

**AUDIT**

# Audit of the ICT project digiFLUX – digital nutrient and plant protection management

Federal Office for Agriculture

## KEY FACTS

The Federal Office for Agriculture (FOAG) is implementing digiFLUX, a centralised information system, on behalf of Parliament.<sup>10</sup> Its aim is to improve transparency and the data basis for deliveries and the use of plant protection products and the supply of nutrients in Switzerland. The project is based on the Federal Act on Reducing the Risks Associated with Pesticide Use, which was passed by Parliament in light of the initiatives on drinking water and a pesticide ban.<sup>11</sup> The digiFLUX project was initiated in 2019 and is scheduled to be finished in 2028. The project costs are budgeted at CHF 19 million, of which CHF 7.5 million will have a financial impact.

The audit aimed to assess the targeted development of the project and the implementation of the statutory requirements. The audit revealed that digiFLUX is operating in a difficult political environment, even though it is only implementing specific parliamentary guidelines. Adoption of the amended Kolly motion 24.3078 in June 2025 could lead to amendment and simplification of the obligation to notify use of plant protection products. This would result in a reduction in data and require adjustments to the project.<sup>12</sup> Since the project is under-staffed, project management and control have been neglected. The project managers urgently need to define and obtain the requisite resources, so they can improve the overview and management of the project and stabilise the necessary controls.

### Benefits and usage need to be defined more precisely

Using digiFLUX offers advantages for authorities, research and farms, in that it would enable comprehensive, standardised data collection for the first time, along with centralised evaluation. The level of detail planned should enable the Federal Council to carry out monitoring activities that would allow for regional or industry-specific measures to be taken where necessary. Admittedly, a specific description of the use of the data has so far been lacking. This makes it difficult to present a well-founded argument to those affected by the obligation to notify, who question the benefits of the data collection. They are concerned about transparency and worry that their data could be misused by authorities for profiling. These reservations will remain until it is clearly defined how and for what purpose the data may be used. This is hampering the willingness to use digiFLUX.

Although the statutory obligation to notify has been in force since January 2024, the information system it requires is still under construction. The FOAG decided to introduce digiFLUX gradually from mid-2025 to 2027. There are no legal transitional arrangements for this transitional phase leading up to full implementation. This implementation gap should be rectified as soon as possible, along with any amendments to the legal framework that become necessary with the adoption of the Kolly motion.

<sup>10</sup> 19.475 Parliamentary initiative 'Reducing the risks associated with pesticide use', Economic Affairs and Taxation Committee, 29 August 2019 ([link](#)) and the Federal Act on Agriculture (AgricA), Art. 164a, 164b and 165fbis AgricA

<sup>11</sup> AS 2022 263 Federal Act on Reducing the Risks Associated with Pesticide Use ([link](#))

<sup>12</sup> 24.3078 Motion 'Removal of the obligation to use digiFLUX for farms', Nicolas Kolly, 04.03.2024 ([link](#))

## **Strengthen project management and regain control**

Despite difficult conditions, the project team is showing great commitment to successfully implementing the project. However, at the time of the audit, there is a significant risk that it will not be possible for the initial launch of parts of the application to take place as planned. Some of the required deliverables and framework for implementation have not yet been finalised. Using digiFLUX to fulfil the obligation to notify poses challenges for the end user, but also provides opportunities. Technical interfaces can facilitate the use of digiFLUX by automating processes. End users' existing systems can be connected to digiFLUX. However, in practice, and shortly before the first launch in the summer of 2025, these interfaces have not been adequately tested. The supporting documentation is incomplete. Without strong support and clear instructions, there is a risk that acceptance by the users and system integrators will fall.

Implementation of the parliamentary initiative is not being holistically managed by the FOAG. This is particularly evident in that specialist areas, such as the development of the legal framework and the definition of future data analyses have not been sufficiently integrated. As a result, some of the aforementioned data usage policies are not currently in place. Furthermore, the project is understaffed. The project managers have attempted to compensate for the gaps themselves, but they have neglected their core tasks as a result. To enable the project to be monitored and successfully completed, it is vital that planning, documentation, provision of resources and financial and risk management be strengthened.