



Livestock farming in Sweden – now and in future

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Website

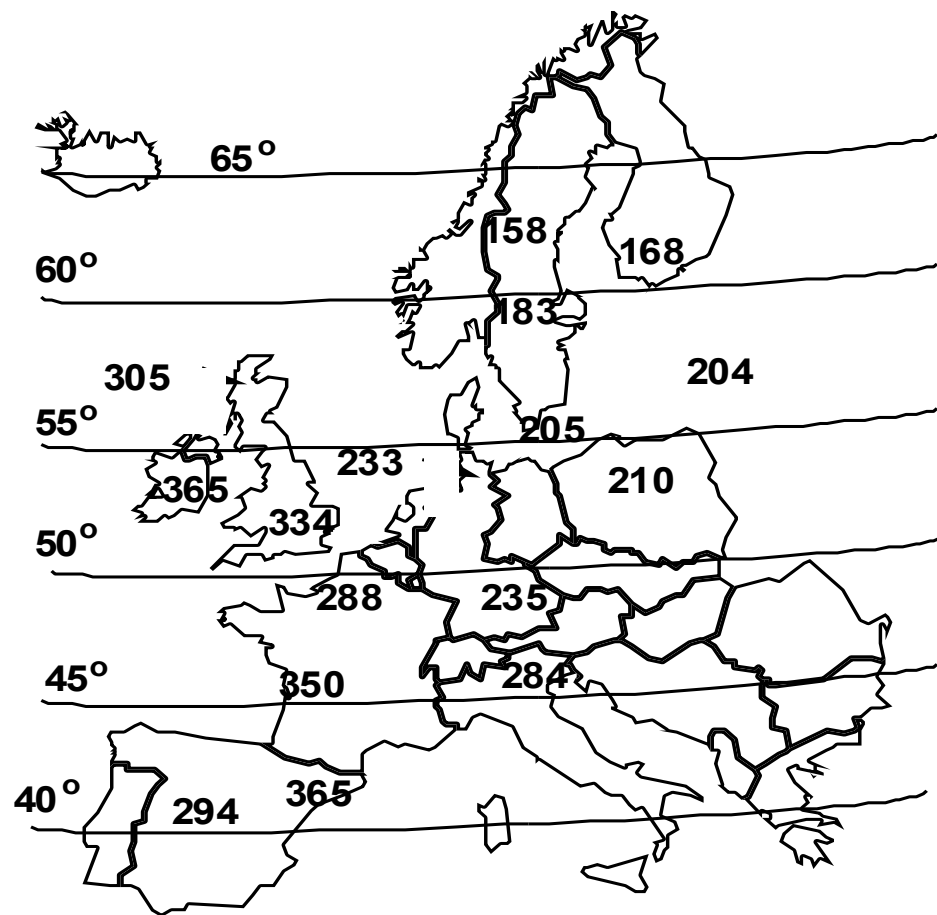
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Length of the growing season in Europe



