



Schweizerische Gesellschaft für Agrarwirtschaft und Agrarsoziologie
Société Suisse d'Economie et de Sociologie rurales
Swiss Society for Agricultural Economics and Rural Sociology

SGA travel grant, report by Anna Geiser, 2025

30th European Society for Rural Sociology Congress – Riga, Latvia



Opening Speech by Viktors Valainis, Minister of Economics of Latvia (Photo credit: Rīgas Stradiņa universitāte)

Thanks to the financial support of the SGA, I was able to attend the 30th Conference of the European Society for Rural Sociology, held in 2025 in Riga. My goal was to present insights from my doctoral research, entitled *“From Assessment to Intervention: How a Digital Sustainability Assessment and Advisory Tool Influences Transition Pathways in Swiss Organic Farming”*. Using Deleuzian philosophy, my contribution critically examines how such a tool not only assesses but actively shapes what counts as sustainable through indicators and data-driven governance.

The panel I took part in, with the evocative title *“Turbulent presents and uncertain futures: How to explore and navigate agrifood system and rural transitions and multiple futures”*, focused on the intertwined environmental, social, economic, and technological challenges shaping agrifood systems and how governing transitions requires moving beyond control toward approaches that acknowledge uncertainty, open possibilities, and critically engage with visions of the future.

Having already attended many conferences, I can honestly say that this one was the most rewarding for me personally. Unlike most conferences, where sessions are packed with presentations and little time is left for discussion, at this panel at least half the time was dedicated to in-depth exchange. It was an inspiring experience to spend several days with people who shared similar interests and were eager to develop ideas further. Because the panel stretched over two days, we also had the chance to really get to know each other and continue discussions during the breaks. As a highlight, since I had planned a week of holidays in Latvia afterward, I was spontaneously invited to visit the alpaca farm of one of the panel participants!

Finally, Riga and Latvia themselves offered a fascinating backdrop for the conference, where the intersections of history and the present moment were clearly tangible, made especially visible through the many Ukrainian flags.