



Combining barn drying – storage, fast rotational stocking and product processing



Pierre Cossement – Ferme du buis

1 Description of the innovation



Pierre Cossement and his wife Véronique have set up a particularly efficient autonomous dairy production system, based on fast rotational grazing, barn hay drying, processing and marketing products on the farm. His business model, guided by the search for autonomy, cross-cutting and integrated vision of the different farm dimensions, is innovative.

The added value of practices implemented by Pierre is :

- Grassland quality (species composition, feeding value)
- Job creation on the farm
- Environment management (soil, water, pollution, odour, etc.)



Barn hay drying, combined with rotational grazing, is an important factor of autonomy that promotes animal health and quality of milk for cheese processing.

- Difficulty, after 20 years (90-07), when deciding to change type of farm, to end up with a herd selected mainly for intensive production => necessary adaptation => replace the selected animals (case of consciousness, difficulty, loyalty and responsibility towards his herd), difficulty for leaving a system running into a system that does not benefit from a structured / available advices + system of hate / adoration (see André Pochon)
- Learn to (re) know the "system" and its limits. Accept not to produce the same lactation with hay (expensive) and fresh grass (May to September)
- Cows must become again animals able to give the best value to the grassland => the hay is their ration
- No antibiotics because the health of the herd is generally better (no dewormer and vaccines needed, etc.)
- But high workloads and constant preoccupations: choice of plots (need to "lie down in the meadow") in connection with a suitable weather window => radically different from the classic system (fine tuning management needed)

2 Farm description

ENVIRONMENT

- Soil types: Sandy-loam
- Climate: Temperate oceanic
- Altitude: 60 m
- Slope: 0-5%

GRASSLAND MANAGEMENT

Permanent grasslands are mostly grazed and temporary grasslands are mostly mowed (4 times a year). The duration of permanent meadows is longer than 10 years. Grazing management is made by fast rotational stocking (24-48 hours) on 30 plots during 9 months per year. Grass is also dried and stored in hay.

STRUCTURE

Annual Work Unit: 4

Farm Type: Cattle-dairying

Agriculture Area: 65 ha UAA

Pierre and his wife Véronique manage the farm. It has 65 ha of UAA, mainly in permanent (18 ha) and temporary (17 ha) grasslands. Small areas provide various crops (30 ha).

The dairy cattle (35 lactating cows and 30 young heifers) is: 1) breed of Holstein X Monbéliarde, 2) Pure Holstein, and 3) breed of Rouge de Flandre X Monbéliarde. The milk production is average: 6,500 kg of milk / cow / year.

WHY IT IS WORKING

- Cattle breeding is perceived as a tool, serving the agricultural system in which it is inserted, and not a goal in itself;
- Because of will and conviction of the farmers of the choices made.
Motivation of the farmer and his family
- The financial objective is not placed first.
- Pierre is a passionate farmer, loves things well done
- The plots pattern helps (land grouped around the farm, distributed along a concrete paths)
- Regular confrontation with colleagues and the experience gained by others (Daniel Rauch, for example) => Filiation of experience and personalities.

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ROTATIONAL STOCKING**