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“Exploring opportunities ...
for managing natural resources and a better life for all”

Toward a better future, how resilient food systems enhance the implementation of the SDGs, an Austrian case study

CAROLIN AUWÄRTER¹, LAURA HUNDSCHIED¹, METTE VAARST², ANDREAS MELCHER¹

¹*BOKU University, Dept. of Sustainable Agricultural Systems, Austria*

²*Aarhus University, Dept. of Animal and Veterinary Sciences - ANIVET Management and Modelling (MAMO), Denmark*

Abstract

The globalised food system's environmental, nutritional, and socio-economic issues are of utmost importance in pursuing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Hence, a transformation towards more resilient and sustainable food systems is crucial. Since the actions in one part of the world result in impact in another, so it is important that the transformation happens on all scales. For Austria, a trans- and interdisciplinary network of 19 universities, the UniNEtZ project, is working to accomplish the SDGs. For this purpose, a report was published with a catalogue of options and measures that are aimed at the SDGs and mention resilience as a fundamental principle. This case study aims to investigate how resilience in the context of food systems can contribute to achieving the SDGs. The Stockholm Resilience Centre's (SRC) framework, which contains seven principles for enhancing resilience in socio-ecological systems, was used as a guide for the qualitative content analysis of the UniNEtZ options report. The results show that the food system approach makes it possible to identify trade-offs and synergies along the value chain and between the different actors. Resilience yields the potential to complement the SDGs for transformation purposes. The results confirm that the UniNEtZ options offer a comprehensive range of measures that cover the principles of the SRC framework. However, some options lack in-depth qualitative analyses and tangible measures to enable resilient transformation. In line with other studies, the results indicate an imbalance in primary production and consumption measures. Thus, the UniNEtZ options should be expanded. For that national future studies that explore other aspects of the food system, such as processing, distribution, and waste management are recommend. This work emphasis a better future for all by including primary production and consumption measures and involving farmers, policymakers and society.

Keywords: Austria, consumption, food systems, primary agricultural production, resilience, sustainable development goals, synergies, trade-offs, zero hunger