
GRAZING FOUNDATION ANNUAL REPORT 2019



NIEUWE GRACHT 3
2011 NB HAARLEM
THE NETHERLANDS

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2019 IN SUMMARY

RECORD NUMBER OF FARMERS GIVE COWS MEADOW ACCESS

Growing numbers of dairy farmers are allowing their cows access to meadow grazing. In 2019, the percentage of dairy farms that allow the cows to graze outdoors rose to record levels. 83% of dairy farmers allowed their cows access to meadow grazing. This is the highest percentage since the dairy sector started to monitor meadow grazing in 2012.

Year	Total	Full grazing	Partial grazing
2019	83,0%	76,7%	6,3%
2018	82,0%	74,8%	7,3%
2017	80,4%	73,2%	7,3%
2016	78,9%	70,5%	8,4%
2015	78,3%	69,8%	8,4%
2014	77,8%	70,1%	7,7%
2013	80,0%	72,2%	7,8%
2012	81,2%	—	—

% of dairy farms with meadow grazing in the Netherlands. Source: ZuivelNL.

NO COMPULSORY PERMIT FOR GRAZING

The foundation provided input for the report on Grazing and Fertilising (Beweiden en Bemesten) published by the advisory commission on nitrogen emissions led by Johan Remkes. On the basis of this input, among other things, the Remkes advisory commission concluded that no compulsory permit is required for grazing, and often not for fertilising either. The foundation is pleased that government authorities have embraced and adopted this conclusion.

EMBEDDING GRAZING IN FARM MANAGEMENT PRACTICE

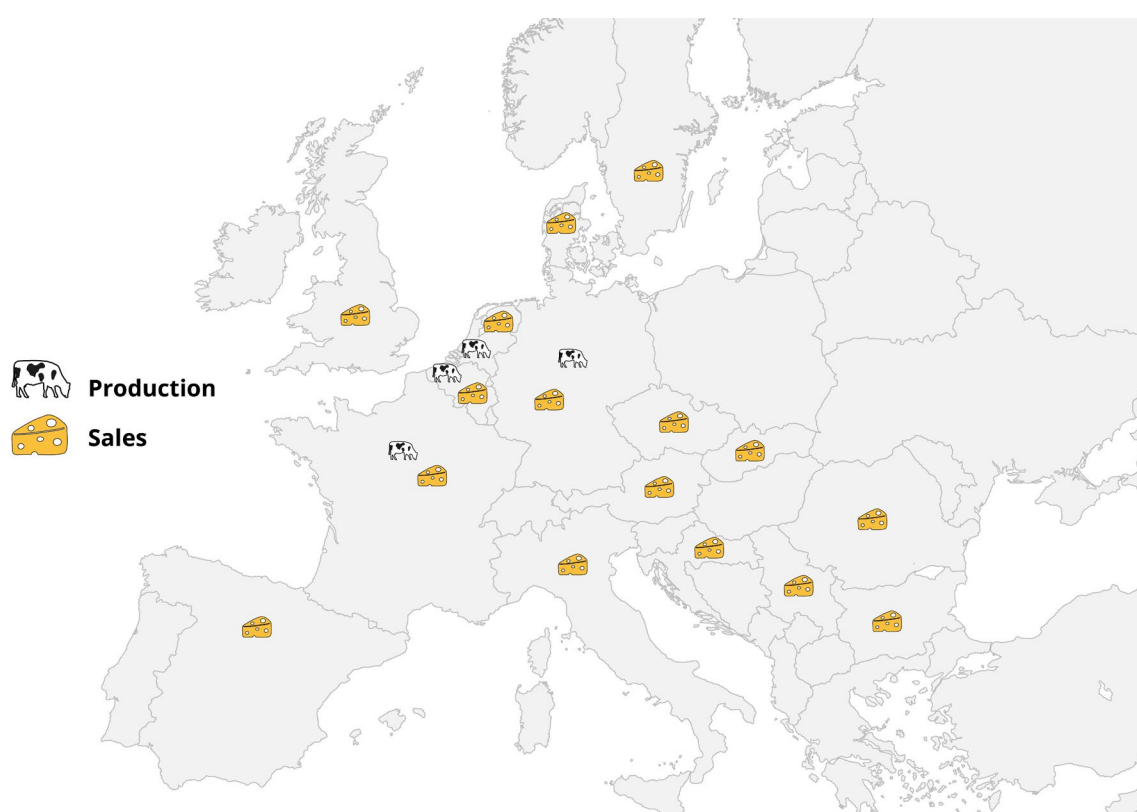
In the form of New Dutch Grazing, the foundation has introduced a new standard that easily integrates grazing into modern farm management practice. We are noticing a high demand for such a system. New Dutch Grazing is increasingly becoming the standard used by growing numbers of dairy farmers as a grazing system. All main farmyard visitors now promote New Dutch Grazing as the preferred option.

A new three-year plan for the foundation's knowledge activities sets out the ambition to embed grazing even more firmly in the management practice of dairy farmers. The principle is that meeting the criteria that define grazing is not the central focus for dairy farmers, but rather giving form to the two primary functions of grazing: harvesting grass and feeding cows. Optimally interpreting and satisfying both criteria can contribute to the efficiency and revenues of dairy farmers and help achieve the goals of the Sustainable Dairy Chain.

In 2019, a fertilising advice was prepared for New Dutch Grazing, in cooperation with the Commission for Fertilising Grassland and Fodder Crops (CBGV) (Commissie Bemesting Grasland en Voedergewassen). This facilitates dairy farmers in better aligning their fertilising strategy to suit the needs of the grass, and via the nutritional value of the grass, the cow.

MEADOW MILK LOGO GAINING GROUND IN COUNTRIES OUTSIDE THE NETHERLANDS

The figure below shows an overview of the countries in which meadow farm milk is produced and meadow dairy products are sold. Dairy farmers in the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany and France graze their cows according to the conditions of the foundation; in total there are over 16,000 participants. Meadow dairy is sold across Europe. The most important markets are the Netherlands, Belgium and Germany.



Countries where products with the Meadow Milk logo are produced and sold.

Due to the international character of the scheme and the logo, the various manuals and guidelines are always published in English, Dutch, German and French. The website (www.weidemelk.nl) is also available in those four languages. For the other countries in which Meadow Milk products are sold – Spain, Italy, Denmark, Sweden, Czech Republic, Croatia, Serbia, Slovakia, Romania and Bulgaria – the homepage with the most relevant information on meadow milk for the public has been translated into the language concerned.

INTRODUCTION

The objective of the Grazing Foundation is to encourage the visibility of cows in the Dutch landscape by stimulating grazing. A cow grazing in a meadow is an integral and typical aspect of the Dutch landscape.

The activities of the Grazing Foundation have two focus areas:

- Knowledge: greater grassland and grazing skills.
- Safeguarding: safeguarding the integrity of meadow dairy products and issuing the Meadow Milk logo.

The focus of the knowledge activities is on stimulating as many dairy farmers as possible to graze their cattle outdoors and to maximise the benefits of meadow grazing. Two focal points were chosen for 2019:

- Advice and guidance for dairy farmers on better grazing practice or how to start grazing, via the GrazingCoaches and GrazingTeachers, via the Meadow Man and by developing new grazing concepts.
- Better integration of grazing into general farm management practice. On the one hand, by expanding New Dutch Grazing to create a total package for grassland and forage management and on the other, by putting the integral approach to grazing on the agendas of farm visitors and the green education sector.

To safeguard this, ensuring a reliable quality assurance scheme is vital, that balances an independent and impartial certification, inspection and auditing process and a practical and workable system for stakeholders.

