



Long-term producer-consumer-relations as tool to decrease vulnerability of agro-food-systems in mountain regions

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Background:

Project 1: Research results with small-scale coffee farmers in Nicaraguan central highlands reveal the potential of long-term producer-consumer relationships within fair trade short-food-supply-chains to enable upgrading in global value chain and empower producers in global value chains as well as in regional development.

- Good price, guaranteed minimum price
- Long-time partnership with import organisation
- Fair trade premium – enables social projects



Certain income amount becomes stable and predictable - Sense of security for small scale producer



- Opens up possibilities for development:
- Investments in facilities and diversification
 - Education
 - Knowledge acquisition – capacity building
 - Healthcare
 - Social projects
 - Political changes, initiated by regional pioneers

Project 2: HIGHT - Sustainability Analysis of high-mountain hut

- Development of a framework and monitoring tool recognizing contemporary and future challenges to assess and measure sustainability situation of high-mountain huts.
- Measuring actual situation and making suggestions for improving sustainability of operating the shelter.
- Transdisciplinary project – pilot in Pitztal, Tyrol, Austria.

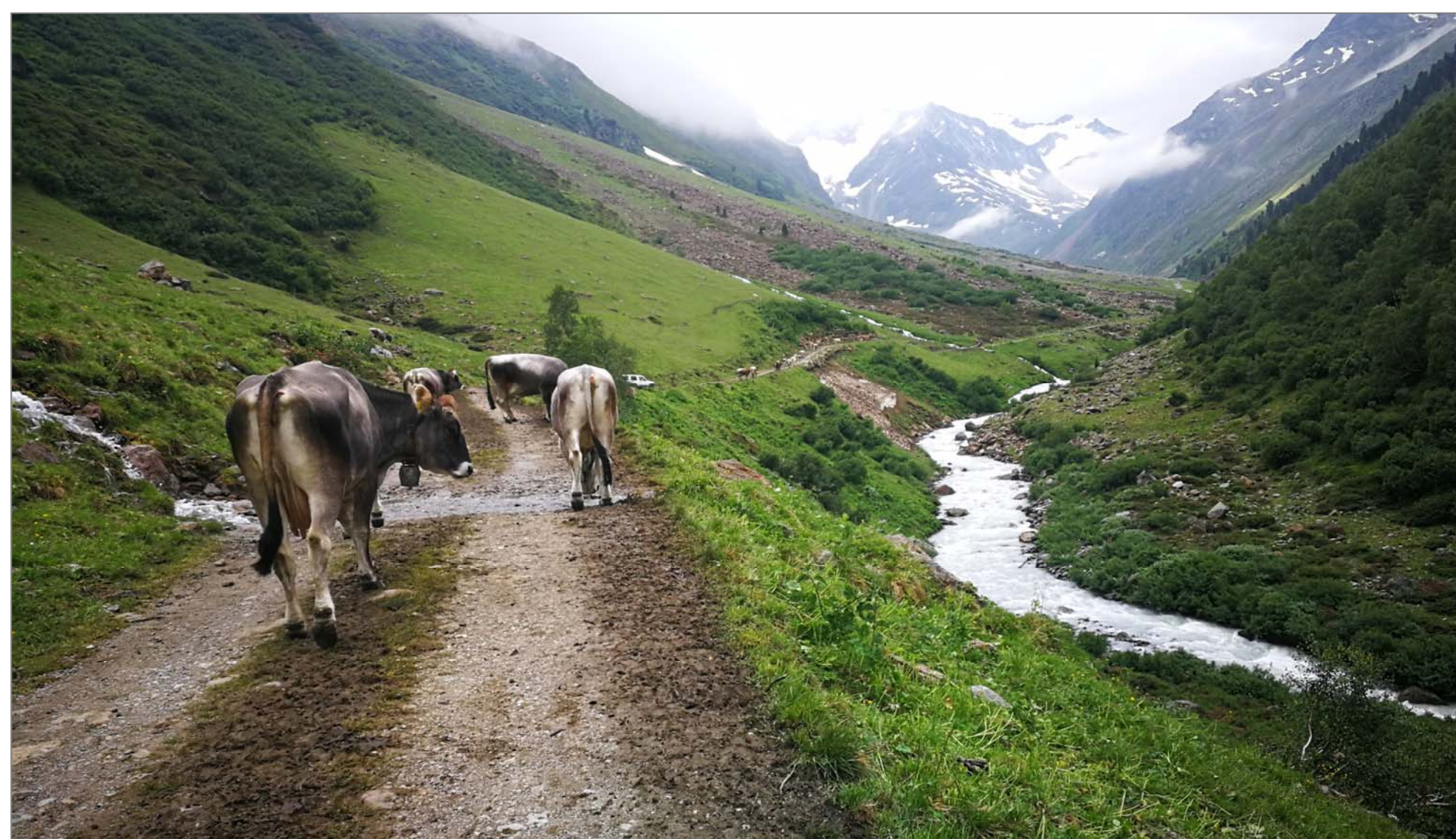
Hypothesis:

Alpine club huts should establish long-term relationships to local producers and purchase local food. This would lead to a more sustainable operation of alpine huts and increase regional responsibility. At the same time it would contribute to reduce vulnerability of small-scale farms in remote valleys lacking of local consumers. Trustful relationships between producers and consumers could prevent farm closings, employment losses and commuting. This could open up perspectives for local development and preserve traditional ways of farming and living as well as cultural landscape.

Methods:

Use of value chain concepts as framework and methodological approach.

- Value chain mapping
- Qualitative interviews
- Focus group discussions and workshops



Preliminary results in Pitztal valley, Tyrol:

- Lacking interconnections between producers and consumers are leading to long value chains (many intermediaries) and long transport distances.
- Product quality is judged high but differs from the mainstream – importance to connect with quality oriented consumers and establish long-term relationships.
- Single small-scale farmers have been unable to establish producer-consumer-relations beyond the conventional wholesale buyer system; first steps for collective activities have been undertaken.

Results and further research needs:

- Research results in Nicaraguan central highlands show evidence of (trustful) long-term producer-consumer-relations contributing to stable and predictable producer's income and therefore opening up ground for investments and local development.
- Investments in production facilities and knowledge leads to value chain upgrading.
- Vulnerability of agro-food-systems can be reduced.
- Further research in remote alpine valleys is needed, to explore chances and obstacles for establishing long-term producer-consumer-relations as a relevant component of short-food-supply-chains for regional development in mountain regions.

Literature:

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