
GRAZING FOUNDATION ANNUAL REPORT 2024



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2024 SUMMARY

PROPORTION OF DAIRY FARMERS PRACTISING GRAZING SHOWS SLIGHT DECREASE

ZuivelNL reported that the percentage of dairy farms with cows grazing outdoors fell to 80.1% in the last grazing season. Dairy farmers questioned by dairy companies said that the wet spring played an important role in this decline as the bad weather prevented the cows from being able to meadow graze in time. The bluetongue outbreak was also mentioned as another reason why farmers decided not to graze the herd, or decided to keep the cows in the barn earlier in the season.

The wet spring and the bluetongue outbreak caused the percentage of dairy farms using any form of grazing in 2024 to fall below the industry target of 81.2%. The share of farms with full meadow grazing declined from 77.0% to 73.9%. The share of farms with partial meadow grazing increased from 5.8% to 6.2% in 2024.

Year	Total	Full grazing	Partial grazing
2024	80,1%	73,9%	6,2%
2023	82,8%	77,0%	5,8%
2022	83,9%	78,1%	5,8%
2021	84,0%	77,9%	6,1%
2020	83,7%	77,5%	6,2%
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: Sustainable Dairy Chain (Duurzame Zuivelketen).

LINKING FORAGE MANAGEMENT TO RATIONS

Important steps were taken in 2024 to link forage management to the ration of cows and young stock as a way of integrating grazing into general farm management practice. As well making progress in reducing nitrogen and greenhouse gases emissions, this also serves to emphasise the benefits of meadow grazing. The intention here is to develop a linear programming model that feed advisers can use as an easy way of advising dairy farmers about measures to formulate a good ration each season. A board game has also been developed to give dairy farmers and advisers more insight into linking forage management to rations at a tactical level.

START DATE POSTPONED

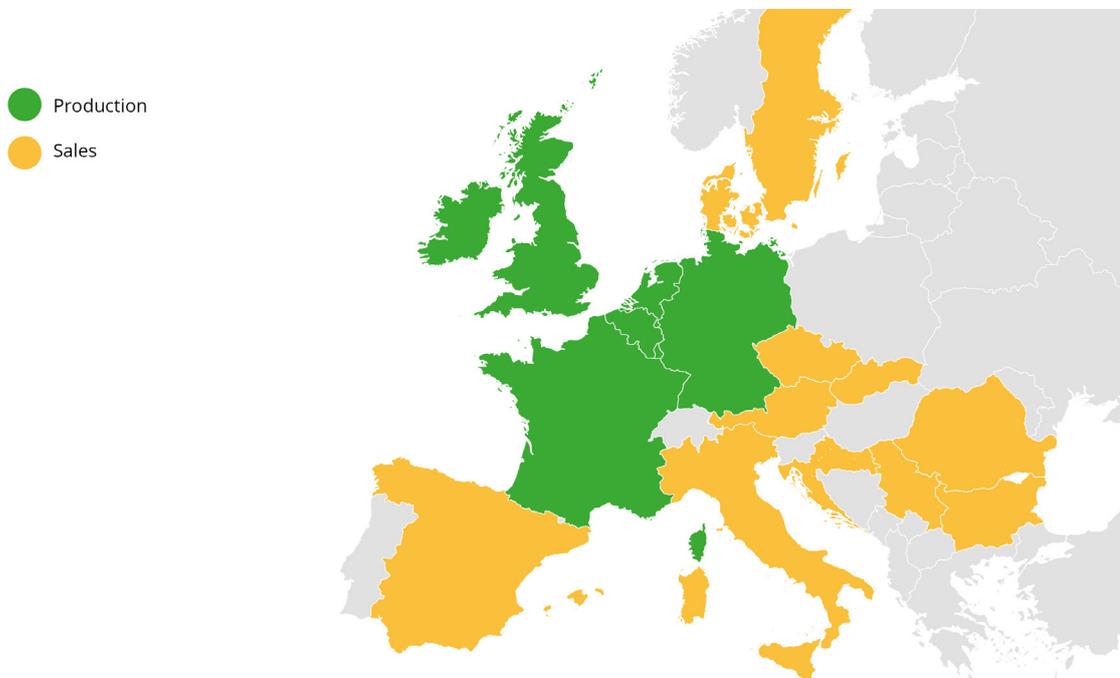
Due to the wet spring, the foundation has postponed the final start date for both the Meadow Milk Scheme and the eco-activity Grazing. The start date for Meadow Milk has been extended from 15 June to 1 July. The start date for the eco-activity has been postponed three times by a 14-day period; from 15 May to finally 1 July. As the weather in the autumn was favourable for grazing, dairy farmers could continue grazing for a long time. In the end, the postponed start date had no consequences for the hours and days of grazing to be achieved.

