

Zeitschrift: Swiss review : the magazine for the Swiss abroad
Herausgeber: Organisation of the Swiss Abroad
Band: 48 (2021)
Heft: 2

Vorwort: Disquiet in the reservoir of Europe
Autor: Lettau, Marc

Nutzungsbedingungen

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften auf E-Periodica. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen sowie auf Social Media-Kanälen oder Webseiten ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. [Mehr erfahren](#)

Conditions d'utilisation

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. La reproduction d'images dans des publications imprimées ou en ligne ainsi que sur des canaux de médias sociaux ou des sites web n'est autorisée qu'avec l'accord préalable des détenteurs des droits. [En savoir plus](#)

Terms of use

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. Publishing images in print and online publications, as well as on social media channels or websites, is only permitted with the prior consent of the rights holders. [Find out more](#)

Download PDF: 17.04.2026

ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>

Disquiet in the reservoir of Europe

- 5 Mailbag
- 6 Focus
Tainted water – disquiet over Switzerland’s “blue gold”
- 11 Switzerland in figures
The Matterhorn is growing ... and shrinking
- 12 Images
Annemarie Schwarzenbach and her photographic work
- 14 Report
Organic farmers of Grisons are one step ahead
- News from your region
- 17 Literature
Luisa Famos wrote poignantly about the Amerindians – in Romansh
- 18 Interview
On the psychoanalyst’s couch – the Swiss response to Covid-19
- 21 Society
Fundamental rights for primates in Basel?
- 23 Politics
Fresh attempt at e-voting
- 25 SwissCommunity news
- 27 Notes from the Parliament Building
Interview with Federal Councillor Ignazio Cassis
- 31 News



Some are big, take Lake Geneva for example. Others are tiny, nameless pools in the high Alps. All told, Switzerland has over 6,000 different lakes. In addition, our country boasts 65,000 kilometres’ worth of rivers and streams. These waterways are our physical link to the sea – much of the water that trickles or cascades from our mountainsides eventually ends up in the North

Sea, the Mediterranean, the Adriatic, or even the Black Sea. It all has to flow somewhere. This aquatic wealth influences our national psyche. Switzerland likes to call itself the “reservoir of Europe”. And our drinking water is, it goes without saying, perfectly clean. Or is it? Recent indications give cause for concern.

Levels of chlorothalonil in drinking water are over the permitted threshold in many parts of the country. Switzerland’s greatest natural resource is less pure than we thought. Chlorothalonil is a fungicide suspected of having a carcinogenic and mutagenic effect. It was banned in Switzerland at the end of 2019. Many water companies now dilute the contaminated water with clean water. Diluting water to make it drinkable? Not the most palatable thought.

Swiss farmers who used chlorothalonil (legally) to protect their crops before 2020 feel like they are being unjustly criticised. Indeed, it would be wrong to view their role in isolation. Ultimately, “more efficient” farming and its associated fallout owe much to the loss of arable land due to urban encroachment as well as our insatiable consumer appetite for cheap food. What type of agriculture does Switzerland want? This is also a question dominating the contentious debate on two initiatives that will be put to the Swiss electorate on 13 June (see page 6).

Incidentally, hydrologists have given us another reason to be concerned about the future of Swiss water. From a climate change perspective, they say that Switzerland is set to become both wetter and drier. Our winters will be rainier. Snow will melt earlier, glaciers quicker. Consequently, more water will flow down into our valleys over a shorter time instead of being naturally retained at higher altitudes. On the other hand, summer precipitation will decline. Water shortages will become more common, particularly in regions of intensive farming. Droughts will become more frequent too. Meanwhile, water temperatures will continue to rise, endangering fish populations as a result. Lac des Brenets in the canton of Neuchâtel dried out completely in late summer 2018 – possibly a harbinger of Swiss summers to come.

MARC LETTAU, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF