

Political orientation and attitudes about agricultural reforms around sustainability

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ABSTRACT

Food system reforms need to respond to many urgent issues and align with needs and values of the public. A clear understanding of how priorities of voters with different political orientations vary will likely be critical to designing future policies. This study therefore examined how left-right political orientation relates to evaluations of multiple food system issues, as well as ratings on trust/responsibility of key stakeholders. We analyzed five open datasets from the Swiss public between 2021 and 2024 (total $N = 9385$): two samples (one monolingual, one multilingual) from surveys on agricultural policy, and three samples from official polls following agricultural popular initiatives. Results suggest that among people with left orientation, several environmental goals were prioritized. People on the political right valued increasing domestic food production more strongly and showed stronger commitments to meat consumption. They were also less willing to compromise on farmers' incomes and low food prices, relative to ecological goals. Crucially, even though concerns about farmed animal welfare were more elevated on the political left, these concerns were also relatively high on the right, suggesting that this is a less divisive issue than environmentalism. Moreover, people on the left and right did not differ in how important food's taste, price, and healthiness was to them. These findings may help policymakers and advocates overcome political divides, for example by framing policies around these common concerns across the political spectrum. We discuss research ideas for investigating temporal dynamics between constructs and recommend similar studies in other countries.

1. Introduction

Food system reform is a challenging issue for governments and international institutions. How food is produced and consumed has multifaceted implications for the economy, human well-being, planetary health, and non-human species. Among those implications is the food sector's role in driving ecological crises. At the same time, with rising geopolitical unrest in many parts of the world, ensuring a safe supply of food has become a growing priority for many countries, often leading to calls for higher national self-sufficiency. A further central issue relates to social justice for those involved in food production (e.g., farmers & factory workers) and consumers.

Industrial animal agriculture negatively affects most of these issues. While being dense in some desirable nutrients, animal products are usually very demanding on resources (land, fresh water, feed), which can undermine food security (Shepon et al., 2018). Furthermore,

plant-based alternatives tend to have smaller environmental impacts than animal products and a higher consumption of these foods would likely lower the rate of non-communicable diseases (Godfray et al., 2018; Willett et al., 2019). Modern livestock management systems also rely on harmful practices to animals (Nordquist et al., 2017).

However, several factors may hinder the adoption of more sustainable, plant-based food system policies. One of them concerns polarized public opinion. A growing research literature indicates that individual differences in personal values and political affiliations predict support for various food system issues. At the broadest level, these differences can be summarized as variation in political orientation from left to right.

The contribution of this study is to explore how political orientation affects views on the food system in Switzerland. By using five different datasets, we aim to answer the research question: How do people with left-leaning versus right-leaning views differ in what they consider important about food issues? Understanding these differences can help

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improve how food system changes are designed and communicated. It might also help to find common areas where popular and successful policies can be created.

Switzerland is an interesting choice for such a study because it shares Western (European) culture, like most countries where relevant prior research was conducted. Moreover, the government has announced intentions to reform the food system. Societal cleavages should represent substantial barriers to food system change in Switzerland because its political system relies heavily on consensus decision-making. It enables citizens to vote several times a year on popular initiatives, with some concerning agricultural reforms (Huber and Finger, 2019).

1.1. Left-right political orientation

In research and public discourse, broad individual differences in political attitudes are commonly represented on the left-right spectrum. This has the advantage of efficiently providing information about political self-identification and about underlying psychological dispositions, such as motivations and values. How exactly left-right political orientation relates to variation in psychological dispositions is moderated by several factors, including context (for a review, Federico and Malka, 2023). Note therefore that the following sections refer to psychological differences found between left- and right-leaning individuals within modern Western democracies, like Switzerland. Relatedly, note that the economic and social-cultural dimensions of political ideology tend to correlate positively in these contexts (but not in non-Western regions; Malka et al., 2019).

1.2. Political orientation relates to food and agricultural policies

1.2.1. Priorities of the left

Some food system issues currently appear to be more prioritized among people on the political left versus right. Some relate to environmental issues, particularly around climate change. Meta-analytic studies estimate that the strength of beliefs in and concerns about climate change is negatively related to conservative political preferences (Hornsey et al., 2016; Stanley and Wilson, 2019). A recent longitudinal study corroborates this finding by showing that increases in social dominance orientation (SDO) and right-wing authoritarianism (RWA), two dimensions that underlie conservative ideology, predicted subsequent decreases in climate change beliefs (Milfont et al., 2025). Individuals who endorse RWA submit more readily to established authorities, conform to traditional cultural norms, and support coercive actions against those deviating from these norms (Altemeyer, 1998). People scoring high on SDO tend to support hierarchical/unequal relations between social groups (Pratto et al., 1994). These ideological attitudes are more prevalent among right-orientated individuals and likely motivate hesitancy or opposition when it comes to environmental protection. Given that actions to help the environment may demand significant modifications to societal norms and traditions (e.g., regarding food & mobility), those high on RWA should evaluate them more critically. Those high on SDO may be prompted to believe in human domination over nature, which allows them to extend their characteristic preference for hierarchical relations to non-human entities. This view suggests that humans have the right to exploit the environment because it exclusively exists for their personal benefit (Milfont et al., 2013). On the other end, low SDO promotes a desire for hierarchy-attenuating actions, which is more associated with left orientation (Pratto et al., 1994). People on the left may be more likely to perceive environmental protection as an end on its own due to nature's inherent value to them (Milfont et al., 2013). This aligns with research implying that left orientation is linked to having broader circles of moral consideration (i.e., universalism), which consequently encompasses non-human entities more often. People on the right tend to prefer a narrower moral circle (i.e., parochialism) and prioritize their in-group (e.g., their family & nation; Waytz et al., 2019). However, note that

prior research has also connected conservative (sub-)groups with specific concerns for the natural environment (Bryant and Farrell, 2024; Peifer et al., 2016). For instance, Billet et al. (2024) found that U.S. conservatives and liberals equally emphasized humanity's dependence on nature and the value of nature's beauty as motives for environmental protection.

People on the political left are also more likely to be concerned about issues related to farmed animal welfare. Public opinion surveys from several Western countries point to a moderate association between indicators of political ideology and concerns for the treatment of farmed animals (Deemer and Lobao, 2011; Hårstad, 2025; Hoffarth et al., 2019; Kupsala et al., 2015). Like with environmentalism, RWA and SDO have been proposed to explain this link. Dhont and Hodson (2014) found that higher scores on RWA and SDO predict more acceptance of exploitative actions towards animals, perhaps because of factors such as the threats of vegetarian dietary habits to traditional order and general beliefs about human supremacy over animals. Such supremacy beliefs relate to the concept of speciesism, which is about the assignment of different moral worth based on species membership (Caviola et al., 2019). People on the political left are usually lower in speciesism than people on the political right (Hopwood et al., 2025).

1.2.2. Priorities of the right

Numerous studies found that meat consumption is more valued among people on the right (e.g., Dhont and Hodson, 2014; Grünhage and Reuter, 2021; Hoffarth et al., 2019; Milfont et al., 2021). Since concerns for the environment and animals are two main motivations of animal product reduction (Hopwood et al., 2020), the link between political orientation and eating meat is likely related to these underlying motivations. However, there may be other reasons as well. Meat is a central feature of traditional dishes in many cultures, and consuming meat is commonly associated with power. Thus, the idea of transitioning away from meat-based diet may be symbolically threatening (Dhont and Hodson, 2014). Meat reduction may also be seen as a threat to personal freedom if measures are perceived as paternalizing consumer choices. This is expected to affect people on the political right more heavily. More paternalistic policies (e.g., regulations & taxes) tend to clash with political preferences of the (economic) right. Moreover, it was found that individuals engaging more in the targeted behavior were more opposed to paternalistic policies (Lassen and Mahler, 2023), and right-leaning individuals tend to eat meat more frequently (e.g., Dhont and Hodson, 2014; Grünhage and Reuter, 2021).

Economic factors may also drive the connection between meat consumption and conservative political values. A transition from animal toward more plant-based food sources has the potential to disrupt the local/national economy (Hoffarth et al. 2019). That being said, Stanley (2022) found that the effect of perceived economic threats was limited, compared to symbolic threats.

Finally, endorsing values associated with the political right is related to stronger beliefs that eating meat is natural, necessary to stay healthy, a normal thing to do, and a nice experience (Hopwood and Bleidorn, 2019). An interesting consequence of this attachment to meat could be that people on the right may have on average a stronger incentive to discount the negative effects of meat, for example regarding its environmental impacts (Graça et al., 2016).