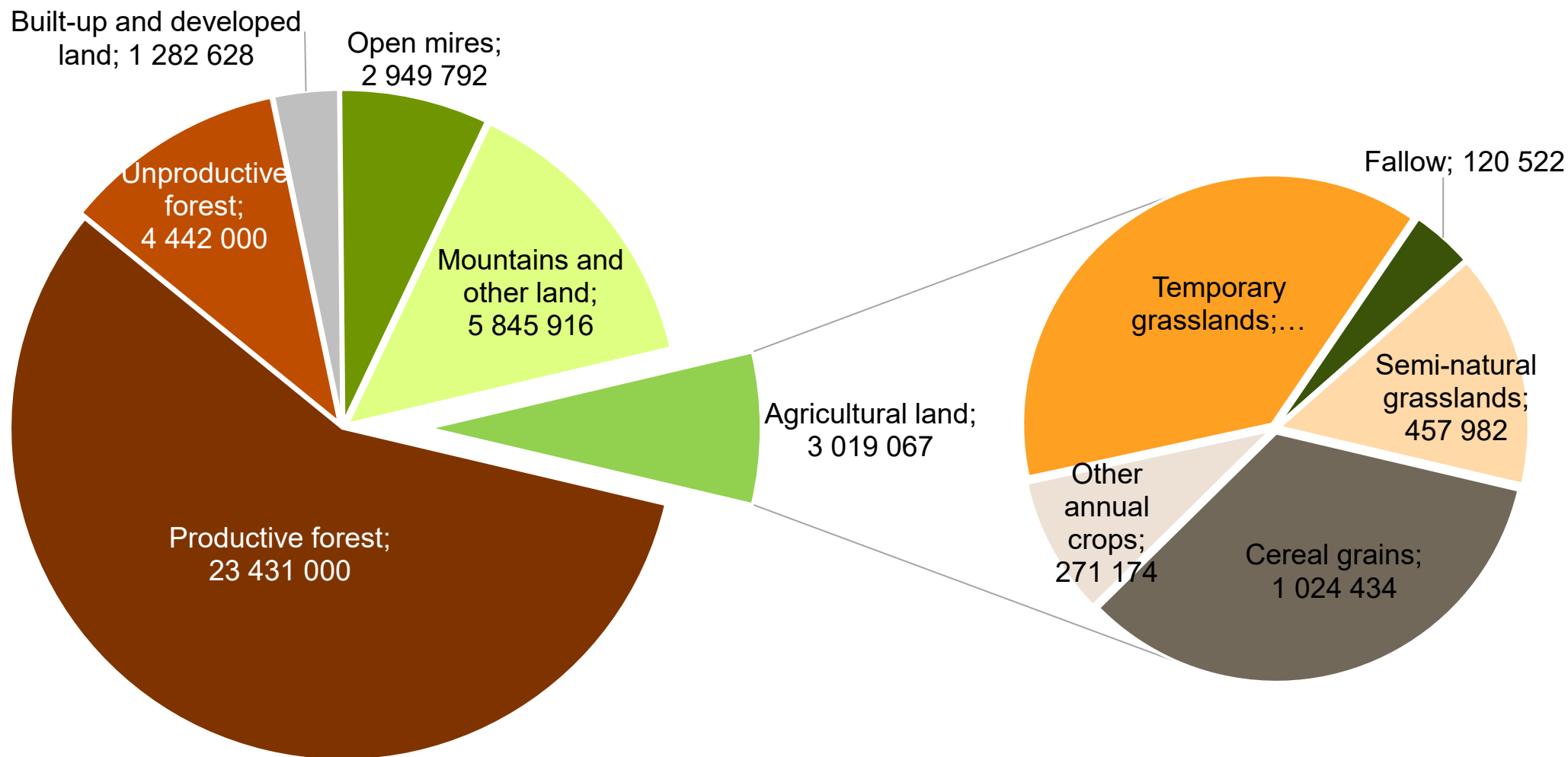
**Length of the growing season, days
>5°C**

**– 150 days in the far north,
240 days in southern coastal areas**

- The combination of temperature, insolation, and day length is unique to the Nordic countries and neighbouring parts of Russia
- Thanks for the Gulf Stream.....

