



# **Grazing4AgroEcology**

## **NEWSLETTER JUNE 2025**

### **No.9**



**Funded by  
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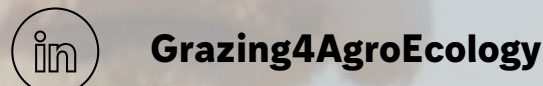
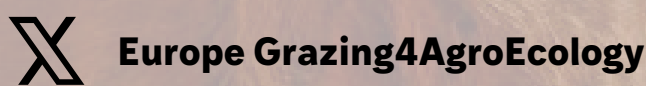
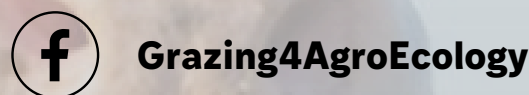
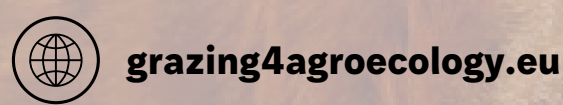
**Welcome to the ninth edition of the Grazing4AgroEcology Newsletter!**

In this edition, we take you through the latest activities and collaborations within the Grazing4AgroEcology community. A central highlight is the Young Farmers Tour in Ireland, which brought together over 70 participants from across Europe for two days of farm visits, shared learning, and the celebration of innovation during the G4AE Grazing Awards. The event showcased practical grazing solutions and helped build strong connections between young farmers and advisors.

You'll also find country updates from our project partners, showing how local conditions, climate, and policies are influencing grassland farming. The Partner Farm Network (PFN) shares new examples of practical solutions for low-input farming, biodiversity, and the smart use of technology in grazing systems.

Our "Country Views" section includes national perspectives from different regions, offering a clearer picture of current trends and challenges in pasture-based agriculture. These updates are complemented by contributions from partner publishers, who help tell the farmers' stories in meaningful and engaging ways.

We invite you to explore this edition and discover how grazing-based farming continues to evolve across Europe—towards more resilient, sustainable, and farmer-driven systems.





A scenic mountain landscape with a brown and white cow in the foreground. The cow is standing in a lush green field, looking towards the right. In the background, there are steep, rocky mountains under a blue sky with scattered white clouds. A dirt path winds through the field.

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From April 28th to 30th, over 70 young farmers from across Europe took part in the Young Farmers Tour in Ireland, organised under the Grazing4AgroEcology project. The event brought together young farmers, researchers, and advisors for an inspiring experience filled with knowledge exchange, farm visits, and the celebration of best practices in grassland management through the G4AE Grazing Awards.

Event highlights

- Participants visited both commercial and research farms, including Teagasc Moorepark and Oakpark, where they explored innovations such as clover-based systems, low-nitrogen strategies, and advanced pasture infrastructure. These visits offered practical insights into Irish grazing systems and created space for participants to reflect on how such practices could be adapted to their own contexts. The presence of strong delegations from countries like Sweden and Germany highlighted the growing interest in sustainable grazing across Europe.
- In addition to the technical content, the tour provided space for open dialogue between farmers and experts from different regions and backgrounds. From discussions on climate resilience and livestock health to technological tools for pasture management, the atmosphere encouraged exchange, curiosity, and collaboration. Informal moments between farm visits also helped create new bonds and cross-border networks that will outlast the event itself.
- The final evening in Cork hosted the G4AE Grazing Awards Ceremony, honouring eight exceptional farmers—each representing one of the project’s partner countries: France, Germany, the Netherlands, Romania, Portugal, Sweden, Ireland, and Italy. The ceremony blended emotion, pride, and shared vision, marking a memorable conclusion to this vibrant European gathering.







