

GRAZING4AGROECOLOGY
NEWSLETTER SEPTEMBER 2024



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Welcome to the sixth edition of the Grazing4AgroEcology Newsletter!

In this sixth edition of our newsletter, we bring you a comprehensive overview of key developments and activities within our community. We begin with a recap of the Young Farmers Tour, highlighting the experiences and insights gained by the young farmers who participated. We also provide updates on the activities of our project members across various regions, showcasing their ongoing efforts and achievements.

The latest innovations within the Partner Farm Network (PFN) are featured, demonstrating how these advancements are transforming farming practices. In our "Country Views" section, we share perspectives and updates from different countries, offering a diverse look at agricultural trends and challenges. Additionally, our partner publishers contribute with valuable insights, further enriching this edition.

We invite you to delve into these updates to better understand the impact of these developments on the agricultural sector.



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Aeres University of Applied Sciences
Dronen

Young Farmers Tour
Friesland and North Holland, The Netherlands






5.0 Rating

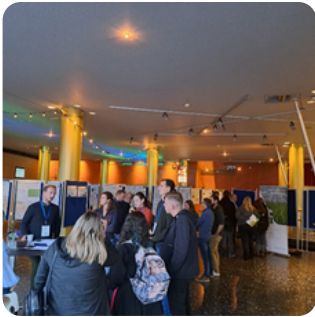
For more information click [here](#).

The event brought together 46 young farmers from seven European countries to share knowledge on grassland management, grazing techniques, biodiversity, and meadow bird management.

Event highlights

-  Day 1: The event began with introductions and discussions about grazing cattle. This was followed by the 8th Working Group “Grazing” meeting with the European Grassland Federation, which focused on the benefits of pasture-based ruminant production systems. The day concluded with a networking reception.
-  Day 2: Participants visited Doede Hettinga’s farm to learn about the New Dutch Grazing system and Wieke Marije Bakker’s nature-inclusive dairy farm. In the afternoon, there were presentations by Valentin Klaus from Switzerland on balancing ecosystem services and Mugur Jitea from Romania on the economic value of cultural ecosystem services. The day also included meetings with industry leaders and sponsor and concluded with a welcome speech by Femke Wiersma (then representative of the province Friesland, now the Dutch minister of Agriculture, Fisheries, Food Security and Nature) at the Fries Museum
-  Day 3: The final day included a visit to the CRV Dairy Breeding Center in Wirdum, where participants learned about breeding objectives and methodologies. The tour continued with a visit to Van der Starre dairy farm in Slootdorp, which featured Lely’s automated milking systems and the Lely Exos capable of autonomously harvesting fresh grass from the pasture to feed the cows. The final farm walk took place at Kay Oostinga and Iris Huisman’s farm in Burgerbrug, focusing on strip grazing.

More Images





Early survey results from the Grazing4AgroEcology project highlight differences in farmers' perceptions and support for adopting innovative grazing practices across Europe.



From December 2023 until March 2024, a large-scale survey for livestock farmers was available as a part of the project Grazing4AgroEcology. With the survey, we aimed to understand the opportunities and challenges of adopting new grazing management practices and innovations perceived by farmers. Therefore, we conducted an expert workshop to select five relevant innovative practices (Thielecke et al. 2024), which were evaluated by the participants of the survey. These practices were: rotational grazing with short intervals, establishing or maintaining trees, hedges and shrubs on pastures, adapted livestock breeds, seeding of mixtures with different functional groups and virtual fencing.



A first look at the collected data shows that a lack of advisory for some practices is perceived in some countries, for example in Germany for rotational grazing. The perceived support for specific innovations differs between the countries. For instance, in Romania the perceived support for working with adapted livestock breeds is high, but low in the Netherlands. Additionally, the personal attitude seems to influence the intention to adopt a new management positively. If farmers think that a management is good or reasonable, they are willing to adopt it. Furthermore, we see indications that the social network of the farmers can influence the intention to adopt new management measures. Especially if it is perceived that the personal network is not convinced of a specific management practice, farmers might decide against it. Higher labour and time requirements and lower productivity (meat/milk) are perceived as main barriers for grazing.