1 KNOWLEDGE: BOOSTING GRASS AND GRAZING EXPERTISE

The GrazingCoaches and GrazingTeachers have a direct link with practice and are therefore key in disseminating and boosting expertise and skills relating to grass and grazing. They offer advice and guidance to dairy farmers who already have experience with grazing or to dairy farmers who are planning to start or recently started grazing (New Grazers). They also give presentations to study groups. The GrazingCoaches and GrazingTeachers are employed by various companies; agricultural consultancies, accountants, compound feed producers, seed companies and agricultural colleges and universities. In 2019, approximately 50 GrazingCoaches and 20 GrazingTeachers were active.



As well as the activities of the GrazingCoaches and GrazingTeachers, the secretary acts as a help desk for questions from dairy farmers and farm visitors, has an advisory role in scientific projects such as 'Amazing Grazing' and acts as an educator in enhancing the knowledge of advisers and other farm visitors regarding grazing. The foundation also communicates tips to improve grass and grazing skills via the Meadow Man (a virtual expert with a newsletter and information platform on social media).

1.1 NEW GRAZERS

The increase in access to meadow grazing over the past few years is partly attributable to new grazers. On several hundred farms, farmers have decided to let their cows roam the meadows again, after having previously kept their cattle confined to the barn year-round. The Grazing Foundation supervises new grazers in the context of the New Grazers project. This project was started in 2015 and will continue to run until the end of 2021. Over the course of the project, around 1700 dairy farmers have been advised about how to start grazing, some 500 of whom have been supervised by dairy farmers at the start of grazing either in the form of a structural action plan or two years of intensive coaching.

Dairy companies and other farm visitors have played a key role in recruiting New Grazers to join the project. Their efforts are supported by communication material: flyers, advertisements in member magazines and free publicity in trade magazines. In 2019, over 200 informative contacts took place with dairy farmers about starting grazing. In addition, around 200 dairy farmers were supervised with the help of a structural action plan or two-years of intensive coaching.

OPEN DAYS

In May and June 2019, seven New Grazers, and their GrazingCoaches, organised open days for fellow dairy farmers. The primary aim was to encourage farmers who still keep their cows indoors to make the switch by demonstrating how the system works in practice. During guided tours of the barns and the meadows, the New Grazers demonstrated how grazing is integrated in daily herd management and there was an opportunity to ask questions.

1.2 EMBEDDING GRAZING IN FARM MANAGEMENT PRACTICE

A new three-year plan for the foundation's knowledge activities sets out the ambition to embed grazing even more firmly in the management practice of dairy farmers. The principle is that meeting the criteria that define grazing is not the central focus for dairy farmers, but rather giving form to the two primary functions of grazing: harvesting grass and feeding cows. Optimally interpreting and satisfying both criteria can contribute to the efficiency and revenues of dairy farmers and help achieve the goals of the Sustainable Dairy Chain. Moreover, this is expected to lead to grazing in a form that is will within the defined criteria of grazing. There is a wide scope for optimisation precisely because less attention has been focussed on grass in the past decades.

In this approach, the dairy farmer plays a key role in embedding grazing in herd and farm management practice. We aim to offer dairy farmers solutions to integrate grazing, seen from the perspective of harvesting grass and feeding cows, easily and effectively into their farm management practice. The three principles are:

- An integral approach to harvesting grass and feeding cows; with attention to circularity on the dairy farm: cow – manure – soil – grass. Firstly, we offer the dairy farmer new tools to balance the ration fed to cows and convert the grass into the highest possible milk yield. Secondly, through the integral approach, we can safeguard that the benefits of grazing are promoted and leveraged as far as possible and that any potential disadvantages are minimised.
- We are on developing guidelines so that 80% of dairy farmers can achieve good results (80% of the potential profit). By choosing guidelines, recommendations can be explained clearly and simply. This is not only necessary to propel the movement forward and make progress, clarity and simplicity necessitate taking an approach from the core, and therefore creates new perspectives for innovation. Using guidelines also stimulates a more structured approach that is consistent with modern dairy farms. During the development of new guidelines, the concept of New Dutch Grazing will be expanded.
- We are cooperating closely with parties active around the dairy farmer: farm visitors (including GrazingCoaches), the trade press channels and policy makers. This will create committed ambassadors for our philosophy and concepts and we can ensure that these parties all share and express the same principles.

