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Word from the Editor

Dear Readers

Once again I pick up the Editor's pen to give Tanja a well-deserved break to have a holiday and extra time to prepare for the Swiss Market in May. Things have been busy over the last few months to prepare for the hand-over to the new Hamilton Helvetia Team which is putting a lot of forethought into their new job. Our Helvetia stint is coming to an end which is bitter sweet: it will be great to have a bit more time on our hands but it's also the end of an era and our own enjoyable Helvetia team. Anyway - there is one more issue to go and until then it's still all hands to the pump!

This Helvetia issue is of great interest to me. It deals with the natural resources of water and land, and the need to manage these sustainably. The great water exhibition of the Gotthard cantons at the Milan World Expo last year showed the importance of Switzerland's role in managing and preserving the sources of Europe's great water supplies.

Managing the land is equally important. Healthy soils and sustainable farming practices support healthy people, animals and nature. They also deliver good crops and profits. Working with the land is genuinely good for your health – Victoria Egli tells us in her article – even on miniature plots in city environments.

Nonetheless farmers everywhere are facing great challenges due to volatile markets – and particularly so here in New Zealand with falling milk prices. No doubt many of our Swiss farming members around the country are all too familiar with these challenges and are thinking deeply about the future.

Trudi Fill's article about farming in Switzerland – based on the case study of her own brother and his godson – is a great eye-opener on the changing landscape of farming in Switzerland. It is a story about creativity, innovation and an unusual partnership. It is also an example of the need for constant adaptation to changing regulations and markets. Farming is facing difficult times in Switzerland as well – although in different ways – but money can still be made by diversifying and diligent planning. And yes: Swiss farmers have one big advantage: they are still eligible for government support, although the criteria are becoming increasingly tougher.

On a lighter side, I hope you are preparing for the democratic event of the New Zealand year (at least until local body elections) – choosing our new flag. What will it be?

Hoping that many of you will make it to the AGM in Auckland on Queen's Birthday weekend and on behalf of the Auckland Helvetia Team,

Sisile

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