Farmer Networks & Knowledge Exchange

In early April, members of the Partner Farm Network in France took part in several exchange and learning activities. On April 1st, six farmers visited Etienne Leretref’s farm in Montreuil-sous-Pérouse (Eastern Brittany). Under sunny skies, they exchanged insights on three-way crossbreeding strategies in herd reproduction, pasture management, and various infrastructure upgrades on the farm—including laneways, water points, and fencing. On April 2nd, the French AKIS group gathered at the experimental farm in Thorigné d’Anjou to discuss the promotion of alfalfa and agroecological policies at European, national, and regional levels, with a focus on grazing. One major barrier discussed was the reclassification rule that discourages maintaining permanent grasslands beyond five years due to crop rotation exemption issues. Later that day, participants toured the experimental farm, which features grass-finishing livestock, winter and summer bale grazing, and sowing grass under mixed cereal cover crops. Watch the video from the farm visit [here](#).



Young Farmer Tour & Grazing Award

From April 28th to 30th, six French farmers took part in the Young Farmer Tour in Ireland, where they visited two family-run dairy farms and two research centers. They observed large herds (150–250 cows), 10-month pasture access, and calving aligned with grass growth. While yields reached 6,000–7,000 liters per cow, farmers noted the high use of synthetic nitrogen (up to 212 kgN/ha/year) and the challenges of introducing white clover. At Moorepark and Curtins Research Farms, they learned about trials aiming to reduce nitrogen use by integrating white clover and multi-species swards (e.g., timothy, chicory, plantain) without compromising yields or milk production. During the trip, French dairy farmer Kévin Hélibert received a Grazing Award for his 4-year-old pasture, composed of perennial ryegrass and white clover. It yields 14 tDM/ha without synthetic fertilization, thanks to precise grazing and the planting of dozens of trees to buffer climate impacts.







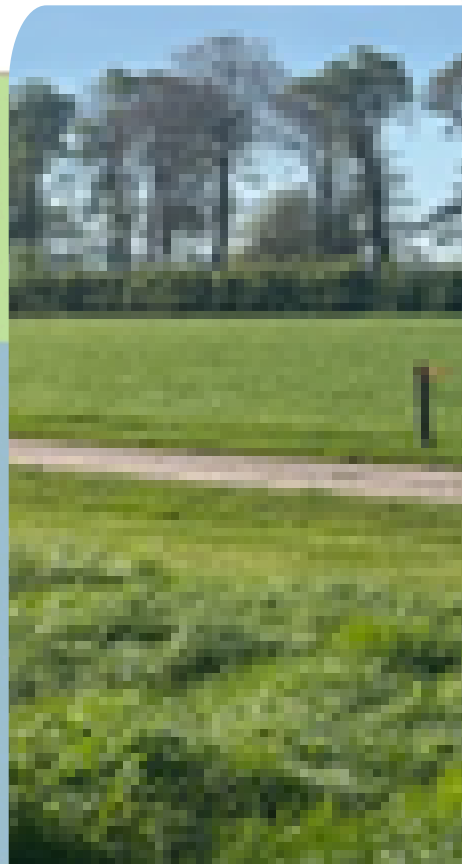
### Grazing4AgroEcology Tour & Awards

Ireland recently hosted the top European grassland farmers during a two-day Grazing4AgroEcology tour, culminating in an awards ceremony at Teagasc Moorepark Animal and Grassland Innovation Centre. The event brought together 70 young farmers and project partners, with visits to commercial and research farms.

The awards recognised eight outstanding farmers for their innovative grazing practices:

- France – Kévin Hélibert: Improving grazing infrastructures
- Germany – Heiko Stelling: Transitioning from zero to full-day grazing
- Netherlands – Renske Weitkamp: G4AE in practice
- Romania – Cristian Echim: Rotational grazing in an organic system
- Portugal – Fernando Vasconcelos: Using GPS collars
- Sweden – Anna & Anders Carlsson: Structured grazing management
- Ireland – Patrick & Michelle O'Neill: High clover/low nitrogen system
- Italy – Sabine Widmann: Closed nutrient cycles and direct marketing

The event highlighted sustainable grazing as a key strategy for healthy ecosystems, animal welfare, and reduced environmental impact.