BROCHURE NEW DUTCH GRAZING, WITH FERTILISING PLANS

In the form of New Dutch Grazing, the foundation has developed a new standard to graze cows simply and effectively that is consistent with modern dairy farming practice. In 2019, the experiences with New Dutch Meadows were compiled and published in a brochure. This publication is intended for dairy farmers and their advisers. A plan has been developed for the five variants (XL, L, M, S and XS).

In cooperation with the CBGV, a fertilising recommendation has been drafted for each variant. This facilitates dairy farmers in better aligning their fertilising strategy to suit the needs of the grass, and via the nutritional value of the grass, the cow.



DEMO FARMS

How the format of New Dutch Grazing works in practice is demonstrated and developed further on six demo farms in different regions of the Netherlands and on different soils. In addition to good grazing practice, all these farms have also formulated an additional personal goal for 2019. Three demo farms will focus on improving protein utilisation by using fertilisers, ensilage and supplemental feeding to reduce the amount of crude protein in the ration and improving the true protein digested in the intestine/degraded protein balance (the DVE/OEB protein evaluation system used in the Netherlands). The focus of the other three farms will be on grazing the cows more on fresh pasture so that more grass can be converted directly into milk. Another target of these farms will be investigating how they can expand their grazable area. Spearheads for less crude protein in the ration are:

- Adapting the composition of the supplemental feed
- Reducing the protein content in grass silage
- Reducing the protein content in meadow grass

Spearheads for converting more grass directly into milk are:

- Adjusting the amount of supplemental feed
- Expanding the grazeable area in plots immediately around the farmhouse
- Extending the grazing period

A series of films have been produced to maintain awareness and boost the profile of New Dutch Grazing and the demo farms¹. In addition to excursions for dairy farmers, groups of farm visitors and school classes, some demo farms have initiated their own activities to promote New Dutch Grazing, such as a stand with a mini-grazing platform (including cows!) at the agricultural days event in Someren, open farms days and activities on Facebook.

1.3 GRAZINGCOACHES AND GRAZINGTEACHERS

In 2019, five training days were organised for the GrazingCoaches and GrazingTeachers, in addition to a joint kick-off of the advisory season, at the Practical Institute for Grazing. In line with the annual plan, the central themes showcased skills and knowledge on how to integrate grazing into a sustainable dairy farm. The themes specifically examined harvesting more grass with grazing, perspectives on the transformative potential of using multiple sustainability themes simultaneously, the composition of silage grass and the composition of meadow grass.



The sessions for GrazingCoaches concentrated on training working methods so the coaches can also support dairy farmers as a critical sparring partner. New Dutch Grazing is another common thread, including sharing the experiences of the demo farms and farm visitors. The content for these days at the Practical Institute for Grazing was provided and presented by Bert Philipsen (Wageningen UR Livestock Research) and René Schepers (Schepers Adviseurs).

1 See: bit.ly/2qSRs4Z, bit.ly/2XbnVzA and bit.ly/33lOvm9

The practical institute plays an important role in inspiring GrazingCoaches and strengthening their commitment to the foundation. In addition to transferring knowledge, which is also absorbed directly by all the important categories of farm visitors, another important aspect is creating a closely-knit community. A key factor that binds the GrazingCoaches is the passion for grass and grazing. At the practical institute, they meet with like-minded, fellow coaches and can discuss how successfully their passion is assimilated by their employers.

CRASH COURSE NEW DUTCH GRAZING

In the autumn of 2019, the crash course organised for New Dutch Grazing advisers included a group of farm visitors representing the animal feed sector, milking robot suppliers and accountants. Here too Bert Philipsen (Wageningen UR Livestock Research) and René Schepers (Schepers Adviseurs) provided and presented the course material.

