



 Azienda Su Giau - family farm



Gavino Arca



45 hectares



improvement of grassland management

SHEEP GRAZING USING COMPLEMENTARY PASTURE TYPES AND MILKING ONCE PER DAY

Reducing variable costs is a requirement on many livestock farms, as well as optimising the daily farming routines to counter the lack of skilled manpower. Introducing legumes in pastures helps to reduce the use of fertilisers and concentrates. In a Mediterranean dairy sheep farm, pastures are cultivated in paired paddocks: each grass or cereal pasture is sown nearby a pure-legume or a legume-based pasture. Sheep graze after the morning milking, which is the only one carried out per day, despite a small loss of milk yield per year (-5%=-2600 l) compared to the twice-a-day milking. Each day, sheep graze on the grass or cereal pastures in the morning, and in the pure-legume or legume-based pastures in the afternoon (part-time grazing). During springtime and long days, sheep complete their forage ration grazing again on the grass-based pasture. The farmer adjusts accordingly the administrations of concentrates, considering grass availability and quality of pastures. Clean water is available in each paddock

A rotational grazing scheme is applied in the management of paired paddocks (from 1 to 2-3 days or more, depending on grass growth). Sheep grazing grasses/cereals first and then legumes have two advantages: preventing health disorders related to the consumption of legumes and legumes with a better quality in late morning. With this management, sheep increase their grass and protein intake, and the farmer enjoys more free time in the evening, when his tasks are recovering sheep and feeding them hay. The legume-based pastures can be annual, but this requires annual soil tillage, or permanent crops, if self-reseeding legumes are preferred (e.g. subterranean clover, burr medic). This latter choice would allow to save fuel and time and preserve soil.

Farmer Interview

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KHan2o9VH5g>

