



# Full time grazing system in East Germany

## 1 Description of the innovation

The Costello brothers are farmers in East Germany, originally the brothers come from Ireland but have a longer tradition in Germany through their parents. Two years ago they had the idea to bring the Irish-New Zealand grazing system with full pasture to Germany. Their cows are on pasture all year round, which is not common in Germany and is very difficult to implement. The climate in this region does not normally seem compatible with the full-time grazing system due to low rainfall and long, long winters. In East Germany, the keeping of dairy cows indoors in combination with arable farming is therefore more of an established system than the grazing system.

The grazing system had to be adapted to the German conditions, since there is little fodder available in the winter months, the Costello's fodder must also be preserved. The cows are exclusively outside, which is a big challenge in the winter months, but due to the perfect conditions of different types of soil, the dry location in the sand area is used as a paddock for the winter and fed on the surface.

Their milking equipment is also adapted to the Irish / New Zealand system. The milking carousel with 50 places was started in 2019 and due to the road infrastructure it is no problem to feed the animals dry to the milking parlour. Most of their cows already have a Kiwi cross genetics which from your point of view is the better pasture cow because it is robust, small and perfectly compatible to the pasture grass.





### 2 Results obtained with the adoption of the innovation

The Costello brothers and the herd manager have acquired a lot of experience with this type of grazing system and in Germany they are therefore pioneers with this system. They had to be motivated to learn how to deal with new situations in Germany and find solutions. Thanks to the sandy soils they can keep their cows quite dry in winter, which speaks for the region where the animals are kept. Thanks to the peaty soil, the grass grows very well in summer, even if there is no irrigation proper irrigation, but there is a supply through river courses.

When fertilizing the 430 ha large areas, the slitting technique with pig slurry is mainly used, so that the pastures can be used again very quickly. The slot technology ensures efficient and low-loss spreading of the slurry. The rather dry location of the farm (only 550 mm per year and sandy soil) also places high demands on the turf, but they seem to master these challenges well.

The company also offers new jobs in the region. Before the Costello brothers took over the business, the former agricultural company was in a rather poor economic situation. In East Germany, migration to the cities is a major problem and many workers are therefore turning away and disappearing into the cities.



#### Advantages

- Low costs due the full time pasture system
- Work places
- Grassland instead of arable farming
- new approaches for German farmers



#### Disadvantages

- difficult conditions in East Germany
- Lower milk yield than in stable keeping
- still no big experience with full pasture in Germany available