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| Session Chair | | |
| Presentations | Session 4.3 | <i>Individual presentations: Ecosystem Services.</i> |

Abstract Session 4.3 – Why integrating the forest into the offset regulation is not (yet) an option in Switzerland.

Biotope offset regulation has been introduced to compensate residual or unavoidable biotope loss from development projects and to achieve at least a “No Net Loss.” The design of such offsetting is non-trivial. A rigid compensation of the same biotope very close to the original location and in a timely manner would be environmentally effective. However, this is difficult to achieve for various reasons and less rigid possibilities might be favoured due to their efficiency, but they might be less effective environmentally.

Against this background, there have been endeavours to make offset regulation more flexible. One means is to establish an offset-banking system (“ecoaccount”), which entails out-of-kind compensation and applies explicit conversion factors. A prominent example for such a flexibilization can be found in Germany, which allows the compensation of biotopes lost on agricultural land within the forest area. Such compensation projects could either be implemented as some type of forest reserve, which would strongly impair forest management, or alternatively, there might also be more “production-integrated” possibilities. As the pressure for an integration of the forest area into such land-use compensation schemes is very likely to rise in the future in various highly populated European countries, we address the following question: to what degree is the integration of forest into offset regulation supported or rejected by which actors and what are the alternatives? To assess this question, we examine the case of Switzerland which is a particularly “hard case” in that respect, as the Swiss forest area profits from a very strict legal protection. Through desk research and interviews, we find that in Switzerland, most actors do not see the benefit of integrating the forest into the offset regulations. Uncertainties about possible benefits from a more flexible offsetting regulation cannot outweigh conceptual flaws as well as the expected implementation difficulties.

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