Technical leaflet

Compartmented continuous grazing

1 Description of the innovation

Why compartmented continuous grazing? To combine the best of two worlds: efficient grass utilisation and efficient cow production.
Compartmented continuous grazing is the solution for dairy farmers that would like to increase the amount of fresh grass converted into milk while spending not too much time on grazing management. Compartmented continuous grazing balances grass intake, grass utilisation and labour needed.

Key elements:

Efficient: utilise fresh grass for optimal milk production
Structured: every day both the farmer and the cows know where they stand
Robust: easy to adapt to weather fluctuations and seasons

Advantages

- Fresh feed
- Higher grass intake
- Higher milk production
- Easy to implement system
- Also possible for large herds

Disadvantages

- Investment costs on logistics
- Grazing platform is mown only once or twice

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2 The approach of compartmented continuous grazing

Step 1 (only once or once a year):

- Divide the grazing platform in a number of equal-sized paddocks (if necessary combine small parcels into one parcel or divide large parcels)
- Number of parcels depends on herd size, size of grazing platform and supplementation level (decision support tools are available)
- Invest in infrastructure to facilitate grazing: water, roadways, fencing, etc.

Step 2 (every 4/5/6 weeks):

- Mow the paddocks that were set for mowing
- Choose your new grazing platform
- Fence the new grazing platform
- Put cattle in pasture at maximum 12 cm grass height

Step 3 (daily):

- Every day a new paddock
- Put cattle out at minimum 8 cm grass height
- Adjust supplemental feeding when needed, depending on grass height of the paddock that cows have just left
    - Grass too long: less supplementation
    - Grass too short: more supplementation

Tips for the best result:

- Start early in spring with grazing
- Minimise supplementation to increase fresh grass intake
- Animal manure only for first cut and for paddocks that will be mown

More information:

(in Dutch) https://www.stichtingweidegang.nl/nieuwnederlandsweiden and http://edepot.wur.nl/445377
Results of grazing experiments (poster/presentation):
https://www.amazinggrazing.eu/upload_mm/4/8/8/6d33d87a-29e8-482b-a23b-c2cd01d4bca9_Poster_EGF2018_Fresh%20grass%20intake%20with%20high%20stocking%20rates.pdf
https://www.amazinggrazing.eu/upload_mm/d/2/6/958005d8-725d-4a05-b008-9776807fa262_Presentation_EGF2018_Nitrogen%20use%20efficiency%20under%20intensive%20grazing.pdf
Results of grazing experiments (papers):
https://www.amazinggrazing.eu/upload_mm/b/a/4/0cb9c0fd-003e-4474-b9bb-88f02e20b07d_Paper_EGF2018_Amazing%20Grazing-substantial%20fresh%20grass%20intake%20in%20restricted.pdf
https://www.amazinggrazing.eu/upload_mm/2/3/4/f1a8b2d7-3922-4662-a013-2efd2090e896_Paper_EGF2018_Amazing%20Grazing-N%20use%20efficiency%20of%2060%20individual%20dairy%20cows.pdf