Another food system goal that may receive more support among people on the right is increasing domestic food production. A survey study conducted in Switzerland reported a correlation between right political orientation and support for protecting the domestic agriculture sector from imports (Rudolph et al., 2022). Research into the psychological foundations of right-wing ideology can help explain this association. Jedinger and Burger (2020) found that RWA predicted protectionist economic attitudes, perhaps because international trade can provoke uncertainty and signify threats to local culture via foreign influences. Johnston (2013) showed that high needs for security and certainty relate to support for restricting imports. In summary,

especially regarding sectors central for national safety like food production, right-leaning individuals might want to safeguard economic independence because they value security (Caprara et al., 2017). They may also see domestic agriculture as supporting producers that are socially proximal, and thus as a way to preserve national identity and traditions.

1.2.3. Priorities with unclear links to political orientation

Some themes are likely to have a complex relationship because they may attract motivations that are differently valued across the political spectrum. For example, a lifestyle segmentation study by Witzling and Shaw (2019) suggested that left-leaning people are more likely to perceive environmental benefits from purchasing local foods, whereas conservative people emphasize other reasons. Regarding social standards, stronger social equality values (i.e., low SDO) associated with the left were found to predict a preference for fair trade products (Gohary et al., 2023). This pattern may be attenuated, however, if those benefiting from stricter standards belong to the in-group of more right-oriented consumers, such as local farmers. Another theme concerns organically produced food and products that are free from additives. Such descriptions should resonate with consumers who hold a general preference for purity and naturalness. These values have been associated with right orientation (Kivikangas et al., 2021; Tiganis et al., 2023). On the other hand, these labels may be associated with ecological production methods and thus appeal to more left-oriented consumers (Tiganis et al., 2023). Importantly, some aspects of food may also be unrelated to differences in political views, at least if not directly weighed against other aspects. The personal importance of foods' taste, healthiness, and price likely fall under this category (Tiganis et al., 2023).

1.3. Contribution of this study

The existing literature suggests that political orientation plays a significant role in food system attitudes. This is important because reforms that cater only to the priorities of one side might fail to generate sufficient public support. Understanding how political orientations relate to a variety of food system issues may help craft policies that are most likely to be supported across the political spectrum. The present study aims to extend this line of research in several ways.

1.3.1. Comparing the strength of polarization

Most previous studies focused on one specific food policy issue (although, see Tiganis et al., 2023). Consequently, differences in the extent to which political orientation is associated with various issues have rarely been examined and discussed. For instance, it is not clear whether environmentalism or animal welfare is a more divisive issue. In this study, a range of food policy issues were tested and compared to each other, with the most important being farmed animal welfare, environmentalism, meat consumption, domestic food production, social aspects, and food prices.

1.3.2. Narrowing down place and time

To compare polarization of food policy issues, one could attempt to integrate results from prior studies, yet variation in research methods may complicate comparisons. In addition, studies were often conducted in different countries and at different times, which could confound conclusions. As an example, a meta-analysis by Czarnek et al. (2025) indicated that the political polarization of climate change has increased over the course of the last 30 years and appears to be more substantial in more affluent countries. This heterogeneity suggests that apart from bottom-up effects (political dispositions incline attitudes towards climate change), interacting top-down effects also occur (e.g., whether discourses from political parties, corporations, & the media contribute to make climate change a divisive/partisan issue; cf. Hornsey and Lewandowsky, 2022). The present project allows for a more direct comparison between multiple issues by focusing on Switzerland

between 2021 and 2024.

1.3.3. Exploring multiple levels

Our examination of how political orientation is associated with attitudes on food system issues focused on both consumer preferences and food policy opinions. Most individuals are consumers and voters; thus, it is appropriate to test both levels.

On the first level, the consumer level, we examined the personal importance of ten shopping criteria and three food values pertaining to animal welfare, environmental protection, and meat consumption. The data also allowed us to test whether right political orientation predicts a tendency to judge meat as more environmentally friendly than plant-based foods (which may be a consequence of a stronger commitment to meat).

At the second level, regarding political behavior and opinions, we examined how the importance of eight agricultural policy goals is associated with political orientation. Moreover, we investigated whether right orientation is linked to lower acceptance of sustainability measures that target meat/dairy products, compared to plant-based foods. Going beyond abstract policy preferences, the present project further linked political orientation to individual voting behavior across three recent federal votes on agricultural policies. This was done by drawing data from the official post-vote surveys of the initiative "For clean drinking water and healthy food" from 2021, the "Factory Farming Initiative" from 2022, and the "Biodiversity Initiative" from 2024. These initiatives demanded different types of reforms and emphasized slightly different policy goals (yet they were all rejected by roughly 60 % of voters). Overall, whereas the factory farming initiative had a clear focus on animal welfare (i.e., abolishing factory farming via stricter welfare requirements), the other two initiatives were more concerned with environmental protection (the drinking water initiative demanded a stop of direct state subsidies for farms which use pesticides, apply antibiotics prophylactically, and require externally grown feed for their livestock; the biodiversity initiative demanded more areas and more financial resources for the conservation and promotion of biodiversity). We also explored how political orientation was associated with opinions about common campaign arguments.

In addition, on a third, more overarching level, we looked at how some key stakeholders within the food system (e.g., farmers, advocacy organizations, the state) are perceived by individuals across the political spectrum. Fig. 1 provides an overview of the variables examined in this project.

1.3.4. Comparisons with demographic predictors

Previous studies have found that gender, age, and education independently predict attitudes on environmentalism (e.g., Hornsey et al., 2016), animal welfare (e.g., Deemer and Lobao, 2011; Kupsala et al., 2015), and economic protectionism (e.g. Jedinger and Burger, 2020). These variables also often correlate with meat consumption (e.g. Pfeiler and Egloff, 2018). A secondary goal of this study was to compare the importance of political orientation with these demographic variables.

2. Methods

We preregistered our data analytic approach and hypotheses on the Open Science Framework (OSF). It should be noted that a few papers have already been published with two of the datasets used in this study (Ammann et al., 2023b; Ammann et al., 2025a; El Benni et al., 2024, 2025; Irek et al., 2025). However, they differ conceptually and analytically from this project in that they simultaneously tested a wide range of predictor variables (with one of them being political orientation) against a narrower set of outcome measures. In the present project the interest is the exact opposite, with a focus on comparing associations across outcomes. Furthermore, this study approached several variables from a different angle due to its focus on political orientation. The preregistration lays out how previous studies overlap.

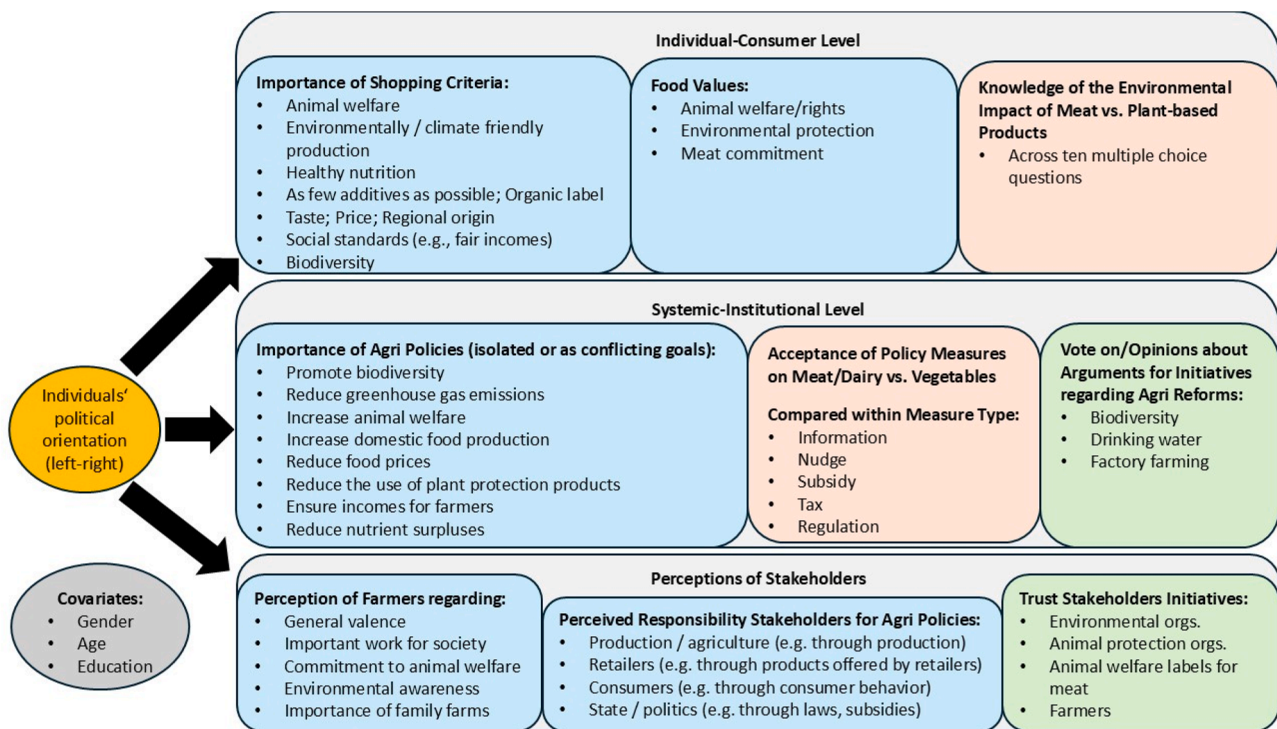


Fig. 1. Study overview, including information on study variables and datasets.

