

COMMUNICATION IN SWISS FARMING COOPERATIVES

by

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Abstract

The present study investigates how Swiss farmers organized into farming collectives (FCs) rate communication with their cooperation partners. The research uses the KomminO questionnaire focusing on intra-organizational communication (Sperka, 2000; Sperka and Rozsa, 2007). The validity of the questionnaire in an agricultural context is analyzed, resulting in confirmation of four of the seven scales assessed by the KomminO, namely, communication quality, usability of information, channel openness, and importance of communication. The FC farmers' scores in these four scales were all fairly high. The comparison of the farmers' scores with the data of a large norm sample suggests that the rating of communication quality, usability of information, and channel openness by FC farmers is significantly above average. Accordingly, the results indicate that Swiss farmers organized into FCs possess strong communication skills. Given that for 75% of the farmers completing the questionnaire the FCs have been in place for at least five years, we can conclude that communication skills are an important factor for the continued existence of an FC.

Keywords: farming collective, production cooperative, communication in organizations, KomminO questionnaire