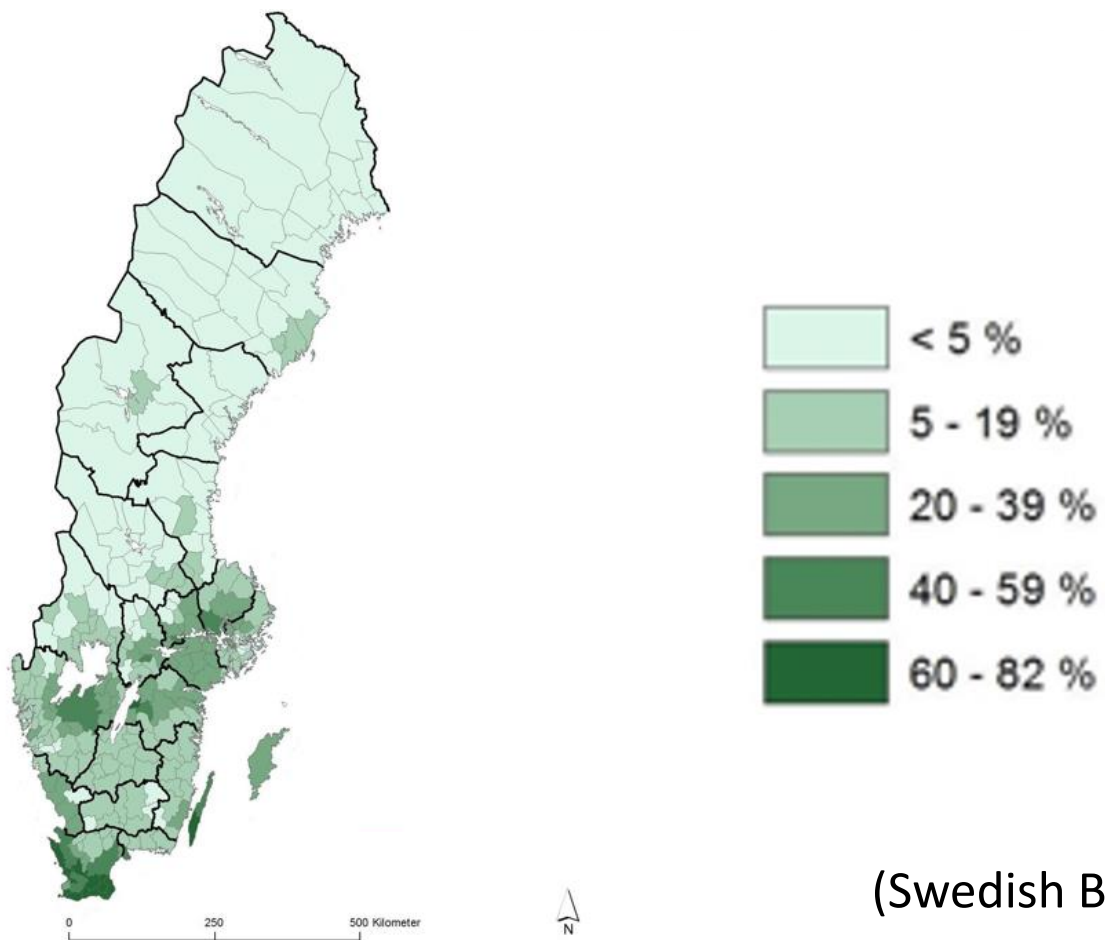


Swedish land use by category for 2020 and use of agricultural land in 2024, hectares



(Official Statistics of Sweden, 2022; 2025)