Note. In blue = from dataset Ammann et al. (2023a); In red = from dataset Arbenz et al. (2024); In green = from datasets of swissvotes.ch.

2.1. Data procurement

This project relied on two public data sources: survey data from Agroscope, the Swiss competence center for agricultural research, and swissvotes.ch, the database on Swiss popular votes. From Agroscope, we used two datasets. The first one (Ammann et al., 2023a) is based on an online survey conducted in October 2022. Individuals from the German-, French-, and Italian-speaking parts of Switzerland were recruited in equal parts. Further information about the recruitment can be found in Ammann et al. (2023b). The second sample (Arbenz et al., 2024) is based on an online survey from February 2023, where only German-speaking individuals were recruited (for more details, Ammann et al., 2025a). Both data collections were conducted together with professional panel providers. Quotas for gender and age were implemented (as well as for language region in the first survey). Steps to improve data quality were taken by removing participants with an incomplete questionnaire or a response time that was below half of the median response time of the sample. The sample that covered different language regions included 1542 participants (51.5 % women, 48.5 % men), with an average age of 44.59 years ($SD = 15.14$). The German-speaking sample included 453 participants (53.2 % women, 46.8 % men), with an average age of 47.58 years ($SD = 15.50$). The supplementary materials on OSF provide a table with more detailed sample characteristics.

From the platform swissvotes.ch, we downloaded the post-vote survey data of the three initiatives: drinking water (gfs.bern, 2021), factory farming (gfs.bern, 2022), and biodiversity (gfs.bern, 2024). The design of these surveys, as well as the data collection, was managed by the private research institute gfs.bern. Each dataset is based on a random sample of around 3000 eligible voters residing in Switzerland, drawn from the sample register of the Federal Statistical Office (FSO). Participation is voluntary and possible even if one did not vote on one or any proposal. We excluded all individuals from our study who did not specify their left-right political orientation, since this was the main variable in each analysis. This means that the remaining samples had the following characteristics: $N_{\text{drinking water}} = 2656$ (49.5 % women, $M_{\text{age}} =$

51.89, $SD_{\text{age}} = 17.43$), $N_{\text{factory farming}} = 1855$ (47.1 % women, $M_{\text{age}} = 52.25$, $SD_{\text{age}} = 17.79$), $N_{\text{biodiversity}} = 2879$ (50.1 % women, $M_{\text{age}} = 52.11$, $SD_{\text{age}} = 17.66$). More details are provided in the supplementary materials.

2.2. Measures

Tables with detailed descriptive statistics for all variables are provided in the supplementary materials.

2.2.1. Predictor variables

Political orientation. In both datasets from Agroscope, political orientation was assessed with a slider scale ranging from 0 (“very left”) to 100 (“very right”), and 50 labeled as “center”. In the larger sample, the mean was 52.23 ($SD = 21.83$), whereas in the smaller sample, the mean was 49.77 ($SD = 20.25$). Political orientation in the post-vote surveys was always measured on a scale from 0 (“very left”) to 10 (“very right”), with $M_{\text{drinking water}} = 5.03$ ($SD = 2.09$), $M_{\text{factory farming}} = 5.21$ ($SD = 2.06$), and $M_{\text{biodiversity}} = 5.19$ ($SD = 2.22$).

Gender. Due to the very small number of individuals identifying as non-binary, we only looked at differences between men and women. In the Agroscope data, there were no non-binary or missing responses regarding gender. In the swissvotes data, for each initiative <1 % belonged to those categories. These cases were excluded for the analyses including gender.

Age. We treated age as continuous variable, ranging from 18 to 85 years. There were no missing values on this variable.

Education. Respondents reported on their highest completed education by choosing among predefined options (but in the swissvotes survey an “other” option was also provided). We treated education as a continuous measure. In the Agroscope data, education had seven levels without missing responses. In the swissvotes data, education had ten levels. Those with “other” and missing responses were excluded for the analyses including education, which concerned around 3–4 % of participants within each initiative.

2.2.2. Variables on individual-consumer level

Shopping Criteria. To measure the importance of ten criteria for grocery shopping (see Fig. 1), Ammann et al. (2023a) instructed the participants in the following way: “Now follow a few questions about your shopping behavior. How important are the following aspects to you when buying food?” Provided was a seven-point response scale from 1 (“not at all important”) to 7 (“very important”).

Food Values. Ammann et al. (2023a) also assessed food values pertaining to animal welfare/rights and environmental protection from the Food Choice Questionnaire (Lindeman and Väänänen, 2000). Participants read the statement “It is important that the food I consume in a day is ...”, followed by five items that they rated on a scale ranging from 1 (“not at all important”) to 4 (“very important”). Two items covered animal welfare/right (e.g., “produced in a way that does not cause pain to animals”). Three items covered environmental protection (e.g., “were produced in an environmentally friendly way”). We computed mean scores for both food values and estimated internal consistencies (environmental protection, Cronbach’s $\alpha = 0.82$ / McDonald’s $\omega_t = 0.82$; animal welfare/rights $r_{items} = 0.72$). Meat commitment was assessed using seven items by Piazza et al. (2015), which were rated on a scale from 1 (“do not agree at all”) to 7 (“totally agree”). Items were averaged, with $\alpha = 0.92$ and $\omega_t = 0.93$.

Knowledge of the Environmental Impact of Food. Arbenz et al. (2024) incorporated the Food Sustainability Knowledge Questionnaire (FSKQ), developed by Hartmann et al. (2021). This questionnaire includes 16 multiple choice questions where respondents are required to identify the most environmentally friendly option. Questions were constructed such that there is always one option with the lowest relative environmental impact (determined via life cycle assessments). Hence it is possible to add up correct answers to determine individuals’ overall knowledge score. The FSKQ covers various topics, such as production methods, different product groups, and seasonality. However, we were only interested in a subset of questions, specifically, ten items in which meat products were placed against plant-based foods. Options involving meat products/consumption were never the most environmentally friendly options. Each question also included a “do not know” answer, thus participants could choose this option instead of guessing. Since we were interested in people’s tendency to perceive meat as particularly sustainable, we summed up the number of questions for which each respondent selected a response option in favor of meat. This “pro meat score” was low on average, with $M = 2.32$ and $SD = 1.9$. For an overview of the questions and our scoring, please see the supplementary materials.

2.2.3. Variables on systemic-institutional level

Single Agricultural Policy Goals. Ammann et al. (2023a) asked participants to rate the importance of eight agricultural policy goals for Switzerland on a scale from 1 (“not at all important”) to 7 (“very important”). See Fig. 1 for a list of these goals.

Conflicting Agricultural Policy Goals. After rating goals in isolation, Ammann et al. (2023a) also asked participants to indicate the relative importance of these same goals if they conflict with another. The instructions read: “Many agricultural policy goals are in direct conflict with other goals. In this part of the questionnaire, you are asked to weigh two given goals that are in direct conflict with each other. Please note that we are limiting ourselves here to the situation in Switzerland. Imports and exports are not taken into account. Furthermore, we are dealing with general correlations that do not necessarily apply in individual cases. Please click in the bar to submit your answer.” Participants were able to use a slider scale (0 = goal A, 50 = no preference, 100 = goal B) to indicate which of the two conflicting goals was more important to them. We analyzed all 16 pairs that were included in the dataset (note that not all goals were contrasted with each other). An overview of the items is provided in the supplementary materials.

Acceptance of Policy Measures. Arbenz et al. (2024) assessed the acceptance of 19 policy measures for sustainable consumption. The items were inspired by Hagmann et al. (2018). The following

instructions were provided: “For the following strategies, please indicate how much you support them from 1 (I do not think it is good at all) to 7 (I think it is very good)”. We focused only on 15 items that covered measures targeting either meat, dairy, or vegetables (leaving out measures that were non-specific). Importantly, each measure belonged to one of five policy categories, which varied in intrusiveness (in increasing order: information, nudge, subsidy, tax, and restrictive measures). Within these categories there was always one measure per product type. This allowed us to compare acceptance ratings across product types while keeping the measures’ intrusiveness at a compatible level.

