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# Exploitation of plant resources during the Neolithic in the Swiss Alps: an archaeobotanical approach

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## Résumé

Between 5500 and 5000 cal BC, first farmers settled in the Upper Rhone Valley. Before these dates, a lack of data of almost 1000 years does not allow us to say whether these farmers are acculturated local populations or if they are from a colonization. With Italian-style ceramics, the colonization hypothesis from the southern Alps seems rather privileged. Besides, preliminary archaeobiological studies have shown that these first farmers had an important knowledge of agriculture, based on crop cultivation (of mainly naked wheat, einkorn, barley and opium poppy) and on stock-breeding of sheep, goat and cattle. Furthermore, these studies inform about the exploitation of the area, from the alluvial plain to the pine forest around the settlements.

In this session, dedicated to early farming and pastoral activities in mountain environments, we will present new results of archaeobotanical analyses carried out on several sites in the Swiss Alps. They are principally located in the actual city of Sion (central Valais) and in the Upper Valais. Some of them represent the oldest agropastoral settlements in Switzerland. In addition they are among the first ones in the Western Alps.

Based on our new results and compared to recent studies, the question of the exploitation of the alpine territory and the subsistence economy of these societies can be approached from a new angle and with a more consistent data set: this talk will allow to consider the management of a territory and to determine to what extent the existing models of exploitation of the region are pertinent.

Studied samples come from settlements covering the entire Neolithic, enabling a diachronic approach and thus highlighting possible changes in the use of plant resources. Our approach, based on both charcoal and seeds/fruits analyses, aims to evidence and characterise 1) the choices made for diet in relation to the available resources and 2) the exploitation forms of plant resources, wild or cultivated, whether woody or not.

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