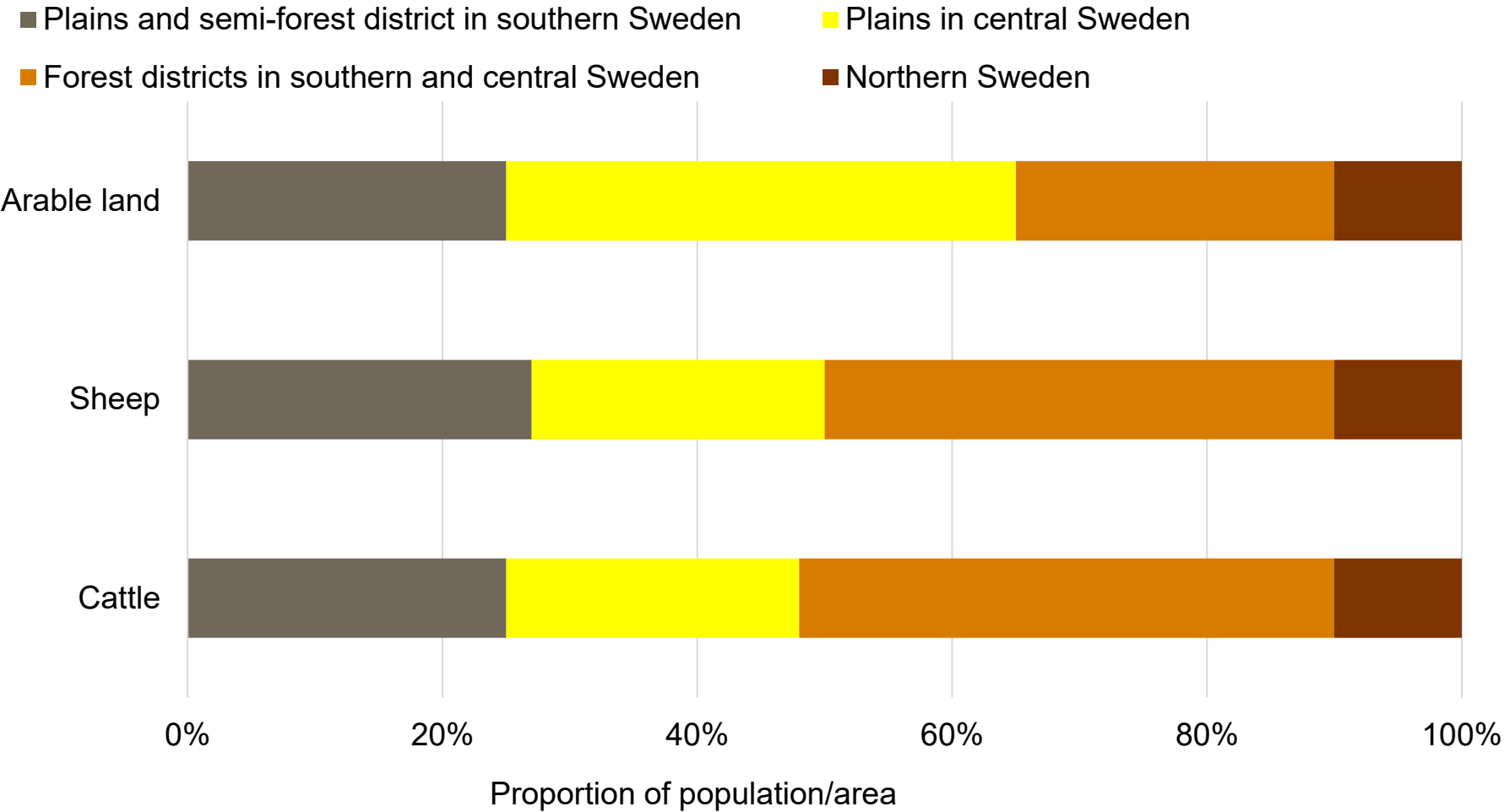
Distribution of agricultural land



(Swedish Board of Agriculture, 2020)