1.4 ADVICE AND LECTURES

In 2019, a total of about 20 existing grazers contacted the foundation seeking the advice of a GrazingCoach on grazing or New Dutch Grazing. In addition, GrazingCoaches gave lectures on grazing to four study groups, following requests submitted to the foundation.

However, these figures are lower than the actual frequency of advice provided by GrazingCoaches to dairy farmers, as the majority of advice is in the form of direct contact between the dairy farmers and the GrazingCoaches. Key visitors to dairy farms have given the New Dutch Grazing concept a prominent role in their advisory services.

1.5 OTHER

GRASS GROWTH FIGURES AND THE MEADOW MAN

In 2019, Veeteelt Gras magazine, in collaboration with a group of animal feed manufacturers, also published the grass growth and quality figures every week, along with a tip from the Meadow Man. This section is one of the most widely read sections of the newsletter. However, the idea of not only providing insight into grass growth and quality, but also showing how these factors affect milk production, has not been successful this year. To make this possible, dairy companies will be approached for cooperation. By making this transparent and understandable, we can bring attention to how fresh grass can be converted into good milk production. For example, one dairy manufacturer indicated that when the cows go outside into the meadows again each spring 'the milk factory starts brimming over with milk'. Dairy farmers still fail to realise and value the potential of fresh grass in good milk production. Clearly visualising this potential in figures can raise the profile of grazing.

WEBSITE

The public website for the knowledge activities (www.stichtingweidegang.nl) was given a new look in early 2019. The way the various advisory products are offered was changed to better reflect and align with the questions asked by dairy farmers.

2 SAFEGUARDING: SAFEGUARDING THE INTEGRITY OF MEADOW DAIRY PRODUCTS AND ISSUING THE MEADOW MILK LOGO

The meadow milk logo guarantees that the product is made from meadow milk. Meadow milk is milk from farms where the cows graze in pastures from spring to autumn for at least 120 days a year and for at least six hours a day. The milk is collected separately and processed into fresh dairy products – such as milk, buttermilk, custard and yoghurt – cheese and other dairy products. The Grazing Foundation safeguards the production process, transportation and processing of the meadow milk into the final meadow dairy product.

The Meadow Milk logo was introduced in 2007 to encourage the grazing of cows in the Netherlands and to make products prepared from meadow milk easily identifiable. The logo was transferred to the Grazing Foundation in 2012. Since then, all dairy companies and food retailers have been able to use the Meadow Milk logo. In 2016 the Meadow Milk logo also became available for use on dairy products manufactured outside the Netherlands. The same requirements apply to these products. The Meadow Milk logo is available in several languages.



In 2019, the following Certifying Bodies were affiliated to the foundation for the purpose of safeguarding the certification of meadow dairy products:

- Qlip, Leusden NL (Grazing Certificate parts A, B and C)
- Melkcontrolecentrum Vlaanderen (MCC), Lier BE (Grazing Certificate part A)
- ABCG, Alsfeld Duitsland (Grazing Certificate part A)

For more information on grazing, meadow dairy and the certification scheme, please consult our manuals at www.meadowmilk.org under Conditions.

2.1 PREPARATION FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF AMENDMENTS TO THE TERMS AND CONDITIONS

In 2019, preparations were made to implement amendments to the General Terms and Conditions for grazing and meadow dairy products. The amendments will come into force on 1 January 2020. For dairy farmers, the amendments include the following:

