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GRAZING4AGROECOLOGY
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Welcome to the fifth Edition of the Grazing4AgroEcology Newsletter!

In this fifth edition of our newsletter, we cover a variety of important topics. We recap the General Partner Assembly Meeting, detailing key outcomes and future directions. Highlights from the Young Farmers Tour to showcase insights from participating young farmers. Updates on our project members' activities across different regions are also included, alongside the latest innovations within the Partner Farm Network (PFN), which are transforming farming practices.

Additionally, we provide perspectives and updates from various countries in our "Country Views" section and share news from our partner publishers, offering a broad spectrum of agricultural insights.

We invite you to continue reading for a deeper look into these developments and their impact on the agricultural sector.



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The General Partner Assembly Meeting #4

The General Partner Assembly Meeting #4 for the Grazing4AgroEcology project took place from April 16th to April 19th, 2024, in South Tyrol, Italy. This meeting convened at the Hotel Steinpent, located in the scenic Ahrn Valley, offering participants a comprehensive experience that included specialised training sessions, dynamics discussions, and informative field visits.

FA TRAINING SOUTH TYROL | ITALY



The assembly commenced on Tuesday, April 16th, with a full-day Facilitator Agent (FA) Training session led by external experts. This intensive session aimed at enhancing the facilitation skills of the participants, focusing on effective co-creation processes and design thinking.



The main assembly activities occurred over the following two days. On Wednesday, April 17th, participants were welcomed by the project coordinator, Arno Krause, and other local hosts, setting a collaborative tone for the event. The day continued with multiple sessions where Work Package Leaders reported on their progress and discussed future steps. These sessions covered diverse topics including the establishment of farmer networks, strategic capacity building, and dissemination strategies.

Thursday, April 18th, was particularly notable for its mix of indoor discussions and an outdoor field visit. The morning sessions included discussions on knowledge and information management, followed by a unique visit to Künighof farm in the afternoon. Here, participants learned about sustainable farming practices directly from the farmer, Walter Steger, who shared his approach to maintaining livestock well-being through grazing methods. The day concluded with a networking dinner at a local mountain hut, which not only provided an opportunity for informal interactions but also showcased the region's beautiful landscapes.

FARM VISIT | KÜNIGHOF SOUTH TYROL | ITALY



The event wrapped up on Friday, April 19th, with an Expert Meeting that engaged both young professionals and experienced farmers. This session included a carousel of information stations, interactive working groups, and detailed discussions on case studies related to agroecology. For more insights and highlights, check out the [video](#) on YouTube page.



Overall, the General Partner Assembly Meeting facilitated a rich exchange of knowledge and practices, helping to further the project's goals of promoting sustainable grazing and improving the economic and ecological performance of grazing-based farms.



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YOUNG FARMERS TOUR

The Young Farmers Tour, set to take place from June 9th to 11th, 2024, will focus on the integration of grazing and agroecology across several farms in northern Netherlands and in Leeuwarden, the agricultural heart of Friesland. This enlightening three-day event is tailored for young and future farmers, agricultural students, and trainee.

The tour will commence in Leeuwarden with an initial session for registration and introductions, setting the stage for a series of engaging activities. The first day will feature an interactive program conducted by the Working Group "Grazing" of the European Grassland Federation.



Participants will attend brief presentations intertwined with workshops that explore the multifaceted benefits of pasture-based ruminant production systems, emphasising their economic, ecological, cultural, and societal impacts.

On the second day of the Young Farmers Tour, participants will visit innovative Dutch dairy farms around Leeuwarden, exploring practices like biodiversity-focused farming and the New Dutch Grazing system. The day includes discussions with Swiss and Romanian experts on the ecosystem services of grasslands, and ends with a networking reception with top grassland experts and industry leaders.



The tour will wrap up on June 11th with further farm visits, including a trip to the CRV Dairy Breeding Center in Wirdum. After traveling through the iconic "de Afsluitdijk", participants will visit a commercial dairy farm in North Holland that demonstrates cutting-edge technologies like Lely's "Exos" fresh grass concept. The tour will conclude with a session to summarise the experiences and learnings, followed by transportation options for returning to Leeuwarden or departing from Schiphol Airport.

This event promises to be a comprehensive learning experience, offering young agriculturists a firsthand look at sustainable farming practices and innovations within the field of agroecology.

For more information, you can visit the event [agenda](#).