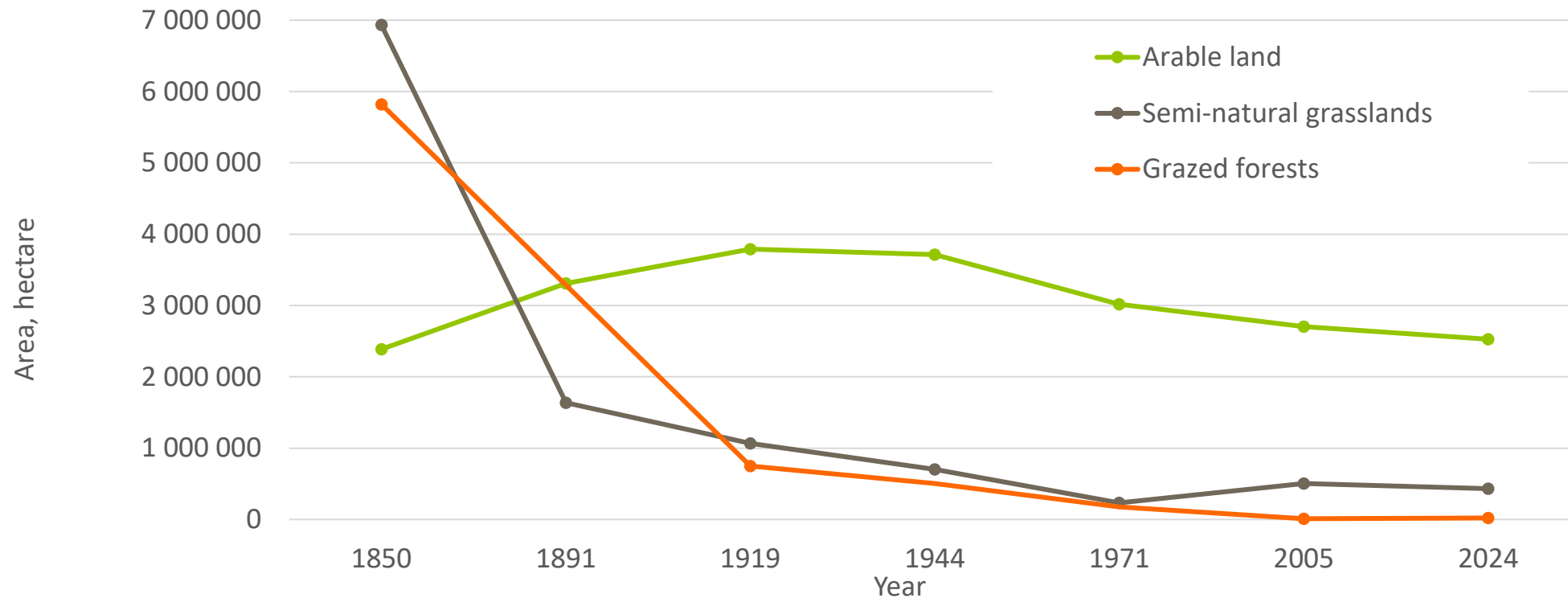


Geographical distribution of cattle, sheep, and arable land in Sweden 2024 into production areas



(Official Statistics of Sweden, 2025)

Areas of arable land, semi-natural grasslands for mowing and grazing, and grazed forests in Sweden, 1850–2024



(Official Statistics of Sweden (2021, 2025) except for grasslands and grazed forests for 1850, which is from Toräng & Jacobson (2019))



Forage has to be preserved for an 8-month winter period.
In the past, **hay-making** was the only available method



1970s and 1980s – transition from **hay to silage**

- Larger farms
- Less weather-dependent
- Lower nutrient losses
- Higher milk production

After 1980, **silage** making took over and is
now the dominant harvesting method



Photo: Rolf Spörndly



In Sweden, short-term leys as part of arable crop rotations are the main forage crop, unlike the perennial forage swards farther south in Europe

The traditional mixture for **hay and silage** is red clover, timothy and meadow fescue



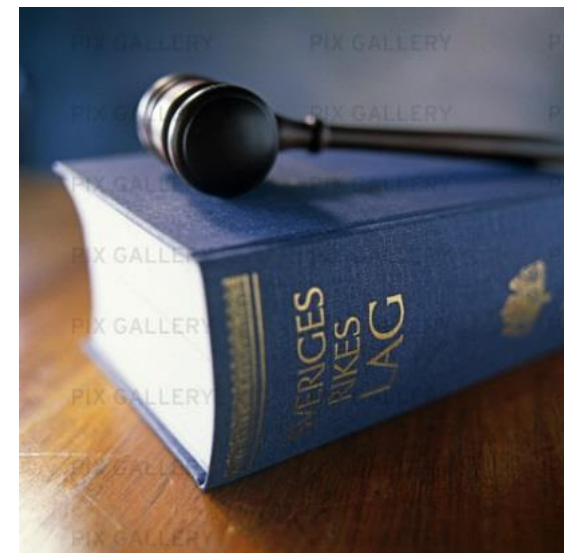
The traditional mixture for **grazing** is white clover, meadow fescue, perennial ryegrass and smooth-stalked meadow grass