In conclusion, our data shows differences between the member states of Grazing4AgroEcology regarding farmers' perception of grazing and innovations in grazing management. These differences deliver the possibility to learn across countries. Locally adapted and customised opportunities for grazing are needed, and the benefits of grazing management innovations need to be promoted in farmers communities. During the next months, the data of the survey will be analysed statistically,



Thielecke D., Riesch F., Fracchetti L., Isselstein J. & Peratoner G. (2024) European expert opinions on implementation, viability and relevance of innovative grazing practices. Grassland Science in Europe 29, 348-350. <https://www.egf2024.com/scientific-information/>





Ireland



Young Farmers Meeting

A successful young farmer meeting was held at Paul Bowden's farm in Urlingford, Co. Kilkenny. Paul farms in partnership with his father, Denis. They milk 137 cows and rear all replacements on a 68 ha farm, which features a new 20-unit milking parlour and drafting system installed last year. Fifteen young farmers from across Ireland discussed labour efficiency, grassland management after a challenging spring, and improvements for farm grazing infrastructure for the upcoming autumn and spring.



France



Young Farmers Tour

During a Young Farmers Tour in the Netherlands, five French PFN farmers visited Friesland dairy farms. They noted high land prices (€50,000 to €150,000/ha), high productivity (10,000L/cow/year), heavy nitrogen use (over 400kg/ha), absence of legumes, prevalence of perennial ryegrass, frequent grazing cycles (up to 30/year), canal-bordered paddocks, and long working hours (70+ hours/week). The tour allowed for valuable exchanges with international farmers and students. At their June 26 meeting, the group shared insights on Dutch dairy systems and compared them with those in South Tyrol, viewing videos that highlighted unique agricultural challenges.



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Insights on preserving dairy farmland

The second Dutch AKIS stakeholder meeting of the Grazing4AgroEcology project focused on preserving land from stopping dairy farms and dealing with land consolidation. Participants included dairy farmers and representatives from the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, Food Security and Nature, BoerenNatuur, LTO, NAJK, Aeres University of Applied Sciences, and DMS Advies. Wil Meulenbroeks, from Noord-Brabant, provided an inspiring introduction based on his land consolidation experience. The partners then collaboratively identified needs and offered advice.



CONSULAI Promotes Agroecology and effective communication in Lisbon

On May 7th, CONSULAI held a meeting for 15 young farmers at the School of Agriculture in Lisbon during Job Fair week. They discussed agroecology, presented the Grazing4AgroEcology project, and found that many students were already familiar with and practicing agroecology principles.

On May 24th, CONSULAI hosted a video and storytelling workshop for 11 advisors in Lisbon. The workshop emphasised the power of visual information and covered the phases of video creation—planning, recording, editing, and sharing—highlighting the importance of structuring videos to capture attention, explain topics, and include a call to action.





Sweden



International AKIS Workshop: Grazing Product Value



In June, the first international AKIS meeting at Sweden’s Royal Estate Stenhammar featured 18 participants from Germany, Italy, and Sweden. They discussed monetising pasture-based livestock.

Arno Krause (Germany) highlighted the Pro Wiedeland milk brand. Anna Jamieson (Sweden) shared a 20-year journey in value-added meat. Reinhard Verdorfer and Martin Unterweger (Italy) discussed marketing organic, local meat and milk.

The meeting ended with a tour of the estate, showcasing grass harvesting and pasture-based cattle.



Italy



Agricultural Events and Workshops

- The third meeting at the University of Bolzano, South Tyrol, involved 12 students in a workshop on a self-assessment tool. They applied the tool to an experimental farm in Dietenheim, presented their findings, and discussed tool performance and challenges.