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UPDATES ON PROJECT MEMBERS ACTIVITIES

GERMANY

On February 13th, German farmers explored the carbon footprint of pasture-based dairy farming in a workshop led by Dr. Friederike Fenger. The session emphasised the holistic assessment of farm activities, including the benefits of pasture grazing in reducing emissions related to feed storage and fertilisers.



The discussion also highlighted the environmental advantages of grass-based milk production, such as lower methane emissions and reduced reliance on imported soy, which helps protect rainforests. Additionally, the importance of recognising the carbon sequestration capacity of permanent grasslands was noted. The workshop concluded that while climate tools are useful, a comprehensive view that includes biodiversity and nutrient management is essential for accurately assessing environmental impacts. For further details, you can read the full article [here](#).



The "GreenMoor" project, launched on April 5 in Elsfleth, Germany, aims to promote sustainable dairy farming on peatland soils by introducing management practices that reduce emissions. This four-year initiative, based at the Hanken family farm, tests partial rewetting techniques to lower greenhouse gases. Supported by Molkerei Ammerland and the University of Greifswald, "GreenMoor" strives to make peatland farming sustainable, economically viable, and aligned with climate protection goals. For more details, view the project video here: [GreenMoor Project Video](#).



FRANCE

In this period in France, farmers have been improving their agroecological practices by focusing on better fertilisation methods and optimal mowing times. A significant event was the conference on grasslands and livestock farming held on March 7th in Laval, attended by over 300 people.



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Organised with INRAE, the conference featured experts Jean-Louis Peyraud and Luc Delby discussing the crucial role of livestock in French agriculture and its impact on climate change, biodiversity, and environmental sustainability. They emphasised the importance of grasslands and effective grazing management to align livestock needs with grass availability throughout the year.



ITALY

On April 11, 2024, the second national Young Farmers meeting in Sassari, Sardinia, focused on tackling microplastic pollution in animal farming. A local agricultural student discussed the main sources of plastic waste on his family's farm and shared strategies for managing this waste to prevent microplastic pollution. CNR researchers also explained the environmental impact of microplastics on biodiversity and soil health, underscoring the importance of sustainable packaging and waste management in agriculture. The session concluded with a hands-on workshop on identifying microplastics in irrigation water.



The next day, a storytelling and videomaking seminar was held, engaging students and teachers in the basics of videomaking, including interview simulations and shooting exercises, with plans for a future seminar on video editing using an app.



IRELAND

The Teagasc Grass10 Campaign, supported by some organisations, has hosted spring grazing and clover walks across Ireland, addressing the challenges posed by this spring's unusually wet conditions. These events provided a platform for farmers to see how peers successfully managed grazing and plan for future clover incorporation.

Dr. Michael O'Donovan from Teagasc noted significant grass growth despite the wet weather, but also highlighted the grazing deficits on many farms. The events were well-attended, drawing about 600 farmers, and offered valuable insights and strategies for managing the difficult grazing conditions this season.



THE NETHERLANDS

On March 26, 2024, the first Dutch farm walk of the year took place at Auke Spijkerman's farm in Wapserveen. During this event, farmers utilised the G4AE self-assessment tool to evaluate their grazing and agro-ecology practices, sharing and discussing the results to highlight both similarities and differences.



Auke introduced participants to Agrinet, a grassland management tool he employs for predicting grass growth and planning pasture usage. The farm walk included a tour of his species-rich grassland located on peat/sand soil, during which he demonstrated how various farm roadways are strategically used to improve access to his pastures.



SWEDEN

The Grazing Award, organised by the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences and Svenska Vallföreningen, is designed to promote grazing awareness in Europe. Open from April 15 to August 31, 2024, the competition invites those involved in dairy, beef, or lamb production on temporary or semi-natural grasslands to participate. Entrants can nominate themselves or others by filling out a survey focusing on five agro-ecological pillars: animal welfare, reducing inputs, emissions, and enhancing diversity and biodiversity. For more information, click [here](#).



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Borgeby Fältdagar is a major agricultural fair in Sweden, set for June 26-29, 2023. It attracts about 20,000 visitors and features 500 exhibiting companies from across Northern Europe. The fair includes crop demonstrations, expert talks, machinery demonstrations, and seminars focused on farming. It provides a key opportunity for industry professionals to stay updated and network. Svenska Vallföreningen will also be present with a stand to discuss grazing practices and the G4AE project with farmers.



