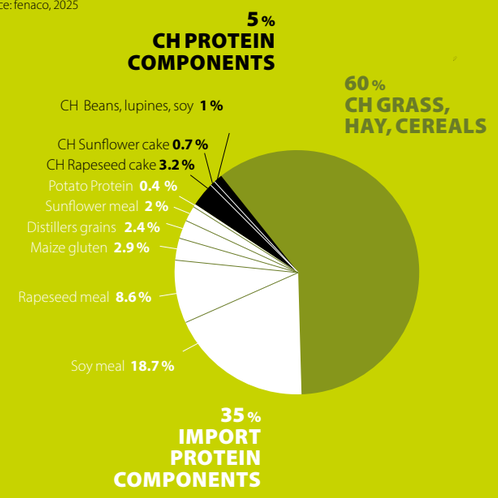
Source: USDA Data

Market forces shift to Asia

Soy is mainly produced in North and South America. The US, Brazil and Argentina account for 80% of total global production. China is now the largest importer of soy. Until 1990, it imported almost no soy. Europe and Asia's addiction to protein is significant.

Origin of crude protein

Source: fenaco, 2025



Switzerland's protein needs

In 2025, around 1,400,000 tonnes of crude protein were available for Swiss livestock. 60% of this comes from domestic grass, hay and cereals. 40% is concentrated feed. Switzerland meets 14% of its crude protein requirements itself. There is a lack of suitable breeds, yield stability and the climatic and topographical conditions required to substantially expand the production of protein-rich feedstuffs.

GMO-free

According to estimates, 77% of global soy crops have been genetically modified. In the US and Brazil, 94% and 97%, respectively, of soy that is produced has been genetically modified. In Argentina, the figure is 100%. Switzerland has always chosen not to plant or import any genetically-modified soy.

Deforestation in the Amazon on the decline – Cerrado under pressure

Thanks to the moratorium on the production of soy the deforestation of the Amazon is on the decline. Wholesalers are refusing to buy soy produced on land in Brazil's Amazon region that was cleared after July 2006. Today, around 5,000 square kilometers of forest are cut down each year. 20 years ago it was five times as much. Yet the pressure on Brazil's Cerrado region, with its extraordinary biodiversity, remains unabated. About half of this region has been converted into farmland since the end of 1950.

Consequences for humanity and the environment

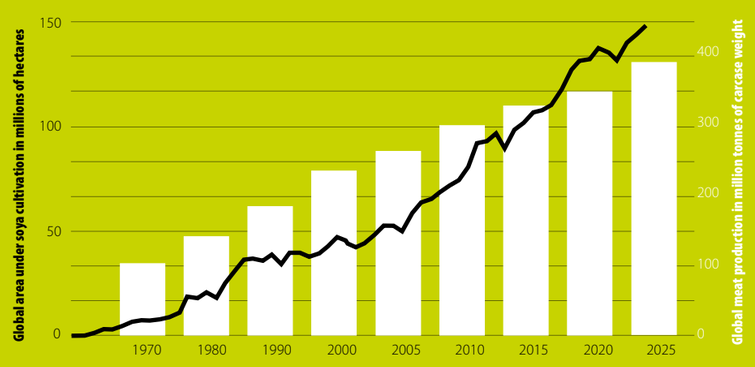
Soy is an important source of protein for people and animals and a crucial source of income and foreign currency for cultivating countries. Yet legumes also have negative consequences for the environment. These range from deforestation through water pollution to soil erosion and decreasing biodiversity. The increase in soy cultivation can also lead to social conflicts and tensions between producers and local populations based on land and worker rights.

Hunger for soy remains unabated

Demand for and production of soy have increased fivefold over the past 50 years. The main reasons for this development are the pent-up demand for animal protein in Asia and the shift in meat consumption in developed countries toward low-fat poultry. Some 140 million hectares of land were planted with soybeans in 2025. This resulted in a harvest of 427 million tons.

Development of global soybean and meat production

Source: Statista, FAO 2025

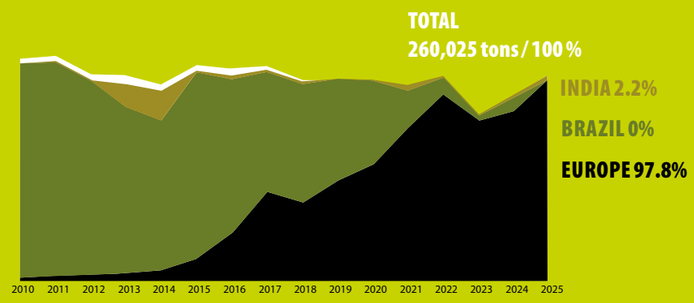


Soy mainly from Europe

Swiss importers have steadily reduced their dependence on Brazil in recent years. Today, they source feed soy almost exclusively from Europe, e.g. from Germany, Italy, Austria and Ukraine. This has reduced the country's dependence on traditional producers.

