



Maximal grazing with automatic milking



GAEC de la Saulaie

1 Description of the innovation



The farm management is aimed at maximizing the share of grazed grass on the diet of dairy cows. Farmers have increased the pasture area by building a cow tunnel under the road. Pasture represents 80 per cent of dairy cow diet for 3 or 4 months and 30 per cent during autumn months. This management allows farmers to decrease feeding cost and to reduce milking labor.



After having exchanged 4 hectares with a neighbor, farmers have increased grazing area of 11 hectares by building a cow tunnel under the road. Cows have a continued access to the robot.



The cow traffic is guided with a drafting gate to allow cows to go to and from the barn to pastures.



-  **A low cost diet**
- A good image of livestock farming**
- Feed self-sufficiency**
- Better working conditions**

FARMER'S STRATEGY

By combining automatic milking and grazing, farmers want to decrease feeding cost. He increases grazing area by using a cow tunnel under the road.

Cow traffic : using two paddocks per 24 hours (day and night paddocks) entice cows to go to pasture.

One water trough is located on the barn. No water is available in the fields.

Heifers are used to rotational grazing.

2 Farm description

ENVIRONMENT

This plain Farm is located in western France, in the department of Maine-et-Loire.

Climate: temperate oceanic with a summer drought

Soils: clayed-loam

GRASSLAND MANAGEMENT

Grazing management type: rotational grazing - grazable area reaches 21 hectares, shared in paddocks of 0,8 ha. Cows spend two days per day paddock and four nights per night paddock.

STRUCTURE

2 Annual work unit

Conversion to organic farming in progress

Agricultural area: 100 ha UAA

- 55 ha temporary grasslands
- 20 ha permanent grasslands
- 12 ha corn silage
- 13 ha cereals and protein crops consumed on the farm

Herd: 68 Holstein cows—120 LU

Stocking rate: 1.2 LU/ha main forage area

ANIMAL PERFORMANCES

Milk production per head: 6,500 L/year

WHY IT IS WORKING

Farmer's experience of grazing management : regular grass growth observations and measures.

Farmers have accepted a reduced milk production to enhance feeding cost.

A gradual implementation: farmers visited many other farms before starting their project.

A strong motivation to increase grazing area: land exchange and building of boviduc (tunnel to cross the road).

Automatic milking system is not saturated.