Every summer, Svenska Vallföreningen organises a two-days tour with one of the stops being Åkerby Manor, a Swedish Partner Farm in the G4AE project. Located in central Sweden, Åkerby Manor manages pastures along the shores of Lake Tysslingen and is known for its grazing suckler cows. Additionally, as part of the same initiative, a tour specifically for young farmers is held annually. This year, it will take place in the Netherlands from June 9th to 11th. So far, fifteen young agricultural professionals have registered, and there are still spots open for additional participants.



ROMANIA

On April 19, 2024, the University of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine of Cluj-Napoca (USAMV-Cluj) and AgroTransilvania Cluster (ATC) held the "Innovations in Grazing" workshop at the Agraria Fair in Jucu, Cluj County. This session highlighted the "Skilled Farmer in Grazing" competition, part of the "Grazing4Agroecology" (G4AE) Horizon Project. Participants discussed the latest in sustainable grazing and agroecology, gaining insights from experts.



Valentin Mihai (USAMV) discussed the Grazing4AgroEcology project's objectives and impact, while Daniel Chiciudean (USAMV) detailed the competition aimed at encouraging innovation among farmers. Vaida Sebastian, Vlad Dănila (both PFA), and Vlad Isarie (ATC) shared practical experiences and case studies on grazing innovations, local gastronomic product valorisation, virtual fencing, and farm promotion techniques.

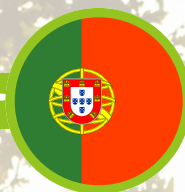


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In early March, Romanian Facilitator Agents from USAMV-Cluj and AgroTransilvania Cluster held successful workshops at two agricultural cooperatives, attended by over 45 farmers from “Someș-Arieș” and “Țibleş-Someș-Meleș.” The workshops focused on "How to Make a Video," providing practical tools for farmers to effectively showcase their practices. The sessions generated significant enthusiasm, with participants eager to use video production to enhance their farms' visibility and communicate the complexities of modern farming.



PORTUGAL

The 2nd Extensive Livestock Innovation Award, hosted by CONSULAI and Grazing4AgroEcology, took place on March 1st in Évora, Portugal. This initiative celebrates pioneering advancements in livestock farming that align with national and European strategies for sustainable agriculture.



It focuses on three main areas: Environmental Sustainability, which rewards zero carbon emissions and circular raw material use; Technological Innovation, recognising farms that enhance efficiency and profitability through advanced technology; and Profitability, where farms must demonstrate high economic performance while adhering to comprehensive sustainability standards.



Innovation and Partner Farm Network (PFN)

PORTUGAL

In Portugal, the "Carne D'Erva" farm exemplifies sustainable agriculture on 25 hectares, focusing on grass-fed livestock without fertilisers, aligning with the farm-to-fork model. Plans include installing a video surveillance system to optimise irrigation and monitor animal welfare, with a live stream for consumers to view the animals directly, enhancing transparency and support for their 100% organic products. For more details, visit Carne de Erva.



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Innovation and Partner Farm Network (PFN)



IRELAND

Kevin Murphy, from Gorey, Co. Wexford hosted a spring grazing farm walk on the 5th of April. With challenging grazing conditions he shared his on-off grazing strategy where cows graze for only 2-3 hours post-milking instead of the usual 5-6 hours, reducing paddock damage in wet weather while incorporating grass into their diet.

FRANCE

Romain Chevrel, an organic milk producer in Val-d'Izé, Brittany, manages a farm with 120 crossbred cows producing 664,000 liters of milk annually. In 2017, he installed two milking robots to reduce labor and maintain year-round grazing for the cows. The farm's automated system directs cows to designated paddocks and provides 500 kg of farm-produced dehydrated corn ears per cow annually as concentrates. This technology has significantly eased the workload, enabling Romain to work shorter days and take Wednesdays off to spend with his children.

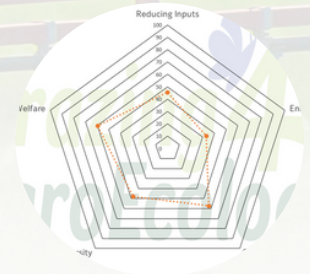


ITALY

At 'Su Giau,' a dairy sheep farm in North Sardinia, paired paddock grazing combines grass and legume-based pastures to optimise land use and maintain pasture health. Sheep graze on a rotational basis, which enhances their grass and protein intake and preserves the quality of the pastures. The farm has also implemented once-daily milking to reduce labor, accepting a slight 5% decrease in milk yield. This system involves careful monitoring of productivity and the strategic use of legumes to minimise fertiliser and concentrate use, streamlining operations while adhering to sustainable farming practices.