NEW CERTIFICATION SCHEME FOR THE ECO-ACTIVITY GRAZING

The certification scheme for the eco-activity Grazing has been approved by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, Food Security and Nature so the eco-activity Grazing can be safeguarded from 2024. The eco-activity Grazing is part of the Dutch implementation of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). In 2024, 2978 declarations for the eco-activity Grazing were issued to dairy farmers who grazed their herd for at least 1500 hours and 505 declarations for dairy farmers who grazed their herd for 2,500 hours.

GRAZING YOUNG STOCK

The Grazing Foundation has a scheme that safeguards meadow grazing of young stock. In 2024, grazing young stock was safeguarded on 781 dairy farms that participate in the On the Way to PlanetProof scheme.



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

PRODUCTION OF MEADOW DAIRY AND THE USE OF THE MEADOW MILK LOGO

The figure on the previous page 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 Grazing Foundation; in total there are over 13,200 participants. Meadow dairy is sold across Europe. The most important markets are the Netherlands and Belgium. The requirements for meadow dairy are also integrated in the conditions of the 'On the way to PlanetProof' label managed by SMK (Stichting Milieukeur), the Better Life label scheme initiated by the Dutch Society for the Protection of Animals, Tuurlijk! managed by the DOC cooperative and Stichting Beter voor Natuur en Boer, a quality label set up by Dutch supermarket chain Albert Heijn that was transferred to an independent foundation in 2024.

INTRODUCTION

In this annual report, we report on the activities and results of the Grazing Foundation in 2024. 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 to this end:

- Advice and guidance for dairy farmers on better grazing practice or how to start grazing. This is given by the GrazingCoaches, communication via the Meadow Man, the YouTube series *Op het Scherpst van de Snede* and in trade journals.
- Better integration of grazing into general farm management practice. We do this by developing knowledge products and practical tools which are applied to integrate grazing and grassland management into modern farm management systems and linking them to other dairy farming objectives such as reducing emissions of nitrogen and greenhouse gases. We are also putting this integrated approach to grazing on the agenda of suppliers and advisers, and in green education.

In Chapter 1, we show the progress made in 2024 for the knowledge activities. Chapter 2 sets out the facts and figures about safeguarding. Chapter 3 contains the foundation's financial statements.

1 KNOWLEDGE: GREATER GRASSLAND AND GRAZING SKILLS

Our network of GrazingCoaches plays a pivotal role in strengthening grazing expertise. They are employed by various organisations; agricultural consultancies, accountants, compound feed producers, seed companies and agricultural universities of applied science. The GrazingCoaches are in direct contact with everyday practice. After following training at the Practical School for Grazing, they offer advice and guidance to dairy farmers, both new and experienced in grazing.

In addition to our GrazingCoaches, the foundation also plays a major role in sharing knowledge. To this end, the foundation has developed ready-to-use concepts for practice and guidelines. These concepts and guidelines are propagated sector-wide by all major suppliers and advisers. To promote a uniform approach to grazing that places the dairy farmer central, on request, the foundation can contribute its expertise to the content of research programmes and policies such as how meadow grazing is organised.



The foundation also communicates via the Meadow Man in Veeteelt and Melkvee Magazine about grass and grazing skills and with content in the YouTube series Op het Scherpst van de Snede. The grass growth figures are published weekly on the Veeteelt website and in their newsletter. In addition, the foundation offers content to trade magazines to inform dairy farmers about the possibilities of grazing.

TRAINING NEW GRAZINGCOACHES

In 2024, 15 advisers from animal feed companies, veterinary practices, accountants and independent consultancies were trained to become a GrazingCoach. The training, which started in January 2024, was provided by Bert Philipsen (Wageningen UR) and Onno van Eijk (Blikopeners). The Grazing Foundation currently has more than 65 GrazingCoaches.

GRIP ON GRASS

The demonstration project 'Grip on grass' was developed in consultation with sector parties with the aim of reducing ammonia emissions. After an intake at the end of 2021, more than 250 dairy farmers were mentored individually and in study groups within the framework of this project in 2022 and 2023. They gained experience with more grazing, combined with a reduction in the crude protein content in the ration.



Phasing out of derogation

The focus of the third year was on grazing in combination with limiting the share of crude protein in the ration in relation to the phasing out of the manure derogation. The project has developed a tool that gives individual dairy farmers greater insight into attention points in their manure management, based on data imported from the *Kringloopwijzer* management tool for mineral efficiency. This tool has been rolled out to the participants.

A factsheet has also been developed to visualise the effects that phasing out of the derogation will have on meadow grazing. This factsheet combines practical experience with calculations performed by experts. It appears that planning and saving manure, including sufficient manure storage, are decisive factors in being able to optimally utilise the available manure and dispose of sufficient manure, and that grazing or not grazing the herd is not a significant contributing factor.

