

Foreword



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Climate change is altering our environment. In Switzerland, too, rising temperatures and changing precipitation are affecting surface water, terrestrial ecosystems and biodiversity: the glaciers are melting, steep mountain slopes in the Alpine valleys are becoming unstable, dry periods in summer are becoming more frequent and longer, foreign animal and plant species from the south are spreading to Switzerland and displacing native species. The habitat of Switzerland is changing, and with it, our livelihoods.

Thanks to science, we now know the causes of many changes and, vice versa, many impacts of our actions. Science reveals how human activity influences climate change and thereby enables us to avert the harm that can be averted and to prepare for consequences that are inevitable. The present report examines the effects of global climate change on Switzerland and thus provides important information for the further development of our climate policy, both in tackling the causes of climate change and in initiating and coordinating measures to adapt to its impacts.

Observations and projections of these impacts are of key importance to adaptation to climate change. Changes must be recognized, anticipated and interpreted correctly, appropriate measures must be planned and initiated at the right time and to the right degree. Interaction between science and policy is essential to this process, to which the CH2014 initiative makes an important contribution.

Further steps, however, must follow. Only if we manage to limit climate change by effectively addressing its causes, will adaptation be technologically and economically feasible. We must therefore be conscious of our responsibility toward future generations and reduce greenhouse gas emissions, both globally and in Switzerland.

◀ Protection from rockfall is an important ecosystem service supplied by forests, and may deteriorate in a changing climate in many places across Switzerland (protection forest at Bilten, Glarus; photo: Georg Ledergerber, BAFU).