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Exploring the gap between climate change rhetoric and effective collective action

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The present paper discusses the causes of the failure of the Kyoto protocol to reduce global greenhouse gas emissions and shows why the Paris Agreement is unlikely to become more effective in enabling collective action to tackle the main climate change challenges. The paper argues that effective collective action requires governments to assume the role of facilitators of technological change. They need to co-invest in the development and commercialization of future climate-friendly technologies that facilitate the transformation a petro-based economy into a low-carbon, biology-based economy. In this context, biotechnology plays a crucial role as a platform technology. Alas, biotechnology is framed in the current public debate on sustainable development in Europe as part of the problem rather than part of the solution. That may eventually make the European Union and its member states part of the problem because its current climate change rhetoric aims at pleasing public opinion rather than at addressing the global challenges in an effective way. Moreover it creates

confrontation rather than cooperation between the private sector and civil society.



Biography

Philipp Aerni is the Director of the Center for Corporate Responsibility and Sustainability (CCRS). He obtained his Master's in Geography from the University of Zurich and completed his PhD in agricultural economics at ETH Zurich. Prior to his position at CCRS, he worked as a postdoctoral fellow at Harvard University, ETH Zurich, the University of Berne, as well as the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO).

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