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Inhaltsverzeichnis

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Buying local

- 5 Mailbag
- 6 Focus
Boom in regional brewing
- 10 Politics
Referendums on 10 June
Swiss aid in Libya
Controversy over CHF 1 million cohesion contribution
- 16 Economy
Esoro's hydrogen-powered truck

News from around the world
- 17 Literature series
A Swiss writer in the jungle of south-east Asia
- 18 Society
Fritz Osterwalder and the protests of 1968 – 50 years on
Albinen seeking new residents
- 22 OSA news
- 25 news.admin.ch
- 28 Images
- 30 Books / Sounds
- 31 Top pick / News



Wine from Australia, fruit from the Caribbean and meat from Argentina – it is not so long ago that people thought the further a product travelled, the better it was. The world was becoming ever more interconnected, and there was an element of modernity about consuming exotic foreign products. It was as if people did not want to miss out on the opportunities and absurdities of globalisation in their everyday lives.

Today, the opposite seems to be true – the nearer a product is made, the better. There has been a sustainable improvement in awareness of “integrity of origin” and local products over the past ten years. It is not just a question of environmental protection. What is the ecological footprint of a bottle of wine that has flown halfway around the world? It is also down to people taking an interest in their immediate surroundings and, ultimately, perhaps even showing greater awareness of their own origins.

This trend has led many Swiss food producers to shift to local specialities. They are typified by regional cheese, bread and wine. There is huge demand for varieties of apple from the local area and if the meat at the butcher's comes from the neighbouring village, consumers are willing to pay a bit extra.

This trend has also encompassed beer. Instead of drinking foreign or national beers, the Swiss are increasingly opting for small regional brands. The number of local breweries has risen to over 900. This boom is also partly attributable to the collapse of the large beer cartel in 1991, a subject explored by this issue's focus article. But the extent to which appreciation of regional products – including beer – has increased in Switzerland over the last decade is astonishing and pleasing in equal measure.

MARKO LEHTINEN, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Cover photo:
Local beer is enjoying growing popularity in Switzerland.
Image: iStock