### International AKIS Meeting on Pasture Innovation

On April 30th, the International AKIS Meeting took place at Teagasc Moorepark, with Irish and Romanian experts discussing legume integration and cross-country pasture research. Topics included:

- Pasture Profit Index (PPI): Economic ranking tool for perennial ryegrass based on yield, persistence, quality, and grazing potential.
- Clover Capability Research: Since 2017, over 100 ryegrass and clover candidates tested under grazing to refine selection criteria.
- White & Red Clover Trials: Focused on nitrogen reduction and milk yield maintenance, contributing to the future Clover Profit Index.
- Multispecies Swards: Evaluation of species like plantain and chicory under different nitrogen levels to improve yield and resilience.

This meeting provided valuable insight into forage innovation, supporting profitability and sustainability across Europe.







AKIS Meeting: Shaping Policy for Semi-Natural Grasslands

On April 10th, SLU and the knowledge centre SustAnimal hosted an AKIS meeting on grazing policy at the Intakan farm in western Sweden, owned by Karl-Johan, Per-Erik, and Carina Lennartson. The event brought together farmers, scientists, and policymakers to address challenges in maintaining semi-natural grasslands. The day began with a farm walk featuring five thematic stops, each focusing on a specific issue—such as shrub encroachment, chemical control, and regulatory obstacles linked to agri-environmental payments. A workshop followed, aiming to develop policy proposals that modernise grazing while preserving biodiversity-rich grasslands. The discussions were productive and constructive, with no major disagreements. Sixteen participants attended, including five partner farmers, along with representatives from national and regional authorities, farmer organizations, universities, and NGOs.



Grazing Season Opens with Celebration in Northern Germany

On April 12th, the Grünlandzentrum Niedersachsen/Bremen e.V. officially launched the 2025 grazing season with a public event at the Hanken family's dairy farm in Elsfleth. The celebration marked the tenth anniversary of this tradition, supported by PRO WEIDELAND and the dairy cooperative Molkerei Ammerland, and attracted over 1,500 visitors, including families and Lower Saxony's Minister for Economic Affairs, Olaf Lies. The highlight was the joyful moment when young farmer Lena Hanken opened the barn doors and the cows rushed onto fresh spring pastures. Under the motto "Discover the World of Grazing," the event offered a mix of entertainment and education, with stations on soil health, biodiversity, water, and dairy production. Inspired by the Swedish "Kosläpp" tradition, the event also featured a grazing-themed quiz, activities for children, and an international exchange with New Zealand grazing experts. Dr. Arno Krause, Managing Director of the Grünlandzentrum, emphasised the importance of such gatherings in promoting pasture-based farming and its role in sustainable agriculture.







### G4AE Workshop at Agraria: Subsidies, Innovation & Success Stories

On April 11, 2025, the G4AE Romania team hosted a workshop at the Agraria Fair in Jucu (Cluj County), focused on the question: “Are current subsidy measures adapted to the needs of pasture-based farms?” The event brought together farmers, public authorities, researchers, and AKIS facilitators to discuss challenges and ideas for improving support for sustainable grazing. A key moment was the award ceremony of the “Most Skilled Farmer in Pasture Management” contest, organised by USAMV Cluj-Napoca and UBM Feed Romania. The winner, farmer Cristi Echim, received a trip to Ireland to attend the Young Farmer Tour 2025. The workshop also featured an open discussion, with inputs from the Cluj Agricultural Directorate and farmer Sebastian Vaida, offering a valuable space for sharing good practices and strengthening collaboration among key actors in grazing-based agriculture.



### TELLING FARMERS' STORIES: ACCESS & USE G4AE VIDEOS AND ABSTRACTS

First week of July 2025

#### AGENDA

- How to access videos + abstracts.
- How Editors Can Use These Resources
- Open Discussion

### Upcoming G4AE Webinar: Telling Farmers' Stories

At the beginning of July 2025, a new G4AE webinar will take place, dedicated to editors, journalists, and media professionals working in agriculture. The session, titled “Telling Farmers' Stories: Access & Use G4AE Videos and Abstracts”, will explore how G4AE’s growing library of farmer-focused videos and abstracts—produced across all eight partner countries—can support editorial work and media outreach. Participants will be introduced to the full video and abstract collection and invited to share ideas on how to use these materials in articles, social media, and other formats. The webinar will also include breakout discussions on how to better engage audiences through stories of innovative grazing practices. More details will be available soon on the [project website](#). Until then, feel free to reach out to us at [office@agrocluster.ro](mailto:office@agrocluster.ro) for any questions. Stay tuned!







