

**Special Session 5: Key Concepts of Agro-Food Studies (OrganisatorInnen:
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Transition in food systems: the case of the Austrian dairy sector

In preparation to EU-accession the Austrian dairy sector witnessed a complete restructuring and the transition from a post war economy of provisioning to a liberal market economy. In the second half of the 1980s dairy system was centralized with strict regulations of production, processing and distribution. Product innovation was hindered and structures were conserved. Ten years later Austrian dairy products proved competitive in a European common market. The concept of eco-social agricultural policy functioned as a catalyst in this success story. Calling for diversification on the producer level it prepared ground for organic production and direct marketing initiatives. This in turn had substantial impact on the liberalized structures in the processing sector. The political plea for consumer patriotism proved a successful antidote against the expected flooding by cheap imported dairy products after the fall of protectionist import policies. Finally the shift led to a consequent positioning of retail chains with regional and dairy products. The case makes a good example to employ Transition Theory for the analysis of the interplay of landscape, regime and niche developments. GATT negotiation rounds made EU-accession necessary which triggered the regime shift. Direct marketing, which had been blocked in the dairy sector before, could build on successful bottom up initiatives and proliferate. Massive organic conversion finally demanded sufficient processing and marketing structures. As a result a new socio-technical regime stabilized. The contribution follows consequences of the realignment through the entire supply chain and shows the impact for producers as well as for consumers and puts special emphasis on the structures in between.