Vote on Initiatives. The post-vote surveys included questions on how respondents voted on the popular initiative. They could answer with the options “yes” (as initiative accepted), “no” (rejected), “inserted blank / not voted on this proposal”, or “no answer”. In the supplementary materials we report how often each answer was registered for every initiative. We only considered respondents who selected yes or no in our analysis of voting behavior (which made up 65–79 % of the samples). Within this reduced sample, the percentage of people rejecting the initiatives was 55–68 %, which is close to the official results (all ~60 %).

Opinion on Initiative Arguments. Opinions on arguments from the three initiatives were assessed on a scale ranging from 1 (“fully agree”) to 4 (“do not agree at all”), but there was also an option for “do not know / no answer” (which we treat as missing). We reversed the coding of all items to indicate stronger agreement with higher scores. Items covered pro and counter arguments (three of each per initiative, except for the factory farming initiative, where an additional set of six arguments was included; see supplementary materials for items). We analyzed all valid responses, including those from individuals who did not answer with yes or no on the voting item.

2.2.4. Variables on perception of stakeholders

Perception of Farmers. Ammann et al. (2023a) included five items measuring perceptions about farmers. The instructions read: “For the following statements, please indicate how much you agree with each of them.” Response option went from 1 (“do not agree at all”) to 7 (“strongly agree”). Since Ammann et al. (2023b) already reports the correlation between political orientation and the aggregate score, and we were interested in taking a deeper look, we ran our analysis with each individual item (see Fig. 1 for the focus of each item & the supplementary materials for the exact phrasing).

Responsibility of Stakeholders. The perceived responsibility of stakeholders for agricultural policies was assessed by Ammann et al. (2023a).¹ Instructions read: “When it comes to achieving agricultural policy goals, who do you see as having the greatest responsibility? Who do you think must ensure that the goals are achieved?” Four types of stakeholders were listed (see Fig. 1) and rated on a scale from 1 (“no responsibility at all”) to 7 (“very much responsibility”).

Trust in Stakeholders of Initiatives. The post-vote surveys contained several questions about personal trust in stakeholders that were central throughout the campaigns. We selected stakeholders that were specifically relevant for the three agricultural initiatives (those that are always involved were not examined, e.g., the federal government or parliament). For each initiative, trust in farmers was assessed. In addition, the drinking water and biodiversity initiatives included environmental protection organizations, the biodiversity and factory farming initiatives included animal protection organizations, and the factory farming initiative additionally included trust in animal welfare labels for meat. Trust was assessed with the following instructions: “Below you can see various institutions. Please indicate on a scale from 0 (no trust) to 10 (complete trust) how much you trust each one.” Again,

¹ The other Agroscope survey measured stakeholders’ responsibility for sustainable consumption. Since responsibility for agricultural policies is conceptually broader and was also assessed in a larger sample, we focused on data from Ammann et al. (2023a).

respondents had the option “do not know / no answer”, which we treated as missing.

2.3. Statistical analysis

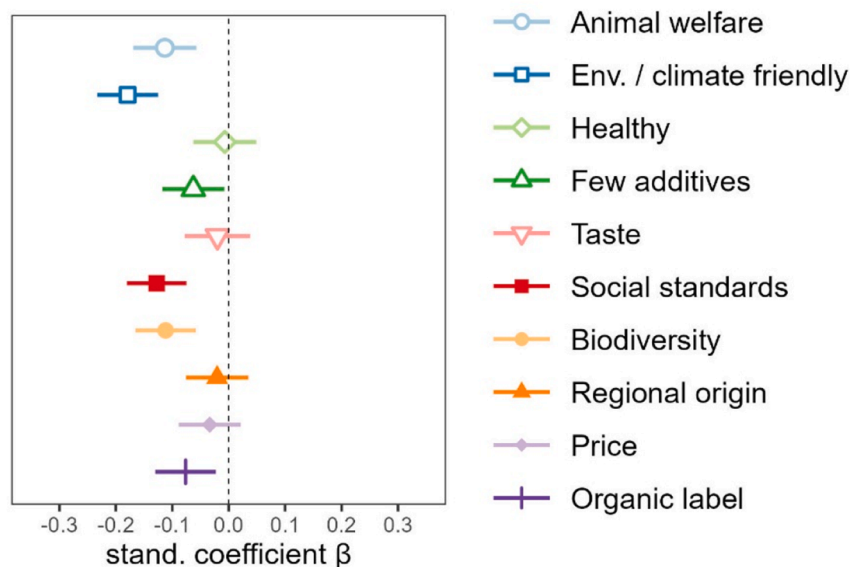
All analyses were conducted in RStudio (Posit team, 2025; R version 4.4.3). Since the primary goal of this project was to compare associations across different measures, we focused on standardized effect sizes. Our secondary goal was to check whether/to what extent political orientation predicted our outcomes beyond gender, age, and education level. Based on these objectives, hierarchical multiple linear regression was applied with continuous outcome variables (using the R packages *lm* & *jtools*). That is, we first ran simple linear regression analyses with political orientation as the only predictor. Next, we added all covariates to our models (gender, age, & education). In the one case where the dependent variable was binary (voting decisions), hierarchical logistic regression was used (with R package *glm*), and average marginal effect sizes were estimated with *margins*.

To test whether product type (meat/dairy vs. vegetables) interacts

with individuals' political orientation to predict acceptance of policy measures, we applied a regression-based moderation analysis that suits data where the focal predictor is measured within-subject (in our case, product type) and the moderator constitutes a between-subject variable (political orientation). Therefore, moderation analysis for two-instance repeated measures designs was used (Montoya, 2019). Models were tested which either compared acceptance of meat versus vegetable, or dairy versus vegetable policy measures. We assessed whether political orientation had a statistically significant effect on these two contrasts, that is, whether an increase in right orientation was associated with a larger *difference* in policy measure acceptance. Like with other analytical approaches, we also added demographic covariates to the models as robustness check. The package *mod2rm* (Forstmann, 2022) was used.

Note that tables with detailed model outputs (e.g., *p* values) are provided in the supplementary materials.

Shopping Criteria



Food Values

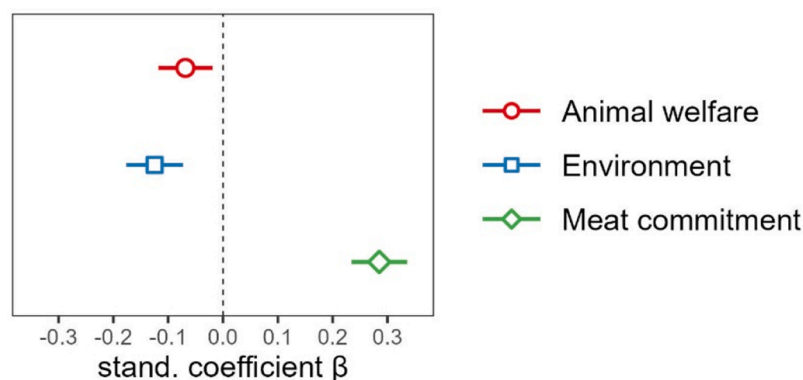


Fig. 2. Association between political orientation and importance of shopping criteria/food values.

Note. Depicted are standardized regression coefficients (β) of political orientation from simple linear regression models and corresponding 95 % confidence intervals (from robust HC3 standard errors). Positive coefficients indicate greater importance with more right political orientation.

3. Results

3.1. Individual-consumer level

Fig. 2 summarizes how political orientation was associated with the personal importance of shopping criteria and food values (with larger, multilingual sample). Several criteria were prioritized among the left, with the strongest effect found for environmentally/climate friendly production, followed by social standards, biodiversity, and animal welfare. Organic quality and few additives were very weakly associated with left orientation. Political orientation had no significant association with the remaining criteria (health, taste, price, & regional origins). Regarding food values, left orientation was again associated with prioritizing environmental protection and animal welfare. Stronger meat commitment was linked to being more right orientated. Looking at the regression line plots for shopping criteria and food values (in supplementary materials), we found that people on the right tended to assign more importance to animal welfare than to environmentalism, whereas people on the left weighted both issues more equally.

Concerning whether political orientation is associated with selecting meat consumption as the more sustainable option (with smaller, monolingual sample), we found that the “pro meat score” was significantly associated with right political orientation ($\beta = 0.18, p < .001, 95\% \text{ CI } [.08, 0.28]$).

3.2. Systemic-institutional level

We first present results on support for isolated agricultural policy goals in Fig. 3 (with larger, multilingual sample). All goals pertaining to some kind of environmental protection were significantly associated with left political orientation, with the goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) having the strongest effect. Protecting animal welfare was also more valued on the political left. Increasing domestic food production was the only policy goal that was significantly more important on the right. Regression line plots (in supplementary materials) showed that the most important goals for people on the right pertained to farmers' income, domestic production, and animal welfare. On the left, it was most notable that domestic production and food prices were perceived as the least important goals.

