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Farms and farmers down, cattle and poultry up

The number of farms and the area of land used for agriculture continue to decline, according to figures released by the statistics office.

In 2008 there were 60,894 farms in Switzerland, down by around 870, or 1.4 per cent, from 2007. In 1984 there were still nearly 100,000.

The average size of farms is growing, although about one third are less than 10 ha, and one third are between 10 and 20 ha.

While the size of the average farm increased, the total area used for farming fell. Also down was the total number of people employed on farms, as well as the number working in agriculture full time. Farming currently employs about 169,000 people.

The number of organic farms also dropped, going below 6000 for the first time since 2002.

However, the number of cattle increased by about 19,000, while the number of poultry reached a record high of 8.5 million.

from swissinfo

Cosmetic botox booms at expense of mice

Originally, botox (botulinum toxin) was created to treat medical conditions like muscle spasms such as uncontrollable blinking. After it is injected, it blocks the nerve impulses in the area for two to six months.

Doctors later found that the nerve poison could be used to temporarily erase wrinkles. The popularity of botox as a beauty aid has soared ever since.

While the demand for youthfully smooth skin is high, the cost of a botox treatment is relatively low. Prices start at SFr200 and the procedure takes just 15-30 minutes.

In Switzerland, the number of botox treatments is estimated at anywhere between 150,000-400,000 a year.

Crow's feet? Creased forehead? Botox is regularly touted as a solution in the Swiss media, but few reports mention the animal cruelty involved.

For every batch of botulinum toxin created, tests are performed on laboratory mice. The standard test is the LD 50, which determines that the nerve poison is at the correct strength if half the mice die.

It starts with a jab in the belly. Impaired vision, paralysis and respiratory trouble follow; eventually, the mice suffocate. The process takes three to four days. The surviving mice - no longer fit for more testing - are typically killed in gas chambers.

Although there is a European ban on animal testing for cosmetics, botox makers can get around it because the drug was first created to treat medical problems.

from swissinfo

Ageing population is financial time bomb

Switzerland's ageing population will put financial resources under increasing strain as more and more people retire. Officials are recommending that social security financing be urgently reviewed to lessen the impact of demographic change.

Switzerland's baby boom generation - people born between 1946 and 1964 - will be retiring over the next 20 years. But during this time the birth rate is not expected to rise while life expectancy will continue to increase.

This means that the number of people over the age of 80 will be multiplied by four between 1991 and 2050, while the number of those between 65 and 80 will double.

Furthermore, in 2050 there will only be two people working for every one person over 65 - the current ratio is four to one - putting more pressure on the pension system.

Alzheimer's costs a fortune in Switzerland

Professional care for Alzheimer's patients in Switzerland cost about SFr3.5 billion in 2007, according to a new study, and unpaid care provided by relatives was worth an additional SFr2.8 billion. Spouses and children often look after their ill relatives without seeking any compensation.

About 110,000 people suffering from dementia live in Switzerland. That number will likely rise as the population ages. The Swiss Alzheimer's Association expects that there will be as many as 300,000 people with dementia by 2050. That would account for one in eight people over 65 years old, unless great advances are made in the areas of prevention or treatment.

from swissinfo

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HALLOWEEN - Solution

Lantern B was made by a 10 year old boy (clue 1). Lantern A was made by Natalie (clue 2). Justin made lantern C (3 and above), so Tim is the 10 year old boy and his lantern is at B (1,5 and above). By elimination, Melissa's lantern is D and the one made by the 12 year old is C (4 and above). Natalie isn't 13 (2), so 11. By elimination, Melissa is 13.