Partner Farm Meetings in Sardinia:

- Osilo (3 May 2024): Discussion on managing permanent pastures, focusing on self-reseeding vs. permanent pastures.
- Runchina (6 May 2024): Discussion on innovative forage mixtures for extended production, weed control, and reduced fertiliser use.

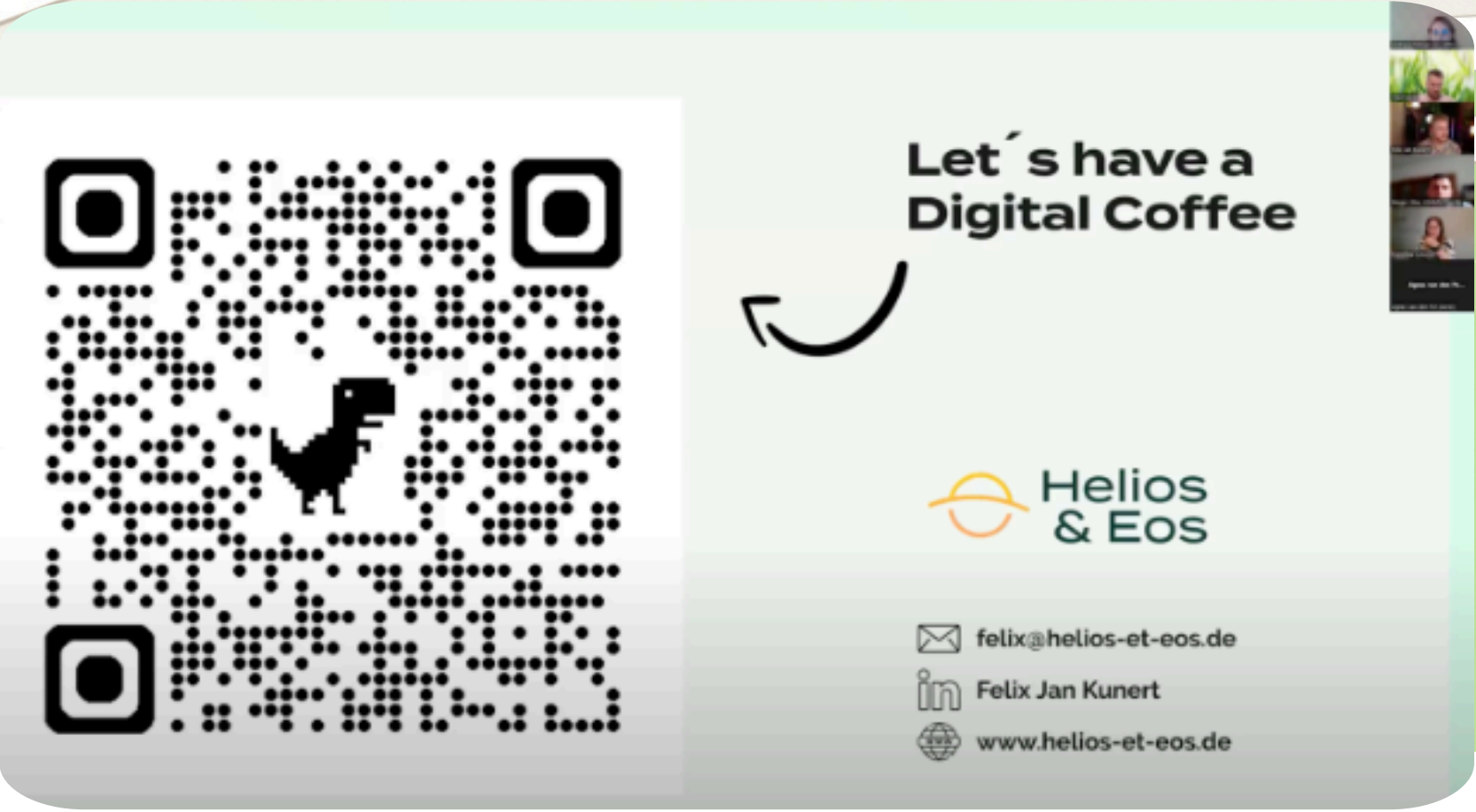
Video Editing Workshop: Students at Istituto Tecnico Agrario in Sassari learned to use the InShot app by editing a poetry reading video.