Participants were also asked to indicate their relative support for policy goals if two of them conflict with each other. Fig. 4 depicts the corresponding results. Note that plots are grouped based on which “goal B” was used (either increasing domestic production, reducing food prices, or ensuring adequate income for farmers). Positive coefficients

suggest that people on the right were more likely to assign a bigger relative weight to goal B than people on the left. This was the case in all but one comparison. Significant associations were observed where goal A concerned an ecological goal or animal welfare. Closer inspections of regression line plots (Fig. 5) indicated that people on the right tended to value domestic production, food prices, and farmers' incomes more strongly than each environmental goal (i.e., a slider score above 50). However, with animal welfare as goal A, regression lines did not move above 50 for those on the right, which indicates that they perceived animal welfare and each goal B as (almost) equally important.

The next question was whether more right-leaning individuals were less accepting of policy measures promoting sustainable consumption if those target animal products, compared to vegetables (with smaller, monolingual sample). In statistical terms, we tested whether political orientation moderates the effect of product type (meat or dairy vs. vegetables) on acceptance. Fig. 6 presents the moderation coefficient of political orientation for all ten comparisons (2 animal products x 5 policy types). Positive effects signify that with more right orientation, the difference in acceptance of animal product compared to vegetable measures increases, such that animal product measures were perceived as increasingly less desirable.

Within measures that were purely informational and nudge-based, we indeed found that being more right oriented was associated with a greater difference. With tax-based and regulatory measures, on the other hand, political orientation did not significantly influence how large the difference was between animal product and vegetable measures. The results with subsidy-based measures were mixed, as there was a significant effect of political orientation with meat, but not dairy. Hence, right-leaning individuals tended to report a larger difference between meat and vegetable measures, relative to people on the left. It must be noted that across all measure types, people on the left were never found to be significantly more accepting of the animal (vs. vegetable) product measures. Instead, they either accepted animal and vegetable measures to an equal extent or vegetable measures more—but sometimes, as described above, with a smaller difference compared to people on the right (supplementary materials for plots).

Moving on to the post-vote survey data of the three federal initiatives, we found that right orientation was significantly associated with the probability of rejecting each initiative (Fig. 7). However, the average marginal effect was larger for the two more environmentally focused initiatives, compared to the initiative against factory farming.

In terms of opinions on campaign arguments, we provide a summary of the results in the main text and refer to the supplementary materials for details. Overall, the results match the direction of voting behavior:

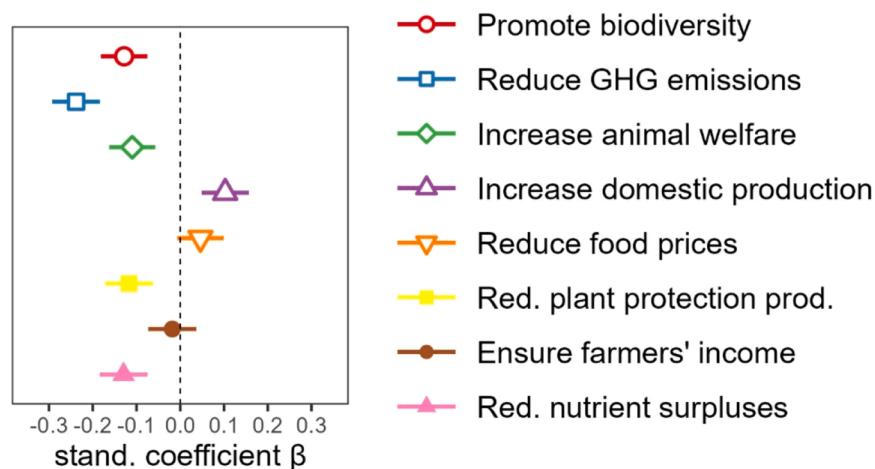
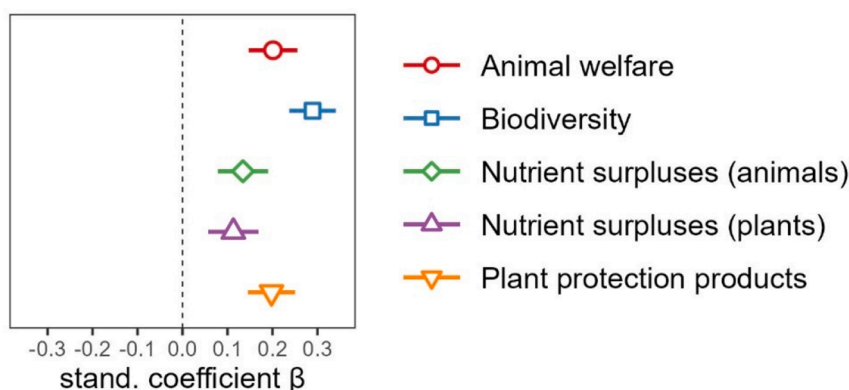


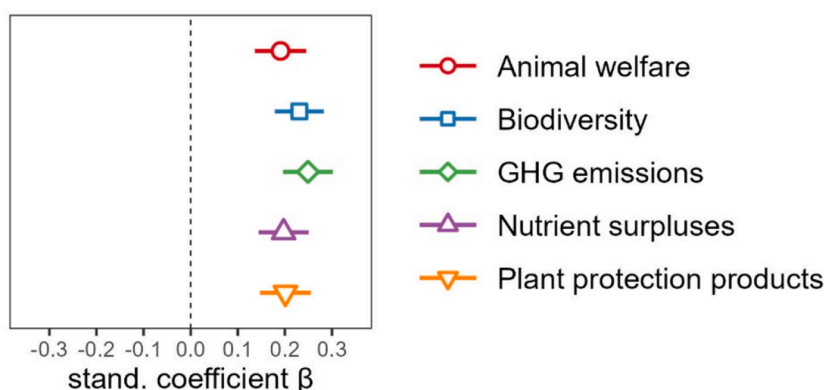
Fig. 3. Association between political orientation and support for isolated policy goals.

Note. Standardized regression coefficients (β) of political orientation from simple linear regression models and corresponding 95 % CIs (from robust HC3 SEs). Positive coefficients indicate greater support with more right political orientation.

Listed goals (A) vs. domestic food production (B)



Listed goals (A) vs. food prices (B)



Listed goals (A) vs. farmers' income (B)

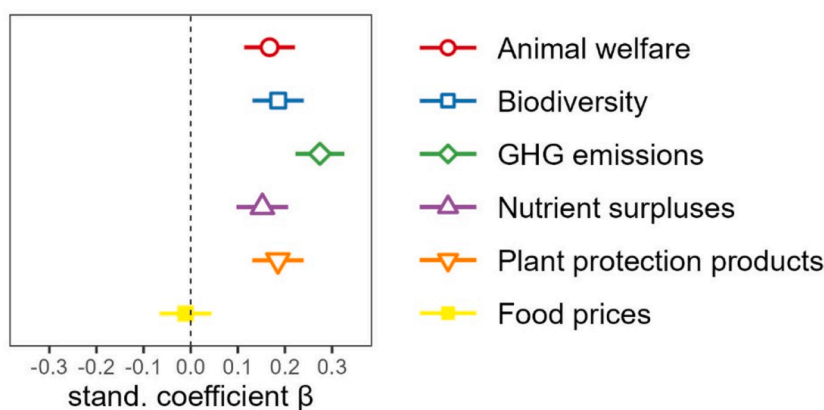


Fig. 4. Association between political orientation and support for conflicting policy goals.