Linking forage production to ration calculations

Producing forage and optimally using forage are important factors which can be managed by dairy farmers to reduce nitrogen and greenhouse gas emissions. A prototype of a linear programming (LP) model has been developed as a spin-off of the 'Grip on Grass' project, in collaboration with other forage projects. This model enables dairy farmers to plan their rations for four to six seasons in advance and adapt the quality of the forage (energy, protein and crude fibre in relation to methane emissions) to fertilisation and grazing strategies and the timing of forage harvesting. Good tactical planning will help dairy farmers make optimal use of the forage they produce themselves. The tool enables the ration to be optimised based on cost price, crude protein and/or methane emissions. This gives greater insight into the benefits of harvesting fresh grass by grazing and helps to proactively deal with any problems involved in grazing (such as the high crude protein of autumn grass).

A board game, the *Grote RuwvoerSpel*, was developed with this in mind. Linking forage production to the rations is not done by an automatic or digital system, but by playing a board game. The *Grote RuwvoerSpel* is a low threshold and useful way to raise awareness in study groups, in training session and when training advisers. The effectiveness of the *Grote RuwvoerSpel* will be widely tested in the Netwerk Praktijkbedrijven initiative of LTO Noord and Wageningen University & Research in 2025. This board game can play a key role in raising awareness among dairy farmers and advisers with the aim of optimising the tactical planning of forage management.

GREENHOUSE GASES

Bert Philipsen (WUR), in collaboration with Harm Rijnveld (GrazingCoach), has calculated the emissions of greenhouse gas in relation to grass production and harvesting. Although feed production is responsible for approximately half of the greenhouse gas emissions related to milk production, greenhouse gas emissions related to grass production have not been calculated at this level before. This study has generated valuable insight into the mechanisms of action that influence greenhouse gas emissions caused by grass production. It has also identified possible action that can be taken to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

2 SAFEGUARDING GRAZING

In addition to safeguarding Meadow Milk, the Grazing Foundation also safeguards the grazing practice of young stock and the eco-activity Grazing.

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 originates from farms where cows graze in the 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 assures the production process, transport and processing of meadow milk.

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. As of 2016 the Meadow Milk logo has also been made available for dairy products produced outside the Netherlands. The same conditions apply. The logo is available in a variety of languages. For more information on grazing, meadow dairy and the certification scheme, please consult our manuals at www.weidemelk.nl under 'Conditions'.



CERTIFYING BODIES

Five certifying bodies are affiliated with the foundation:

- Qlip, Zutphen, the Netherlands
- Melkcontrolecentrum Vlaanderen (MCC), Lier, Belgium
- SGS, Emstek, Germany
- Bureau Veritas, Paris, France
- Certis, Le Rheu, France

CERTIFICATES

At the end of 2024, there were a total of 167 farms with one or more valid Grazing Certificates. Together, they hold 306 partial certificates. An up to date overview can always be found on weidemelk.nl/nl/certificaten.

	NL	BE	DE	FR	GB	LU	Total
Number of farms*	122	27	6	10	1	1	167

*Number of certified farms, categorised per country.

RESULTS INSPECTIONS 2024

The table below shows the results of the inspections performed on dairy farms in 2024 by Certifying Bodies.

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Number of participating dairy farmers	16.259	15.470	15.771	14.986	14.198	9.516
Inspected Dairy Farmers total	44,6%	48,2%	47,7%	29,0%	27,8%	31,4%
by CB after risk assessment	15,1%	27,3%	29,7%	12,9%	11,0%	12,5%
by CB	25,8%	14,8%	10,8%	13,5%	14,6%	16,8%
By Dairy Company	3,6%	6,1%	7,1%	2,5%	2,2%	2,1%
Repeat inspections*	4,7%	3,4%	3,2%	12,2%	9,8%	14,0%
Positive assessments*	98,6%	99,5%	99,4%	98,9%	98,9%	98,4%
Negative assessments*	1,4%	0,6%	0,6%	1,1%	1,1%	1,6%

Inspection results dairy farms, 2019-2024.

* % of inspected dairy farmers.

The apparent decline in the number of participants can be attributed to the start of the eco-activity Grazing. Although participants in the eco-activity also supply meadow milk to their dairy company, this activity has been kept separate in this report because two different certification schemes are concerned.

The results of the inspections clearly reflect the impact of the introduction of the Grazing Indicator inspections in 2023. In 2024, the Grazing Indicator inspections concerned 1231 (12.9%) of the 9516 dairy farmers. This is only used in the Netherlands. For this reason, the share of dairy farmers inspected has declined since the introduction in 2022, but the proportion of risk assessment-based inspections has increased. The increase in the number of inspected dairy farmers in 2024 is due to the start of the eco-activity of extended grazing. As a result, proportionately more participants fell under the scheme without a Grazing Indicator. The Grazing Indicator analyses the composition of tank milk samples to assess whether dairy farmers are complying sufficiently with the requirements for grazing. The Grazing Indicator makes it possible to monitor and safeguard sufficient grazing all year round.