Self-Assessment Tool Completion: In June 2024, Italian G4AE Partners completed self-assessment tools with farmers and provided recommendations for improving sustainability and animal welfare.





Romania



AI Workshop for Grazing Publishers

On May 29, 2024, AgroTransilvania Cluster (ATC) and USAMV Cluj-Napoca hosted the 2nd Pan-European Grazing Publishers Webinar. The event introduced AI tools for the grazing and farming publishing sectors, covering AI fundamentals, applications, and content strategy enhancements. Led by Felix Jan Kunert, the workshop also addressed challenges in AI integration, promoting collaboration and innovation within agricultural publishing. For more information you can acces the [link](#).



4th Partner Farms Meeting at Green Farm Sel

In late May 2024, the 4th Partner Farms Meeting was held at Green Farm Sel in Cheia, Cluj, Romania, organised by USAMV Cluj-Napoca and AgroTransilvania Cluster (ATC). The event gathered over 40 farmers, researchers, and agricultural experts to discuss agricultural innovations and visit one of the region's most modern farms. Participants toured the farm, home to around 1000 Aberdeen Angus cattle, and learned about strategies for short supply chain sales and adding value to farm products. Discussions also covered non-reimbursable funding opportunities in animal husbandry, with the 2024 funding calendar presented. The meeting fostered collaboration and knowledge-sharing, promoting innovation and sustainability in Romanian agriculture.



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Germany: Three-Breed Cross for Robustness, Milk Yield, and Marketing

The Bartels family farm in Northwestern Germany manages 190 ha with 200 dairy cows on sandy soil. Facing infrastructure challenges, they implemented a three-breed crossbreeding system:

- Holstein-Friesian for high milk yield.
- Swedish Red-and-White for hoof health, mobility, fertility, and milk components.
- Montbéliard for milk quality and better male weaner sales.

Since 2000, this system has improved calf health, reduced mortality, and enhanced fertility, allowing winter block calving. The farm optimised pasture use with short sward grazing and plans further improvements like installing water pipes and enhancing road quality.

Swedish: Fair Borgeby

In late June, the G4AE project participated in Sweden’s largest agricultural summer fair, Borgeby fältdagar, in southern Sweden. Together with the Swedish Grassland Society, they engaged in many productive meetings and discussions. The focus was on innovations from partner farms, such as managing alder on semi-natural grasslands, establishing ley in dry areas, implementing two cuts between grazing, producing and marketing beef from culled dairy cows, and investing in pasture irrigation. Network farmers joined the discussions and were pleased to learn their videos would soon be published online.





Portugal: Carne D’Erva’s Organic Grass-Fed Meat Production

João Pedro Pereira, a partner of the “Carne D’Erva” brand, rents 100 ha near Lisbon in Santa Iria-da-Azóia, producing 100% grass-fed meat sold via e-commerce. The organic farm includes 25 ha of grazed grassland, 75 ha of cut grasslands/meadows, and 25 ha of permanent crops. It supports 60 adult cows that graze year-round, weather permitting. After fattening, animals are processed at a slaughterhouse, the only step not controlled by the farm, then sold directly to consumers online.

The farmers plan to install a video surveillance system to monitor land and animal health 24/7, improve irrigation, and enhance animal welfare. This system will also allow live streaming on their website, demonstrating to consumers the high standards of animal care and farm conditions.

France: Sowing Grassland with a Quad

The group visited Styven Thomas’ farm in Le Faou, Finistère. Styven is a young organic farmer with crossbred cows, spring block calving, and a once-a-day milking system.