Note. Standardized regression coefficients (β) of political orientation from simple linear regression models and corresponding 95 % CIs (from robust HC3 SEs). Positive coefficients indicate increasing support for goal B (vs. goal A) with more right political orientation.

approving pro arguments was associated with left orientation, approving counter arguments with right orientation. However, effects with pro arguments tended to be more homogeneous than those from counter arguments. The weakest associations were found for counter arguments which implied an increase in personal costs (food or housing prices) or claimed the ineffectiveness of initiatives (note that regression

plots provide a hint on whether weaker associations were due to unusual responding of the left or right). Stronger polarization was found with counter arguments claiming that current environmental/animal welfare standards are sufficient, or that domestic agriculture would suffer from changes. Also aligning with voting results, pro arguments on animal welfare issues had somewhat weaker associations with political

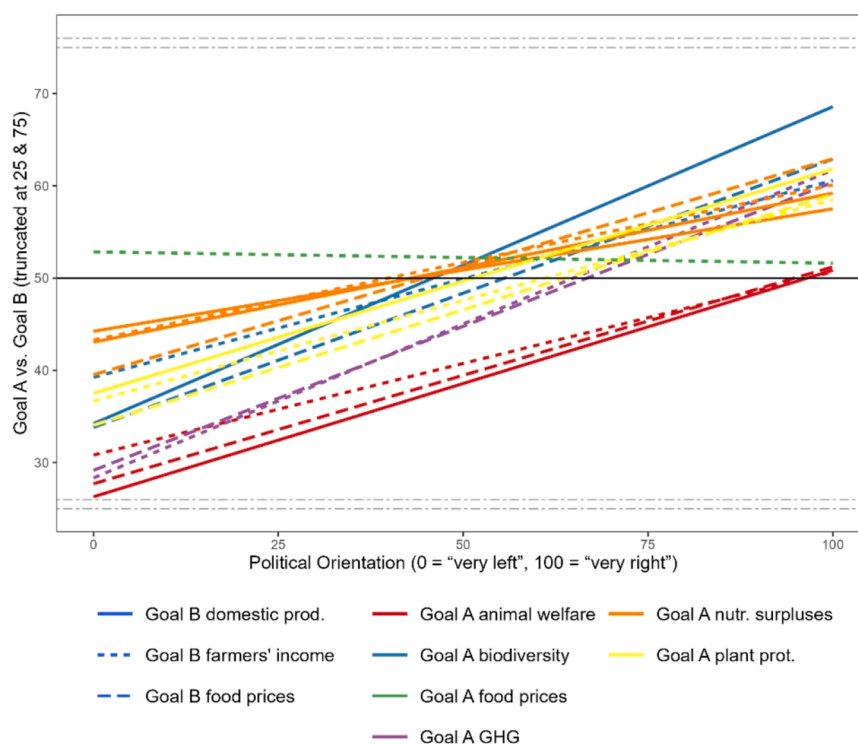


Fig. 5. Regression line plots for association between political orientation and support for conflicting policy goals.

Note. Y-axis: relative importance assigned to two conflicting policy goals, with 0 = goal A, 50 = no preference, 100 = goal B; truncated at 25 & 75 for ease of presentation (see supplementary materials for plot with full range). Line color indicates goal A, line type indicates goal B. X-axis: 0 = “very left”, 50 = “center”, 100 = “very right”.

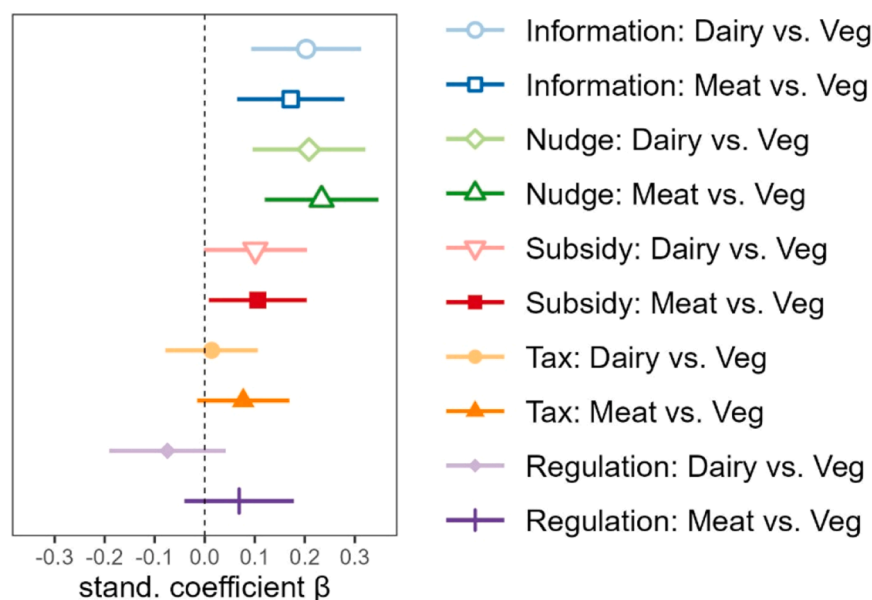


Fig. 6. Association between political orientation and difference in acceptance of policy measures on meat/dairy vs. vegetables.

Note. Standardized regression coefficients (β) of political orientation from moderation analysis for two-instance repeated measures designs and corresponding 95 % CIs. Positive coefficients indicate that with more right orientation animal product measures were perceived as increasingly less acceptable compared to vegetable measures.

orientation than more environmentally focused pro arguments.

3.3. Perceptions of stakeholders

Regarding perceptions of food system stakeholders, we first looked at farmers (Fig. 8; with larger, multilingual sample). A non-significant

relationship between political orientation and the perceived importance of farmers' work for society and family farms was found. However, people on the left were significantly more critical about farmers' animal welfare commitment and their environmental awareness, and they reported slightly less positive general attitudes about farmers.

Regarding responsibility for agricultural policies in Switzerland

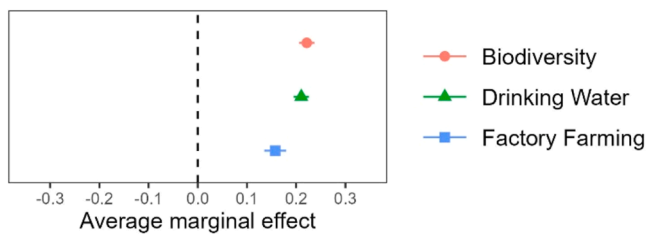


Fig. 7. Association between political orientation and reported rejection (vs. acceptance) of initiative.

Note. Average marginal effect of political orientation from logistic regression models and corresponding 95 % CIs. Positive coefficients indicate the average increase in probability to reject initiative for every 1 SD increase in right political orientation.

(with larger, multilingual sample), people on the right attributed slightly less responsibility to consumers and the state/politics, compared to people on the left. There were no significant associations concerning the role of production/agriculture and retailers. Despite the significant association with state/politics, we found in the regression plots that this stakeholder emerged as the one with the greatest attributed responsibility across the political spectrum (although note that this was clearer on the left and every stakeholder received high scores; see supplementary materials).

Finally, we examined trust in key stakeholders of the three popular initiatives and found a consistent pattern. In line with results on perceptions about farmers, there was a positive association between right orientation and trust in farmers. On the other hand, left orientation was associated with trust in animal protection and environmental organizations, with the latter effect being considerably stronger. There was no significant association with trust in animal welfare labels for meat. Looking at the regression plots (supplementary materials), we observed that with each initiative farmers were the most trusted stakeholders on the right, but the least trusted on the left. In the only initiative where both animal and environmental organizations were examined (on biodiversity), animal protection organizations were much more trusted on the right, whereas on the left environmental organizations were slightly more trusted.

3.4. Role of demographic covariates

We repeated each analysis reported above with covariates and found no important changes to the effects of political orientation (except for policy measure acceptance of dairy vs. vegetable subsidies, where the effect became statistically significant with covariates). Please see the supplementary materials for details on findings with demographic variables.

4. Discussion

This study examined associations of political orientation with a range of attitudes relevant to future food system reforms. The scope of employed measures allowed us to compare how people in Switzerland, as both consumers and voters, differ in their prioritization of agricultural issues along the left-right political spectrum. Several issues showed robust links with either left or right political orientation across levels/measures.

In summary, for left-oriented individuals, all issues pertaining to environmental protection were strongly valued and considerably more so than on the right. Those on the left also prioritized animal welfare more than those on the right. However, relative to environmentalism (particularly if involving climate change mitigation), animal welfare may represent a somewhat less divisive issue, as it figured among the more important goals of right-oriented individuals as well.

Among people on the right, meat consumption was more valued and

more likely to be judged as environmentally sustainable. Moreover, apart from being less accepting of sustainable food policies overall (Ammann et al., 2025a), we found that right-leaning individuals were particularly critical of measures targeting meat (or dairy), compared to vegetables—although this tendency was only found when policies were low or moderate in intrusiveness. People on the right additionally assigned more importance to domestic food production (but not regional origin of food) than people on the left.

Regarding social issues, people on the left perceived social standards as a more important shopping criterion, yet when it comes to policy goals, both the left and right equally wanted to ensure incomes for (Swiss) farmers. For the left, however, concerns for the environment and animal welfare may take slight precedence over farmers' incomes. Lastly, we observed no polarization around issues where self-interests are most evident, that is, people on the left and right perceived food's price, healthiness, and taste as equally important.