Young Farmers’ Meeting in Sardinia – 24 March 2024

Organised by CNR-ISPAAAM, the meeting brought together 13 young farmers and students from the agricultural high school Istituto tecnico agrario Pellegrini in Sassari. Participants explored agroecological alternatives to chemical fertilisers, including wool pellets, compost from organic waste, and effective microorganisms. A field trial was set up at the school’s experimental farm to test these materials on grasslands, involving barley, bur medics, and chicory. Discussions focused on the pros and cons of each material and further steps needed to support agroecological transition in Sardinian farms.

Upcoming: Participation in the 1st International Congress of Mediterranean Agroecology – 9–11 June 2025

CNR will present G4AE’s objectives, methodology, and main results at this international event in Agrigento, Sicily. The Congress aims to foster dialogue between Mediterranean agroecology researchers and the Agroecology Europe Forum, and to promote a sustainable vision for Mediterranean agriculture rooted in biodiversity and cultural heritage. Click [here](#) for more information.



The Netherlands: Grazing and Technology in Focus

In April, the 7th Partner Farm Network meeting in the Netherlands was held at the farms of Christian Swolfs and Jan Vonk. Discussions focused on managing heat stress and combining grazing with robotic milking. At Swolfs’s farm, planting Honey Locust trees was suggested as a natural way to reduce heat stress. At Vonk’s farm, improving grass quality on peatlands and ensuring smooth cow movement between pasture and robot were key. Well-designed infrastructure—such as roadways and water points—was highlighted as essential for success.







**France: Three-Way Crossbreeding at Etienne Leretrif’s Farm**

Etienne Leretrif runs a 145-hectare dairy farm in Montreuil-sous-Pérouse, Brittany, alongside his father. With 130 ha of grassland, the 100-cow herd produces over 526,000 litres of milk annually, mainly from grazed grass. Since 2018, Etienne has used three-way crossbreeding—combining Prim’Holstein, Jersey, Swedish Red, and New Zealand Friesian—to create smaller, more robust cows suited to low-input grazing. Though milk volume is slightly lower, the cows show improved fertility, higher milk solids, and better health. Heifers calve at two years and are integrated into the main herd, streamlining management. Etienne oversees all breeding decisions directly. For more information click [here](#)!

**Italy: Biodiverse Larch Meadows at Markus Lintner’s Farm**

Located in South Tyrol, Markus Lintner’s farm places biodiversity at the core of its operations. With 24.1 hectares of grasslands—11.4 of which are larch meadows (a traditional agroforestry system)—the farm supports 15 suckler cows and a bull under extensive, low-input grazing conditions. This low-intensity system requires minimal labour and no purchased feed, while still producing high-quality beef marketed through the Bioregio cooperative under the Bio\*Beef label. The larch pastures play a crucial ecological role: their tree cover provides shade, cools the soil, reduces wind, and helps retain moisture by lowering evapotranspiration. Annual maintenance is needed, but the benefits include enhanced biodiversity, efficient land use, and cost-effective beef production with minimal environmental impact. [Video](#)



**Ireland: Nitrogen Efficiency at Pat Walsh’s Farm**

On April 24th, 2025, the Partner Farm Network (PFN) met at Pat Walsh’s farm in Durrow, County Laois, to discuss nitrogen efficiency. Optimising nitrogen use is key to improving farm productivity while reducing environmental impact. Pat presented several innovative practices implemented on his farm. He performs soil tests every two years and has integrated clover across his fields to enhance soil fertility naturally. He uses low-emission slurry spreading, GPS-guided fertiliser application, and develops an annual nutrient management plan to balance input use. These practices show how practical, on-farm innovations can support more efficient and sustainable nutrient management.