Soy meal import to Switzerland

Source: Reservesuisse, Soy Network



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In the global context, Switzerland is not a significant soy producer or consumer. Its share of global production is 0.001%, while it accounts for just 0.1% of worldwide consumption. Yet Switzerland is considered a trailblazer of more sustainable soy production. Swiss stakeholders like Coop and WWF were the first to recognize and deal with the issue of the global boom in soy. Together, they created the "Basel Criteria" in 2004, which seeks to encourage sustainable soy cultivation.

Exemplary industry solution

Sustainable standards are part of the solution

In order to achieve environmental and social improvements in the cultivation of soy minimum standards, such as ProTerra, RTRS, ISCC or Donau Soya , are an important step. Thanks to controls the standards ensure compliance with the law. The common thread of these standards is that they ensure responsible soy production.

Environmental criteria

– No clearing of old-growth forests and habitats rich in biodiversity since 2008.

– Application of integrated production methods with the goal of reducing the use of potentially harmful pesticides and fertilizers.

– Protection of soil and water.

Social criteria

– Observance of labor rights (minimum wages, no child labor, fair working conditions, worker protection).

– Respect for traditional land rights.

GMO-free

– Farms and the flow of goods is monitored by independent agencies.

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FROM THE "BASEL CRITERIA" TO THE SOY NETWORK SWITZERLAND

2004 In 2004, the WWF and Coop created the "Basel Criteria" to ensure sustainable soy cultivation and thus contribute to a substantial change in mindset in the soy industry. The Basel Criteria formed the basis for standards such as ProTerra and RTRS.

2006 Import of the first 1,000 tons of certified soy meal by fenaco. Challenges: Establishment of functioning certification organizations, credible and sustainable value added chain, achievement of critical mass.

2011 Foundation of the Soy Network Switzerland. Goal: Increase the percentage of responsible soy production to at least 90%.

2013 Switzerland was one of the first signatories of the Danube Soya Initiative to promote soy cultivation in Europe.

2015 In 2015, the share of imports of responsibly produced soy is 94%.

2020 Decision to import, in addition to soya, feed grains, broken rice, corn gluten and dextrose in a sustainable manner.

2021 The Soy Network Association has 33 members. The import share of feed soy from Europe is 78 per cent.

2022 Soya procurement from Russia is being discontinued.

Thanks to the sourcing of certified and European soya, the greenhouse gas emissions caused by imports are reduced by 85 per cent.

2025 The proportion of feed soya imports from Europe has reached 98 per cent. For the first time, there are no imports from Brazil.

The commitment goes on

The import of responsibly produced soy meal is an opportunity to curtail the negative consequences of soy cultivation. But the members of the Soy Network are not stopping there. They are involved in research projects to develop alternative sources of protein. They are looking for alternative sources in Europe and promoting grassland-based milk and meat production.

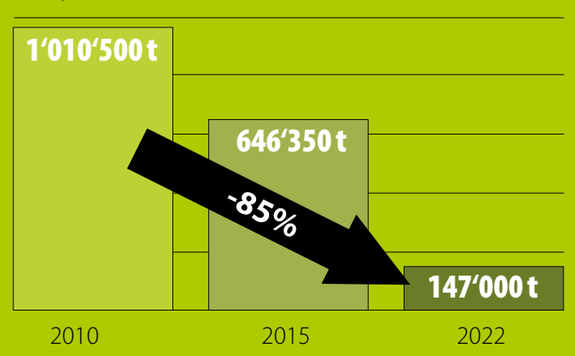
Soy network success factors

- **Cooperation within the industry**
- **Major forces pull together**
- **Ambitious, yet realistic goals**
- **Pragmatic process**
- **No separation of the flow of goods**
- **Use of existing standards**

85% less greenhouse gas emissions

Greenhouse gas emissions from imported soy (in tonnes CO_2eq)

Source: Soy Network



MEMBERS OF SOY NETWORK SWITZERLAND

Switzerland is a role model

The Swiss Soy Network is regarded throughout Europe as a pioneer and a model of best practice for effective, cross-sector cooperation.

96%
Since 2011, the members of the Soy Network have increased the share of responsibly produced soy used as feed from about 40% to 96%.

Proximity
In 2025, 98% of Switzerland's soya imports for animal feed came from European farms.

Footprint
The life cycle assessment of European, certified soya is significantly better than that of conventional soya from overseas.

EU
Other countries, such as The Netherlands, Germany, France, Denmark, Norway or Sweden have created initiatives and objectives similar to Switzerland's.

