



Profitability of permanent grassland

How to manage permanent grassland in a way that combines profitability, carbon sequestration, animal health and biodiversity?

The 20 experts of the EIP-AGRI Focus Group on profitability of permanent grassland (PG) evaluated the current situation of permanent grasslands in Europe and explored innovative ways to sustainably increase their productivity.

The topic is broad and there is a great diversity of permanent grassland systems and management strategies in Europe. Nevertheless, the Focus Group identified the following seven common key issues which reflect the multiple aspects of enhancing permanent grassland productivity and sustainability:

- Defining a grassland typology in relation to biodiversity and productivity
- Achieving grassland production and quality that matches livestock needs
- Benchmarking grassland dry matter production and utilisation at regional and national levels
- Increasing grassland functionality by diversifying sward plant composition
- Increasing resource efficiency (i.e. nutrients recycling, dry matter utilisation, labour) to improve profitability and sustainability
- Differentiating grass-based products, such as meat, milk and cheese, for higher market value: linking quality traits and management practices related to the ecosystem services
- Evaluating the environmental impacts of grassland-based systems using life cycle thinking (LCT)

“Spring is coming, grass is growing and the farming season is starting. What is the best strategy this year for my grass production? Is the strategy of this year also the best strategy for the next decade?”

- Jeanet Brandsma (the Netherlands) expert from the EIP-AGRI Focus Group
on Profitability of Permanent Grassland -

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Ideas for Operational Groups

- ▶ Develop internet/smartphone applications, together with other easy to use tools (visual assessment, plate meter, sward stick, palatable species height, GIS etc.) for grassland management (e.g. grazing planning, grazing measurements, assessing forage quality, etc.).
- ▶ Develop new effective and ecologically friendly methods to renovate swards (e.g. by using animals as seed dispersers)
- ▶ Explore multi-species mixtures with different growth patterns for permanent grassland establishment and renovation under different soil and climate conditions, suitable to different livestock species and breeds
- ▶ How to use Life Cycle Thinking tools at the farm to communicate farm/grassland performance to customers/neighbours/stakeholders/....?

Research needs from practice

- ▶ Develop tools to describe ecosystem and social services and link those services to local demands
- ▶ Develop methods and tools to estimate ecosystem services provided by PGs at regional level prior to their inclusion in a life cycle assessment framework
- ▶ Identify different farmers' incentives for innovation and use this knowledge in development and transfer activities

For more ideas for Operational Groups and research needs please see the Focus Group report

Other recommendations

- ▶ Find and adapt technical and political solutions to capture value of high quality products and ecosystem services to improve quality of life of farmers
- ▶ Develop knowledge through participatory processes, for instance in Operational Groups supported by Rural Development Programmes

More information

Focus Group webpage	Inspirational ideas <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A passion for permanent pasture (Portugal)• Amazing Grazing- going back to the roots (Netherlands)• Sports apps for dairy cows, digital technology to combine grazing and automated milking (Netherlands)
Final report	
Press article	

Contact: EIP-AGRI Service Point - Avenue de la Toison d'Or 72 - 1060 Brussels - BELGIUM
Tel +32 2 543 73 48 - servicepoint@eip-agri.eu - www.eip-agri.eu

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