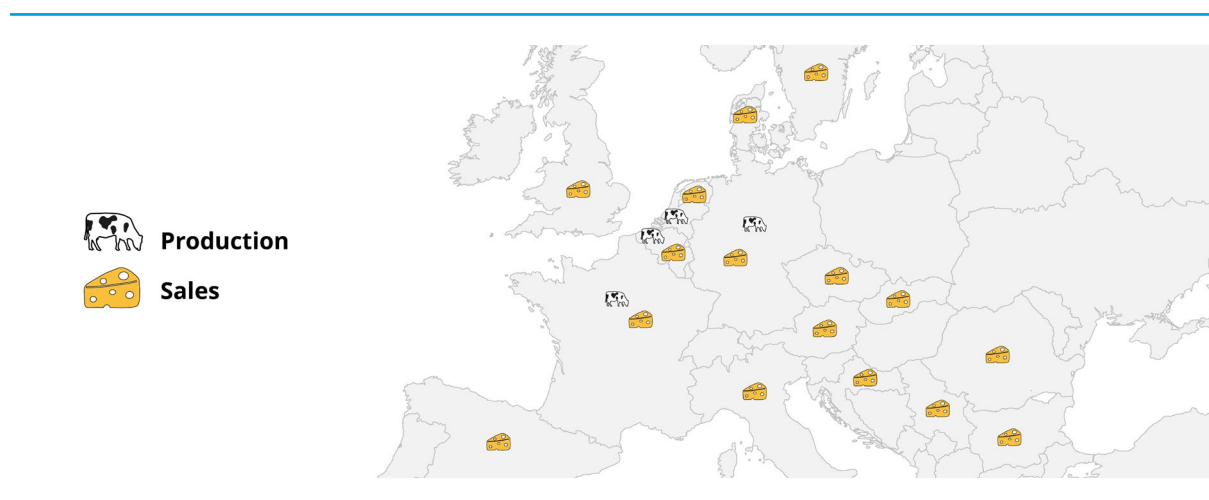
- In addition to the grazing days, dairy farmers must also register the start and end times of grazing on those days.
- Dairy farmers can amend or enter the registration up to a maximum of seven days back in the grazing history.
- Unannounced inspections and follow-up inspections can only be completed if the inspector has seen the cows grazing. If the inspection is outside the registered grazing time, the inspector will return to the farm at another time. Dairy farmers who use automatic milking systems and a free cow traffic system for grazing must ensure during grazing times that always at least 75% of the cows are in the meadow.

These amendments enable grazing inspections to be performed more precisely. In addition, amendments have been made relating to certificate holders and CBs in particular:

- New interpretative guidelines have been drawn up for performing inspections at dairy farms and provisions have been included on how to reach a conclusion.
- Provisions have been included on following up inspection results by the Meadow Dairy companies.

2.2 PRODUCTION AND SALES OF MEADOW DAIRY PRODUCTS IN EUROPE

The figure below shows an overview of the countries in which meadow farm milk is produced and meadow dairy products are sold. Dairy farmers in the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany and France graze their cows according to the conditions of the foundation; in total there are over 16,000 participants. Meadow dairy is sold across Europe. The most important markets are the Netherlands, Belgium and Germany.



Countries where products with the Meadow Milk logo are produced and sold

Due to the international character of the scheme and the logo, the various manuals and guidelines are always published in English, Dutch, German and French. The website (www.weidemelk.nl) is also available in those four languages. For the other countries in which Meadow Milk products are sold – Spain, Italy, Denmark, Sweden, Czech Republic, Croatia, Serbia, Slovakia, Romania and Bulgaria – the homepage with the most relevant information on meadow milk for the public has been translated into the language concerned.

2.3 CERTIFICATES

At the end of 2019, there were a total of 161 farms with one or more valid Grazing Certificates. Together, they have a total of 252 part certificates. The latest overview can always be found on: weidemelk.nl/en/participants.

Certification combinations	Netherlands	Belgium	Germany	France	Total
All three (ABC)	10	4	2	3	19
One or two	80	17	5	–	102
Farm dairy processor	39	1	–	–	40
Total	129	22	7	3	161

Number of certified farms, categorised per country and certificate combination.

2.4 RESULTS INSPECTIONS 2019

The table below shows the results of the inspections performed on dairy farms in 2019. The number of farms participating in the scheme has risen compared with 2018. The inspection targets have been met.