4.1. Theoretical implications

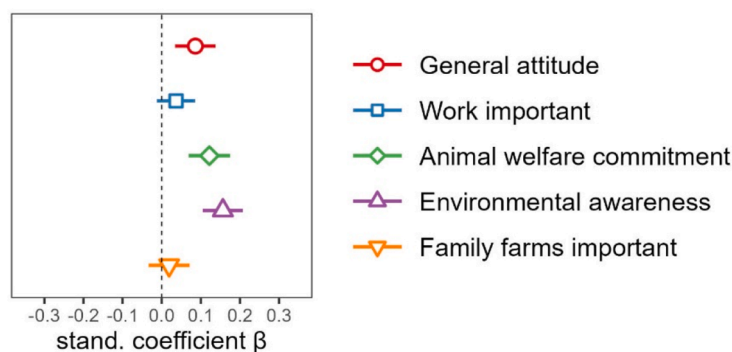
Several implications can be derived from our research. In line with prior studies, we found that environmental protection is a higher priority of the political left (Czarnek et al., 2025; Hornsey et al., 2016). The present study demonstrates that this finding extends to the realm of agriculture and food, which draws in additional issues beyond climate change like biodiversity, nutrient surpluses, and the use of plant protection products. Presumably, this polarization is partly a result of right-leaning people's greater commitment to upholding established norms/traditions and hierarchical relations with nature (Milfont et al., 2025; Stanley and Wilson, 2019). Interestingly, we observed that if a goal was directly aimed at climate change mitigation, there was a slightly larger gap between the political left and right, compared to other environmental goals. Stronger politicization/partisan framing of climate change in Western public discourse over the last decades might explain this finding (Czarnek et al., 2025). However, please note the possibility that certain environmental motives which were not part of this study (e.g., preserving nature's beauty) may be politically unaligned (Billet et al., 2024).

Prior research and theoretical arguments suggest that farmed animal welfare should also be more valued among people on left (Deemer and Lobao, 2011; Dhont et al., 2016; Dhont and Hodson, 2014; Hoffarth et al., 2019; Hopwood et al., 2025; Kupsala et al., 2015). The present study confirms this link but provides some nuance to it. Across all relevant measures, we indeed found that animal welfare concerns increased with left orientation. Yet at the same time, we found that those concerns were often also relatively strong for those on the right. Both on the consumer and policy level, animal welfare figured among the top issues for those with right political orientation. If policy goals were presented as being in conflict, those on the right tended to weigh animal welfare equally or slightly higher than domestic food production, food prices, and farmers' incomes.

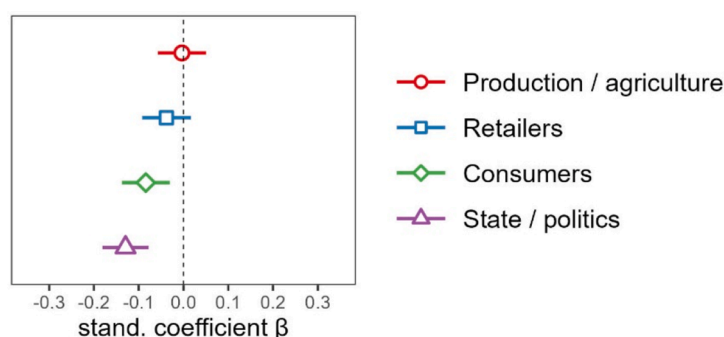
Moreover, considering environmentalism as a reference category, we found some evidence that the welfare of farmed animals might be a slightly less divisive issue in Switzerland (also Jenni and Hopwood, under review). This pattern emerged with the three initiatives we compared, concerning both voting decisions and campaign argument agreement. Of course, we cannot exclude that some extraneous factors also influenced these relationships apart from the issues being targeted (e.g., which political coalitions endorsed/opposed the initiatives or the concrete measures that were proposed to attain policy goals). More controlled comparisons using measures of shopping criteria, food values, and policy goals suggested that it is climate protection that primarily generates more polarization than animal welfare. An avenue for future research would be to contrast the polarization around environmentalism and animal welfare in other parts of the world and explore what causes potential differences.

We found that commitment to meat consumption was greater with

On Farmers



Responsibility of Stakeholders for Agricultural Policies



Trust in Stakeholders of Initiatives

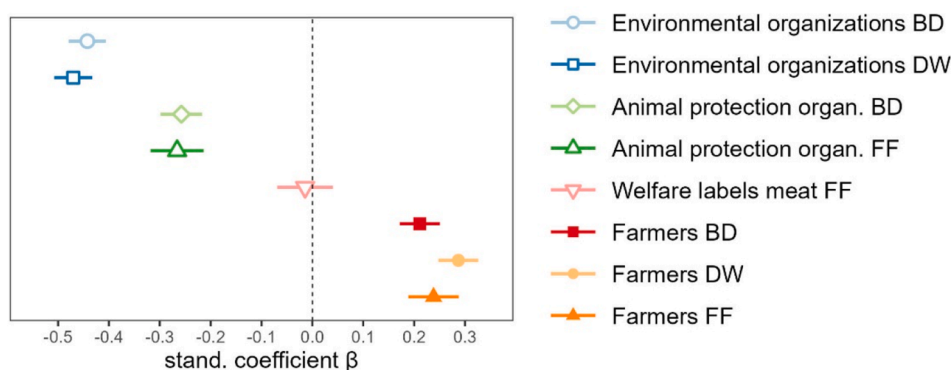


Fig. 8. Association between political orientation and perceptions of food system stakeholders.

Note. Standardized regression coefficients (β) of political orientation from simple linear regression models and corresponding 95 % CIs (from robust HC3 SEs). Positive coefficients indicate higher scores on respective items with more right political orientation. Abbreviations of initiatives: BD = biodiversity, DW = drinking water, FF = factory farming.

more right political orientation (also Ammann et al., 2023b). In Western countries, this link between political attitudes and meat is well-established (Dhont and Hodson, 2014; Grünhage and Reuter, 2021; Hoffarth et al., 2019; Milfont et al., 2021). The present study adds two novel findings to this literature. First, by repurposing the FSKQ (Hartmann et al., 2021), we were able to show that among people on the right there was a tendency to overestimate the environmental sustainability of meat. Ammann et al. (2025a) found a small, negative correlation ($r = -0.14$) between right orientation and general knowledge about food's environmental impact, using the full FSKQ and its original scoring. In the present study, we only used ten (out of 16) questions

which specifically contrasted meat with plant-based food and changed the scoring, such that selecting a pro meat answer would give a point. Importantly, each question also had a “do not know” option. Our “pro meat score” thus represents how often people confidently judged the meat options to be more sustainable. People on the right tended to do this more often. At least two explanations may be considered. One is that because people on the right tend to have stronger meat commitment, they may show heightened motivation to disengage from or even positively reinterpret the environmental consequences of meat (Graça et al., 2016). A second, related explanation is that people with different political orientations might be exposed to distinct information

environments, which differently engage with meat's (un)sustainability. We must note, however, that the average pro meat score was quite low and that the predicted score for people on the right was not that high either (see supplementary materials). Thus, most people rarely thought that the meat option was more sustainable (but also note that many participants answered with “do not know”, so knowledge was often not very high). Interestingly, with the two questions contrasting local meat with plant-based food transported overseas, we observed that more than half of the sample selected meat options. This matches previous research findings (Siegrist et al., 2015; Siegrist and Hartmann, 2019), highlighting a tendency to underestimate the environmental burden from producing meat (vs. vegetables) relative to the impact of transportation.

The second contribution to the meat-politics literature concerns the finding that the difference between the acceptance of sustainability measures on meat and dairy versus vegetables increased among people on the right (at least for measures with low to medium intrusiveness). This adds to the findings from Ammann et al. (2025a), who reported that overall, and for each measure type, people on the right showed lower acceptance of these policies ($r_s \sim -0.30$). The present study further differentiated between product types. Because right-leaning people are generally more committed to meat (and dairy, Ioannidou et al., 2026), we expected that measures targeting these products might evoke opposition beyond that for measures aimed at vegetables. With information, nudge, and subsidy measures, our hypothesis was confirmed. Yet with the most intrusive measures, taxes and regulations, the difference between meat/dairy and vegetable measures did not significantly increase with right orientation. Upon closer inspection of the regression plots (supplementary materials), we think that this finding may be due to how most people on the right feel about taxes and regulations in general. That is, even though targeting vegetables, taxes and regulations may be perceived as strongly unacceptable because (economically) right-oriented individuals show principled opposition to measures with strong government involvement regardless of the product being targeted (cf. Lassen and Mahler, 2023). Note, however, that even among people on the left, higher intrusiveness led to somewhat lower acceptance (see also Ammann et al., 2025a).

Regarding increasing domestic food production, we found that people on the right attributed greater priority to this policy goal. If goals were put against each other, we found that those on the right tended to prioritize domestic production over ecological concerns and weigh animal welfare almost equally. This aligns with prior research around agricultural politics (Rudolph et al., 2022) and economic protectionism, more broadly (Jedinger and Burger, 2020; Johnston, 2013; Mansfield and Mutz, 2013; Rudolph et al., 2022). Right-oriented individuals may particularly value having a strong and independent domestic agricultural sector because it benefits national security and promotes industries that are socially and culturally proximate. Supporting this assumption, we found in a related study (Jenni and Hopwood, under review) that highlighting the benefits of plant-based food for national food security was relatively appealing to right-leaning participants. Furthermore, framing this argument around moral values of the right slightly enhanced perceived argument strength among this audience.