Sweden: Learning, Innovation & Exchange

In late April, 46 Swedish participants—including young farmers, students, and advisors—joined the Young Farmers Tour in Ireland as part of the Grazing4AgroEcology project, alongside peers from other partner countries. The group visited Teagasc research farms Oakpark and Moorepark, where they explored innovative grazing research, including ryegrass trials using grazing heifers and a variety of ongoing pasture projects. Visits to commercial farms showcased practical examples of Irish grazing systems. The tour also offered valuable networking opportunities, encouraging cross-border exchange and dialogue among the next generation of European farmers.

Portugal: Smart Farming and Biodiversity at Quinta da Cholda

On May 28th, CONSULAI hosted a Partner Farm Network meeting at Quinta da Cholda, gathering 22 participants, including farmers, technicians, and consultants. The event combined presentations and a farm walk through experimental and control plots, focusing on precision agriculture technologies like soil moisture probes, smart irrigation systems, and satellite imagery—all aimed at reducing inputs and improving water-use efficiency. A key highlight was the farm’s approach to biodiversity, with 15% of the land dedicated to enhancing ecosystem resilience. Participants exchanged insights on using biodiversity crops to protect irrigated fields. One ongoing experiment involves collecting insects from these zones and performing DNA sequencing to identify all animal species present on the farm—an innovative step toward understanding and promoting farm-level biodiversity.



Portugal: Regenerative Practices at Monte da Silveira Bio

Monte da Silveira Bio is a 1,000-hectare farm combining olive groves, annual crops, and over 500 hectares of Montado—a traditional Portuguese agrosilvopastoral system. The farm integrates livestock and crops in a way that promotes ecological balance, with a strong focus on animal management. Recent innovations include the use of profit and cover crops, along with holistic livestock integration. A notable development is a composting method using compost extracts to enrich soil structure and biodiversity through beneficial microbes. The farm also takes part in national and EU research projects aimed at sustainable agriculture. Find out all the details in the [video](#)!







**Romania: Innovative Rotational Management System in a Mixed Dairy and Meat Farm**

Cristian Echim runs a family-operated organic dairy farm in Monor, Bistrița-Năsăud County. Spread across 85 hectares—mostly pasture and hay meadows—all land is certified or in conversion to organic. With 150 Bălțată Românească cows (78 in milk), the farm produces over 273,000 liters of organic milk per year, processed by a local dairy.

A key innovation is the rational rotational grazing system. Of 50 hectares of semi-natural pasture, 26 are divided into paddocks, rotated based on forage quality and recovery time. Dairy cows and young stock graze in separate areas to meet their specific needs. The system supports animal welfare, contributing to longer lifespans and reduced disease.

Rotation is timed to optimise pasture productivity and prevent soil erosion. Paddock size varies with grass quality, and the system is managed using around 10 km of electric fencing, which also helps limit damage from wild animals, particularly bears. Find out all the details in the [video](#)!



**Germany: Clean Water Access for Cows on Coastal Grasslands**

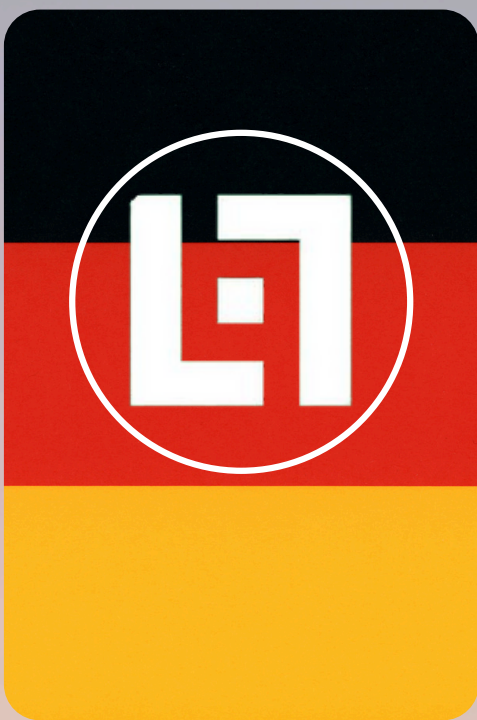
In northwestern Germany, near the North Sea, Joost manages a 180-cow dairy farm on 115 hectares of marshy grassland with ditches typical for the region. Traditionally, cows drink from these ditches, but this poses a risk for animal health due to parasites like liver fluke.