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Number of participating dairy farms	9.802	9.441	9.565	11.450	15.828	16.837	16.259
Inspected dairy farms	39,6%	67,1%	34,1%	49,3%	44,1%	47,4%	44,6%
inspected by CB after risk assessment	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	17,0%	14,5%	15,7%	15,1%
inspected by CB	10,2%	10,3%	28,5%	26,4%	22,2%	22,9%	25,8%
inspected by dairy company	29,4%	56,9%	5,6%	5,9%	7,4%	8,8%	3,6%
Repeat inspection*	10,1%	8,1%	2,3%	9,4%	3,9%	3,3%	4,7%
Positive assessments*	95,5%	97,4%	98,7%	98,6%	98,4%	98,9%	98,6%
Negative assessments*	4,5%	2,6%	1,3%	1,4%	1,6%	1,1%	1,4%

Inspection results dairy farms, 2013-2019.

* % of inspected dairy farmers.

2.5 LICENCES

37 licences for the use of the Meadow Milk logo were issued.

2.6 GRAZING RELATIVE TO AMMONIA EMISSIONS

The secretary of the foundation is affiliated to a working group of government authorities and sector organisations to gain better insight in the grazing times in order to estimate the impact on ammonia reduction more accurately. The assumption is that ammonia emissions are over-estimated because the grazing time is underestimated. Estimating the grazing times from the system for safeguarding Meadow Milk at group level (regional or national level, not at individual dairy farmer level) could offer a solution.



The foundation also provided input for the report on Grazing and Fertilising (Beweiden en Bemesten) published by the advisory commission on nitrogen emissions led by Johan Remkes. On the basis of this input, among other things, the Remkes advisory commission concluded that no compulsory permit is required for grazing, and often not for fertilising either.

3 FINANCIAL STATEMENT

3.1 ASSETS AND LIABILITIES AS PER 31 DECEMBER 2019

ASSETS	2019	2018
Receivables		
Account receivable	9.623	25.927
Other receivables	48.154	13.665
Accrued assets	51.913	43.588
<i>Total receivables</i>	<i>109.690</i>	<i>83.180</i>
Liquid assets		
Bank account	200.386	241.668
Total assets	310.076	324.848

Assets Grazing Foundation, 2018-2019.

LIABILITIES	2019	2018
Equity capital		
Capital	104.039	64.582
<i>Total equity capital</i>	<i>104.039</i>	<i>64.582</i>
Short-term Liabilities		
Accounts payable	143.064	107.899
Transfer account VAT declarations	0	131
Accrued liabilities	62.973	152.236
<i>Total short-term liabilities</i>	<i>206.037</i>	<i>260.266</i>
Total liabilities	310.076	324.848

Liabilities Grazing Foundation, 2018-2019.

3.2 STATE OF REVENUE AND EXPENDITURE

Revenue	2019	2018
ZuivelNL; secretary	19.531	–
ZuivelNL; knowledge development and sharing	279.569	250.000
ZuivelNL; New Grazers project	115.340	107.153
Ministry EZ; project Nieuwe Weiders	115.340	107.153
Contribution dairy farmers (or dairy companies) for advice on grazing	38.875	148.176
Contribution-transfer certificate holders and CBs for Meadow Milk safeguards	257.942	251.509
Other	0	10.150
Total revenue	826.598	874.141

State of revenue Grazing Foundation, 2018-2019.

EXPENDITURE	2019	2018
Secretary	39.062	29.109
Knowledge development and sharing	299.819	292.929
New Grazers project	249.306	336.357
Safeguarding Meadow Milk	199.053	172.031
Other	-5	1.032
Total expenditure	787.235	831.458

State of expenditure Grazing Foundation, 2018-2019.

BALANCE	2019	2018
Balance	39.363	42.683

Balance Grazing Foundation, 2018-2019.



CONTACT

For any questions, comments or suggestions, please contact the secretariat of the foundation via:

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