Outlook

The share of responsibly produced soy is only about 4% worldwide. Demand for sustainable soy for use as feed previously only came from Europe. Switzerland needs to maintain the high level of quality and help further develop international standards. The focal points are:

- Further reduce negative impacts on the environment (water, soil, biodiversity).
- Promote the image of this crop amongst the general public.
- In addition to soy, sustainably source other feedstuffs with potential risks, such as cereals, broken rice, dextrose and corn gluten.

The Swiss Soy Network guarantees the responsible cultivation and sustainable supply of soy for animal feed. The network comprises 33 member organisations, including producers, procurement and milling companies, label and environmental organisations, and retailers. They have decided that, from 2021 onwards, also the sustainable procurement of feed grain, broken rice, maize gluten or dextrose will fall within the network's area of responsibility.

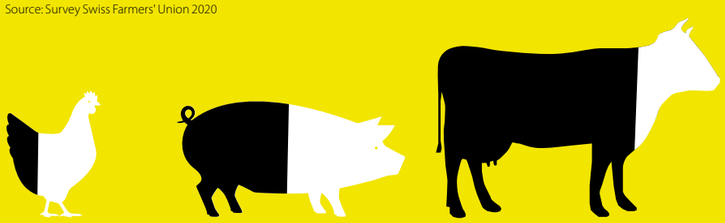
Optimising our livestock feed

86 % domestic

Thanks to coarse fodder such as grass, hay and silage, Switzerland produces 86% of the animal feed it needs itself. Of the almost 8 million tonnes (DM) of fodder fed each year, 1.3 million tonnes are imported. Cows and cattle mainly consume Swiss roughage. Dairy cows are fed 90%, Pigs 56% and poultry 29% of their feed with Swiss fodder.

Feed rations with Swiss origin by animal species

Source: Survey Swiss Farmers' Union 2020



Poultry
29 %

Pork
56 %

Dairy cattle
90 %

Soy-Imports 98 % from Europe

Over 90% of imported animal feed comes from Europe. Feed supplies from South America and Asia are losing importance. As for soy cake, almost 98% now comes from Europe, overtaking Brazil as the leading producer.

Diverse import requirements

In total, more than 260 sources of energy and protein, such as are imported. The main components are, in order of quantity, soy, soft wheat, hay, alfalfa, fodder beet and maize. For sensitive products such as wheat, maize, rapeseed, barley, broken rice, the soy network supports sustainable sourcing.

Avoiding food waste

Swiss livestock consume around 365,000 tonnes of by-products from the food industry every year. Milling by-products, rapeseed cake, sugar beet molasses, dried potatoes, skimmed-milk powder, whey, fats, malt germs and dried grain remain in the nutrient cycle and food waste is reduced.

Three areas for action

A sustainable supply of animal feed for the Swiss egg, milk and meat industry is of the utmost importance. To achieve this, improvements are being made in three different areas.

1 Feed of the future

Insects as a source of protein: In the EU, insects are authorised as animal feed – particularly for aquaculture and poultry. Mealworms and crickets serve as a high-quality substitute for fishmeal or soya.

Methane reduction through specialised feed: Additives such as natural plant extracts are mixed into the feed to reduce methane emissions from dairy cows.

Algae as a sustainable, protein-rich feed: Research institutes such as Agroscope are investigating microalgae as a climate-friendly source of protein and are conducting research into their large-scale introduction into animal feed.

2 Promoting alternative feed

Increasing domestic production

3 Applying sustainability standards to imports

Responsible animal feed imports

Switzerland has unique requirements when it comes to importing animal feed. Swiss agriculture has always avoided genetically modified feed. The addition of hormones and performance enhancers has been banned since 1999, and since 2015 soy has only been imported if it comes from deforestation-free production. From 2021, the industry went a step further. From the 2021 harvest onwards, it only buys feed grain produced without synthetic acceleration of ripening. Since 2022, only broken rice with a sustainability certificate or European cultivation has been used as livestock feed, from 2024 onwards, maize gluten and from 2026 onwards, dextrose will gradually be sourced from European or, in the case of overseas goods, certified cultivation.

Label requirements

Source: Soy Network Switzerland 2021

Label / Marque	GMO free	Certified soy	Siccation-free cereals (wheat, oats, barley)	Certified broken rice	European corn gluten/ dextrose**	Soy renunciation	Palm oil ban
Suisse Garantie	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
IP-SUISSE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓***	✓
Bio Suisse*	✓	✓	✓	✓			
Natura Beef	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Industry standard sustainable milk	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Naturafarm	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Optigal	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Schweizer Ei	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓

* Limitation of fodder imports ** from 1.1.2026 (50%) from 1.1.2027 (100%) *** for pasture fattening, SwissBlackAngus, meadow milk

Fact Sheet Soy Network Switzerland
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www.sojanetzwerk.ch

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