Swedish legislation requires pasturing during summer

- Dairy cows must have access to pasture for at least 6 h/day
- Other cattle¹ and sheep must be kept on pasture for 24 h/day
Exceptions are bulls and young calves (below 6 months)
- The required length of grazing period is 120 days in southern Sweden, 90 days in central, and 60 days in northern Sweden

¹Suckler cows and their calves, replacement heifers, dry cows etc.



(Swedish Board of Agriculture, 2019:18)



Livestock in Sweden

	Heads, No 2023	Herd size 1995	Herd size 2024	Enterprises, No 2024	Organic, % 2024
Dairy cows	295 526	27	113	2 562	14
Beef cows	210 470	9	21	9 487	33
All cattle	1 444 487	42	100	14 091	20
Ewes	486 082	20	31	7 752	18
Sows	1 303 503	31	155	751	2
Slaughter pigs	861 000	157	968	426	2
Laying hens	10 296 000		48 338	213	11
Broilers	13 327 000		126 923	105	1

(Official Statistics of Sweden, 2025)



Typical feed rations for dairy cows and beef suckler cows

Item	Dairy cow	Beef suckler cow
Milk yield, kg energy-corrected milk	10 700	-
Grazing period, days	120	170
Grazing, semi-natural grasslands, kg DM	-	1 953
Grazing, leys including aftermaths, kg DM	882	345
Grass/clover silage, early cut, kg DM	3 182	-
Grass/clover silage, late cut, kg DM	-	659
Whole crop silage, kg DM	-	977
Straw, kg	284	-
Rolled cereals, kg	2 150	-
Protein concentrate, kg	1 418	-
Minerals, kg	9	34



Typical feed rations for young grazing cattle

Item	Beef heifer	Dairy steer	Beef steer
Weaning age, months	7	3	7
Starting liveweight, kg	275	100	300
Slaughter age, months	24	26	30
Carcass weight, kg	315	320	385
Grazing period, days	150	150	150
Grazing, semi-natural grasslands, DM kg	871	1 457	1 782
Grazing, ley aftermath, DM kg	218	364	446
Grass/clover silage, medium cut, kg DM	2 506	2 663	-
Grass/clover silage, late cut, kg DM	-	-	2 615
Rolled cereals, kg	-	188	-
Calf pellets, kg	-	123	-
Minerals, kg	26	30	28



Typical feed rations for sheep

	Spring lambs	Autumn lambs	Winter lambs
Ewes			
Lambs reared/ewe, No.	1.8	1.8	1.8
Carcass weight, kg	33	30	30
Grazing period, days	214	161	161
Grazing, semi-natural grasslands, kg DM	233	333	395
Grazing, leys including aftermaths, kg DM	0	53	0
Grass/clover silage, early cut, kg DM	109	101	65
Grass/clover silage, medium cut, kg DM	113	189	211
Concentrates, kg	59	19	4
Minerals, kg	8	9	10
Lambs			
Carcass weight, kg	21	20	20
Age at slaughter, months	4	5	10
Grazing period, days	-	118	161
Grazing, semi-natural grasslands, kg DM	-	23	117
Grazing, leys including aftermaths, kg DM	-	96	-
Grass/clover silage, early cut, kg DM	50	3	3
Grass/clover silage, medium cut, kg DM	-	-	118
Concentrates, kg	61	35	5
Minerals, kg	2	2	5

Trends for the future

- Focus on winter hardiness
- Climate changes – forage tolerant to dry and/or wet conditions
- More home-grown protein to replace imported protein
- Species with special qualities
- Added value products semi-natural grasslands, concept up and running (COOP)





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