Quad seeding is an innovative method for small areas, offering advantages like speed (20 min/ha), reduced soil compaction, and lower fuel consumption compared to tractor seeding. This method ensures uniform seeding, preventing issues with soil cover and weed growth. The process involves seeding 3.5 meters apart in rows, then diagonally across the field. The pellet spreader, attached to the quad, was purchased from a CUMA (agricultural equipment cooperative).

Styven also practices agroforestry, planting various tree species in paddocks to protect animals from sun and wind, contributing to climate change adaptation.





The Netherlands: Innovative Grazing Practices and Cow-Calf Management at Het Boterhuys

The Dutch Grazing4AgroEcology study group visited Gerard Mul’s Boterhuys farm in Warmond. Gerard uses the Collie system for virtual fencing, which eliminates the need for electric wires. The system uses solar-charged collars that assign cows to zones via an app, with beeps and electric pulses keeping them within boundaries. The system can also direct cows back to the barn using vibrations. Gerard practices cow-calf contact, keeping calves with their mothers for up to three months and using gradual weaning methods. He also avoids dehorning to maintain natural animal behavior, with minimal injuries observed. For more information, visit [Boterhuys Farm](#) and [Collie System](#).

Ireland: Clover Incorporation and Nutrient Management

A Partner Farm Network meeting was held at the O’Donnell farm in Golden, Co. Tipperary. The O’Donnells grow an average of 15 tonnes DM/ha annually. The meeting focused on farm management innovations, particularly incorporating clover in reseeded areas and effective nutrient management. The O’Donnells reduce chemical nitrogen to 130-160 kg/ha on clover paddocks, using soiled water from the yard to replace chemical fertiliser during the growing season on paddocks with over 20% clover content.





Romania: Moldovan Family Farm: Blending Tradition and Innovation in Animal Husbandry

Cristina Moldovan, a student at the Faculty of Horticulture and Business in Rural Development and a passionate farmer from Berindu (Cluj county), operates a family farm with 17 Romanian buffaloes. The farm spans 140 hectares, with 110 hectares dedicated to permanent grazing, managed by the Berindu Animal Breeders Association, of which Cristina is a member. In summer, the buffaloes graze freely 24/7. To minimise daily animal movement, the family has innovatively set up a milking space directly on the pasture, optimising work and enhancing animal welfare. Facing volatile milk prices, the Moldovan family processes their milk into high-quality cheese and cream using traditional methods. Committed to connecting directly with consumers, they distribute their products personally, ensuring authenticity and quality reach their customers' homes.

Italy: Grass-based and labour-efficient dairy production by means of a grazing-oriented cattle breed and farming system in South Tyrol

Maximising labour and feed efficiency, especially when using own forage use, is a pivotal issue for all livestock farms. Aiming to match cattle needs and grass availability while minimising labour and resources, the Stockner family at Schnagererhof has developed over many years a pasture-specialised management system. Key steps in this process were the introduction of full grazing in combination with a short sward grazing system, seasonal spring calving and the switch from an all-year-round indoor housing and Braunvieh breed to a grazing-based production with the Jersey breed. By consistently focusing on an intensive grazing system, the farm achieves the best forage quality from the permanent pastures and produces fully grass-based milk. By not using concentrated feed, there is no food competition with humans. Grazing significantly reduces work processes in the field: fertilisation, mowing, forage field curing and harvesting of forage are strongly reduced. This leads to a considerable reduction in the amount of machinery required and therefore in fuel consumption. Seasonal calving allows taking a break of about 8-12 weeks from milking during the winter, which increases the family's life quality.



Italy

April:
+2°C above average, occasional 30°C peaks. Rainfall at 50% of normal, with a -80 mm water deficit. Grass growth reduced, but forage availability adequate.

May:
Rainfall near average but under 100 mm. Temperatures average or slightly above. Wet fields caused haymaking issues.

June:
Scarce rainfall, mainly on the 24th-25th. Temperatures slightly above average. Mowing and haymaking of grasses and alfalfa continued smoothly. Irrigated crops had no issues.