GERMANY

The G4AE project has introduced a self-assessment tool for European farmers to evaluate their adherence to five key agroecological principles: reducing inputs, diversifying production, minimising pollution, enhancing agrobiodiversity, and improving animal health and welfare. This tool, used during a pilot with Northern German farmers, helps identify discrepancies between perceived and actual farm performance, fostering peer learning and strategic planning.



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SWEDEN

In February, farmers visited Sweden's Hagshult farm in Sweden, known for sustainably processing grass-fed dairy cows and marketing its meat directly. The farm is continuously evolving, including initiatives like a Spotify tune release. This visit enabled valuable knowledge exchange among farmers.

Upcoming videos will showcase innovations from Sweden's partner farms, addressing semi-natural grassland management, animal care, and pasture-based production. Topics will include managing biodiversity, water levels, and predator threats, along with key investments in irrigation and fencing.



Country views

France

WINTER 2023-2024

2°C



50%



The winter of 2023-2024 in France was the third mildest on record, with temperatures 2°C above average and February rainfall 50% higher than normal. This replenished groundwater in most areas but left soils very moist, delaying the grazing season due to reduced soil load-bearing capacity. Persistent rain into mid-April further complicated grazing management, leaving many plots unfertilised.

For more detailed weather impacts and agricultural forecasts, visit the Institut de l'Elevage and the Forage Observatory by the Chamber of Agriculture of Brittany: [Forage Observatory](#).

Germany

FEBRUARY 2024

3°C



In Northern Germany, grassland vegetation started early in February, indicated by early-blooming crocus and forsythia and a temperature sum of 200°C. However, wet soil conditions have delayed the start of the grazing season and grassland maintenance. The annual "opening of grazing season event" in Lower Saxony, inspired by Sweden's "Kosläpp," is set for April 13th to celebrate the onset of grazing and showcase agriculture to the public. For more information, visit: [Grünlandzentrum Weideautrieb 2024](#).

Italy

JANUARY -
FEBRUARY 2024

1.5-2.5°C



170mm



In January 2024, Sardinia experienced temperatures 1 to 1.5 °C above average with varied rainfall that supported seed germination, particularly in traditionally tilled areas. Forage growth thrived in wetter regions, while drier areas like the Nurra plain saw slower progress. February continued with frequent rainfall, especially in western Sardinia, where it exceeded 170 mm and temperatures were over 2.5 °C above average, enhancing the growth of cereals and pastures, except in the drier southern regions.

Ireland

SPRING 2024



In spring 2024, Irish farmers faced difficult grazing conditions due to higher-than-average rainfall, which delayed the second grazing rotation until April and led to fodder shortages and increased pressure on slurry storage. Reduced application of organic and chemical nitrogen also hindered grass growth, potentially impacting the quality of the first silage cut.

Sweden

WINTER -
SPRING 2024



Much water. This is typical for the past winter and the situation for this year's growing season. Unusually heavy precipitation has filled the reservoirs in irrigation dams and groundwater. The water delays the spring field work but boosts the ley and pasture and hopefully contributes to a better resistance against the more frequent dry periods.



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PARTNER PUBLISHER UPDATES



FRANCE

To ensure the quality of grass silage in France given the current weather conditions, it's crucial to anticipate and adapt your silage strategies. Here are some tips to help manage these challenges effectively.

> [see more](#)

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GERMANY

The Schilling family, recognised as "Best Milk Producers in Lower Saxony" in 2022, has been farming for over 280 years. They use a short-grass grazing system, giving cows daily access to fresh pastures for optimal milk production using their own forage.

> [see more](#)

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SWEDEN

The G4AE project has established a network with eight Swedish agricultural journalists to promote grazing awareness and combat its decline. The network focuses on both semi-natural and temporary grasslands across Europe. Members will participate in online meetings and attend events like grazing field days to enhance and exchange knowledge on grazing practices.

> [see more](#)

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PORTUGAL

The G4AE project has established a network with one Portuguese Technical-scientific agricultural magazine - Agrotec - and with Rede Rural Nacional, which is an online platform, for disseminating and sharing information about agriculture, food production, forestry, and rural areas.

> [see more](#)

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