To improve both animal welfare and milk productivity, especially during summer, Joost installed self-made water troughs across his pastures. Using repurposed 1,000 L IBC feed tanks and over 2.5 km of piping connected to municipal water, he created a low-cost, clean water system that supports flexible grazing management.

Despite some added maintenance—leaks and broken floaters—Joost improved efficiency by adding shut-off valves to control each trough individually. The result: healthier cows, better milk yields, and a smarter use of farm resources. Find out all the details in the [video](#)!







France  
Web-agri



At Mickaël Lepage’s farm: 300 days of grazing, including 120 days of full grazing without supplementation – May 16<sup>th</sup>

Settled on a dairy farm with over 150 years of history, Mickaël Lepage takes a hands-on, pragmatic approach to sustainability. His goal is to produce milk while reducing environmental impact and fostering strong social connections. To achieve this, he places a strong emphasis on grazing. With up to 300 days of grazing per year—including 120 days of full grazing without any supplementation—he demonstrates how sustainability and profitability can go hand in hand through efficient, grass-based dairy farming. Click [here](#) for more.



Likes



Reply



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Germany  
Land & Forst



At February’s Grassland Day in Rodenkirchen, Dr. Tammo Peters emphasised grazing’s benefits, including better animal health, milk quality, and lower costs. However, these advantages depend on optimal management, including proper pasture composition, nutrient fertilization, and grazing practices. For more details, visit the article [here](#).



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### Sweden

A warm and dry April preceded by a mild winter has accelerated the spring farming operations in the whole country. In some regions the spring activities were completed four weeks ahead compared to normal.



### France

March and April 2025 were warmer than average across France, with April ranking as the 5th warmest since 1900. March included two brief cold spells, but both months were marked by persistent dryness in the North, caused by a stable anticyclone, and above-average rainfall in the South. Nationwide, March rainfall was 20% below normal, with regional extremes ranging from +50% in the Southeast to -80% in the North.

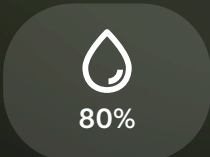
The dry and sunny weather promoted early grazing and good grass quality, though yields were slightly lower than expected. Soil dryness and northeastern winds complicated maize sowing and grass ear emergence, especially in the North. In contrast, excess rain and cooler temperatures in the South delayed pasture access and created challenges for harvest and sowing operations.

For more details, monthly weather-agriculture reports are available from the [Institut de l'Élevage](#).



### Italy

In Sardinia, weather conditions from February to April 2025 significantly improved pasture and crop development. February brought much-needed rainfall to the southeast, replenishing soil moisture, though the northern areas remained drier. Forage crops showed good growth in wetter zones, while drought-affected regions lagged behind. March and April continued with above-average rainfall and mild temperatures, creating ideal conditions for cereal crops and autumn-spring forage species. The consistent water availability and favourable temperatures ensured abundant green biomass and optimal pasture conditions for livestock grazing across most of the island.



### Germany

As of May 2025, northern Germany—especially Lower Saxony—is facing growing challenges due to persistent drought. The first four months of the year brought significantly below-average rainfall, with February receiving only 25% of normal precipitation.

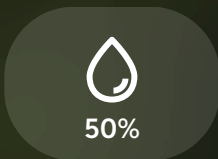
These dry conditions have caused dried-out topsoil, delayed grass growth, and limited forage availability, posing serious concerns for pasture-based livestock systems dependent on early-season grazing.



### Ireland

The end of April 2025 brought unusually warm weather, with Athenry recording a new high of 25.9°C. After a wet mid-April, the last week turned dry and sunny, and this trend continued into May.

With average temperatures around 13°C and peaks up to 26°C, Ireland has experienced plenty of sunshine and limited rainfall overall, supporting early grazing and good pasture growth conditions.





PARTNERS







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