The present study also demonstrated that neither the left nor the right perceived the regional origin of food to be a more important shopping criterion, even though purchasing regional food is conceptually similar to promoting domestic food production (but note the low correlation between items in Supplemental Table S2). As laid out in the Introduction, local origin might signal several values (Meyerdinger et al., 2019), including environmental benefits (especially considering the earlier-mentioned sensitivity to food transportation). Sustainability concerns might make left-oriented consumers evaluate local food more positively (Witzling and Shaw, 2019).

In the context of consumer priorities, we found that those on the left valued social standards (such as fair incomes) more than those on the right. Regarding policy preferences, however, there was no difference if asked about the importance of ensuring farmers' incomes. This pattern

may be partly due to the way the items were phrased and how political orientation relates to moral expansiveness. In the case of policy goals, participants were instructed to focus on Switzerland (and therefore Swiss farmers). Within the shopping criteria item, there was no geographic specification. Furthermore, the concept of social standards involves more than just farmers and their income (e.g., government regulations on workers' rights). If defined this broadly, we should expect left-leaning individuals with wider moral circles to attribute greater importance (similar to findings on fair trade shopping, Gohary et al., 2023). However, if concerning local farmers, differences between the left and right might disappear because this target group likely occupies a more central space within the tighter moral circle of right-leaning individuals (Waytz et al., 2019).

We are regularly forced to navigate trade-offs within policies. It is therefore informative that people on the left were more willing to compromise on farmers' incomes against animal welfare and ecological goals, whereas those on the right tended to compromise on ecology (but not animal welfare) for farmers' incomes. For those on the left, who tend to have broader moral circles (Waytz et al., 2019), such trade-offs should be quite challenging, since farmers, animals, and nature might receive relatively large moral concerns. Importantly, though, people on the left felt specifically more critical about the current engagement of farmers in animal welfare and environmental protection—probably because they desire stricter standards (cf. findings from campaign arguments). This discontent might partly explain why they tended to favor animal welfare and environmental goals over farmers' incomes.

There were also some issues which did not polarize. Where consumers benefit personally, that is, food's taste, price, and healthiness, political orientation had no relationship with importance ratings, confirming prior research (Tiganis et al., 2023). Among those three, taste was the top criteria (aligning with Ammann et al., 2024). Moreover, keeping food prices low as an isolated policy goal was equally important to the left and right (note that prices in Switzerland are relatively high). Similar to farmers' incomes, though, people on the left tended to prioritize ecology goals and animal welfare over food prices in the conflicting scenarios, whereas those on the right prioritized food prices over ecology goals (but not animal welfare). Lastly, although significantly associated with left orientation, coefficients for the criteria “having few additives” and “organic label” were very weak. Further research is needed to determine whether these associations are robust.

4.2. Practical implications

For policymakers and advocates, the present study provides several insights for reducing/avoiding political division around sustainable food system reforms. Firstly, it might be advisable to focus on needs which were unpolarized, that is, taste, price, and health. Many governments are already moving in this direction by financially supporting research/industries around sustainable, mostly plant-based foods, thereby helping to create more affordable, tasty, and healthy products (United Nations Environment Programme, 2023). Removing institutional hurdles to the success of such foods may be critical as well (e.g., Siegrist and Hartmann, 2023). Since the financial situation of farmers was important to left- and especially right-leaning individuals, support for reforms might also depend on whether they entail compensatory measures for livestock farmers. Furthermore, animal welfare emerged as an issue receiving high levels of support across the political spectrum. With animal welfare being a strong concern for most individuals, it is crucial that stakeholders along the entire supply chain invest more into this issue. Welfare measures targeted at more extensive farming systems and smaller numbers of farmed animals could provide co-benefits in other domains, such as public health and the environment.

Our study further shows that certain issues receive more support on either side of the political spectrum: environmental protection on the left and domestic food production on the right. To satisfy both sides, policymakers might therefore want to balance these issues when

designing policies. One way to do this would be to bundle instruments for different goals into an overarching policy package (e.g., Fesenfeld, 2025). Our findings also imply that special attention should be given to measures targeting meat and dairy, with people on the right being often more attached to these products. However, in line with findings of this study, right-leaning individuals may be more open to plant-based food if arguments emphasize reasons they value most (tentative candidates are food security and animal welfare; Jenni and Hopwood, n.d.). Supporting this idea, recent research (Ammann et al., 2024, 2025b; Perino and Schwickert, 2023) found that meat reduction policies with the explicit goal to benefit animal welfare received higher acceptance than comparable policies in the name of environmental protection.

Finally, our findings indicate that participants tended to see all food system stakeholders responsible for achieving agricultural policy goals, with the (federal) government being slightly at the top (see also Irek et al., 2025). This was even the case for people on the right (although to a lesser degree than on the left), suggesting that governmental leadership is widely expected in the domain of agriculture (cf. Biedny et al., 2020). Yet note that this does not mean, as our study showed, that more intrusive measures will automatically receive high levels of support. Furthermore, we found that farmers received greater trust among the right and animal/environmental protection organizations among the left. Hence, they may bear special responsibility in shaping opinions on either side.

4.3. Limitations and future directions

The study's focus on unidimensional left-right political orientation was a limitation. The labels left and right might not be equally meaningful in all political systems or in some regions, like the former communist bloc, they might be associated with somewhat different concepts (Malka et al., 2019). In this project, we understood individuals' self-identification on the left-right scale as proxy to the motivational substructures (i.e., values/ideological attitudes) that are typically linked with left versus right orientation in developed, Western countries (but see Federico and Malka, 2023). To conduct similar studies in contexts where there is less mapping between these constructs, researchers may be advised to measure psychological dispositions (like RWA & SDO) directly and/or consider other constructs such as populist attitudes. In addition, this would provide an opportunity to run more fine-grained analyses, which was not possible in this study. However, note that for the purpose of gauging political polarization and how media/partisan discourses have tied specific issues to the left or right, measuring political self-identity may be more informative.

By conventional standards, most associations we found might be considered small. This is likely in part because of measurement (most variables were composed of single items), and because numerous factors apart from political orientation determine issue preferences (cf. incremental variance explained by demographic variables). Nevertheless, even small polarization among voters and consumers may lead to consequential outcomes, such as whether new legislation gets adopted.

It must be noted that our research design was correlational and cross-sectional, hence inferences about causality are not warranted. Longitudinal studies would be required to test whether changes in political disposition predict changes in issue prioritizations (e.g., Milfont et al., 2025). Moreover, it would be informative to track how shifts in issue positioning of political parties/elites relate to issue polarization in the public. Finally, utilized datasets did not enable differentiation between different types of meat products and farming systems, or assess attitudes towards food processing and innovation. These are avenues for future research.

4.4. Conclusion

People among the political left and right assign somewhat different significance to several issues around food and agriculture in

Switzerland. Most importantly, left-leaning individuals were found to be more focused on environmental and slightly more on animal welfare goals, whereas right-leaning individuals tended to value domestic food production and meat consumption more strongly. People on the right were also more likely to prioritize low food prices and farmers' incomes over ecological goals (but not animal welfare). The success of reforms towards a more sustainable, plant-based food system may depend on how well policy proposals will account for those varying priorities.

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Data statement

Research data and codes can be accessed via the corresponding project on the Open Science Framework: <https://osf.io/2ay34/>.

Ethical statement

This study used publicly available survey data obtained from the online platforms of Agroscope, the Swiss competence center for agricultural research, and swissvotes.ch, the database on Swiss popular votes. The data were collected by the original authors in accordance with applicable ethical standards, and no identifiable personal information was included in the datasets. The present analysis complied with all relevant ethical guidelines and regulations, and no additional ethical approval was required as no new data were collected from human participants.

CRediT authorship contribution statement

Sandro Jenni: Writing – original draft, Visualization, Methodology, Formal analysis, Conceptualization. **Jeanine Ammann:** Writing – review & editing, Data curation, Conceptualization. **Judith Irek:** Writing – review & editing, Data curation, Conceptualization. **Christopher J. Hopwood:** Writing – review & editing, Supervision, Funding acquisition, Conceptualization.

Declaration of competing interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

Supplementary materials

Supplementary material associated with this article can be found, in the online version, at [doi:10.1016/j.fufo.2025.100825](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.fufo.2025.100825).

Data availability

Research data and codes can be accessed via the corresponding project on the Open Science Framework: <https://osf.io/2ay34/>.

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