The Netherlands

In many parts of the Netherlands, grazing and mowing started late this year due to the heavy rainfall. Soils were too wet to graze or to harvest grass. The differences between the different regions were also much larger than usual. The latest insights on grass growth and grass quality are provided weekly by VeeteeltGRAS through the [website](#).



Germany

Germany's "Haltungsform" label classifies animal products based on welfare. In summer 2024, a fifth level will require cows to have year-round pasture and yard access for level 4 classification. This may downgrade pasture milk, despite its benefits. Stakeholders are discussing solutions, with a decision expected soon.



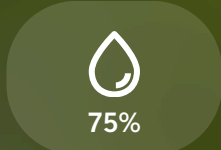
Ireland

Growth rates in Ireland are 52–65 kg DM/ha/day, below average due to an unseasonably cold summer. This limits opportunities for silage. Farmers should walk and measure grass weekly to make grazing decisions. As the breeding season ends, focus shifts to ensuring enough winter fodder. Farmers should use Pasturebase Ireland to calculate fodder needs.



Sweden

This summer is favorable for grazing and crop production due to higher-than-normal rainfall. Fodder crops are thriving, and the harvest of cereals, ley cuts, and maize is pending. However, excess water has caused delays in sowing and harvesting, potentially affecting quality.



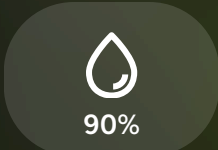
France

Since November 2023, continuous rain has raised groundwater levels, except near the Mediterranean. Farmers struggled with grazing and often brought animals indoors to protect pastures. Haylage was made this spring due to unsuitable haymaking conditions, even in June. Grass is plentiful but mature, lowering nutritional value despite high yield. Rain continues into July, likely supporting summer grass growth. For more details, refer to the [Institut de l'Elevage's](#) monthly reports.



Portugal

Early 2024 was one of the hottest and rainiest periods in decades. Heavy rain reduced drought in southern Portugal, but higher temperatures increased CO2 emissions due to faster organic matter decomposition. By May, pastures had excellent growth, providing ample livestock feed compared to the previous year's dry conditions. However, some regions still face drought, with insufficient grass production, though less severe than last year.





Portugal
Consulai



The article from Consulai covers the European Grazing4AgroEcology (G4AE) project, which aims to reverse the decline of grazing systems in Europe through rotational grazing. This method improves soil health, forage production, parasite control, and biodiversity. Involving several European countries, including Portugal, the project promotes sustainable farming practices aligned with the EU Green Deal, showcasing innovations that enhance soil conditions, feed quality, and animal welfare. For more details, visit the article [here](#).



Likes



Reply



Repost



Germany
Topagrar



Elite Magazin discusses rotational grazing, where land is divided into parcels, and cows are moved every few days. This maintains optimal grass height (8-10 cm) and allows land to rest for 21 days, ensuring high feed quality, better fertilization, and reduced parasite risk. It's a flexible and efficient pasture management method, enhancing grassland productivity. For more details, visit the article [here](#).



Like



Reply



Repost



France
Web-agri



The Inrae du Pin-au-Haras is conducting an experiment on simplified rotational grazing for its dairy herd of 140 cows. The animals graze 10 hectares for 10 days before moving to a new parcel, optimizing management and production. This method, tested since the 1990s, shows similar performance to daily grazing while being easier to manage. Milk production guides the rotation of the parcels. The Tripl'XL project, which will last at least five years, will study various aspects such as reproduction, grazing behavior, and supplemental feeding of the cows. For more details, visit the article [here](#).



Likes



Reply



Repost



Ireland
Teagasc



The article on the Teagasc website highlights the benefits of rotational grazing, where land is divided into parcels and cows are moved periodically. This system maintains optimal grass height, allows land to recover, and improves feed quality, fertilization, and parasite control. It is an efficient method for enhancing grassland productivity. For more details, visit the article [here](#).



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Repost



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PARTNERS












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