In 2024, 69 inspections could not be completed because the dairy farmer had already stopped grazing before the follow-up-inspection after the required days and hours had been achieved (these are not included in the table).

LICENCES

One new licence for the use of the Meadow Milk logo was issued in 2024. The Grazing Foundation has concluded licence agreements with a total of 49 parties.

LOGO SCAN DUTCH SUPERMARKETS

In December 2024, correct use of the Meadow Milk logo – including the accompanying text – on dairy products was inspected for compliance with the regulations in ten Dutch supermarket chains. The conclusion was that the logo was used correctly. The old Meadow Milk logo, which was phased out on 1 January, was still used on some packaging. In addition, one distorted and illegible logo was found, and one incomplete accompanying text. All relevant licensees have been informed.

AMENDMENTS TO GENERAL TERMS AND CONDITIONS

A number of points in the general terms and conditions have been amended with effect from 1 January 2024. An exemption was possible for 2024 for two of the amendments. These exemptions no longer apply in 2025:

- Further criteria for meadow grazing: to realise a grazing day, and to count the hours of this grazing day as grazing hours, a dairy farmer must graze for at least 2 hours between 06:00 and 22:00.
- No subsequent adjustment of calendar after doubt or incomplete: after an inspection with the outcome ‘doubtful’ or ‘incomplete’, the dairy farmer may no longer subsequently adjust the grazing times on the grazing calendar. From that moment on, the grazing times on the grazing calendar must always correspond with the times the dairy farmer actually grazes his cows.

WET SPRING

Due to the extremely wet spring, it was not possible to graze cows in parts of the Netherlands in the spring. For this reason, the final start date for both Meadow Milk and the eco-activity was postponed to 1 July.

PILOT AMS

In 2024, together with Qlip, a pilot was launched to develop an alternative criterion for the standard for dairy farmers with an automatic milking system with a free option for grazing that states that at least 75% of the cows must be in the meadow during grazing hours. The pilot will examine various aspects of farm management, such as the interpretation of the meadow grazing system, the cow route (the route taken by a cow to reach the meadow) and the feed regime in combination with so-called ‘24-hour management’.

The pilot will be continued in 2025.

SAFEGUARDING ECO-ACTIVITY GRAZING

The Grazing Foundation has developed a certification scheme for the eco-activity Grazing. Under the conditions of the Dutch interpretation of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), farmers are eligible to apply for an eco-premium. This is an additional payment made on top of the basic payment. To be eligible for the eco scheme, the participants must perform eco-activities. Dairy farmers can decide to graze their dairy cows for 1500 or 2500 hours.

The certification scheme of the Grazing Foundation has been approved by the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality to safeguard the eco-activity Grazing from 2024. Qlip performs inspections for compliance with this scheme as a Certifying Body for the foundation. By being approved, the foundation can ensure that certification of the eco-activity grazing is harmonised as far as possible with certification of grazing for meadow dairy.

In 2024, 3749 dairy farmers registered with Qlip for the eco-activity grazing. This breaks down into 3229 dairy farmers for category 1 (1500 hours) and 520 dairy farmers for category 2 (2500 hours). At the end of the year, 3483 dairy farmers received the declaration that they had complied with the conditions for the eco-activity Grazing in 2024: 2978 dairy farmers for category 1 (1500 hours) and 505 dairy farmers for category 2 (2500 hours).

Inspection results for eco-activity Grazing	2024
Number of participating dairy farmers	3749
Inspected dairy farmers total	46,2%
By CI	46,2%
Repeat inspections	14,1%
Positive assessments	97,7%
Negative assessments	2,3%

Inspecties deelnemers Eco-activiteit.

Grazing declaration	2024
Grazing declaration issued total	3483
Grazing declaration not issued total	266
Grazing declaration issued for 1500 hours	2978
Grazing declaration not issued for 1500 hours	251
Grazing declaration 2500 hours requested, issued for 1500 hours	59
Grazing declaration issued for 2500 hours	505
Grazing declaration not issued for 2500 hours	15

Explanation: the Grazing Declaration is not issued if there a negative inspection result or if the grazing hours to be achieved are not reached.

The certification scheme was evaluated after the end of the grazing season. Based on this evaluation, the most important changes implemented for dairy farmers are:

- The standard for 2500 hours of grazing applicable to the plot contiguous to the farmhouse has been amended from 2.5 to 3 dairy cows per hectare of contiguous plot.
- Grazing only at night is no longer permitted. To count the hours of this grazing day as grazing hours, the cows must graze for at least 2 hours between 06:00 and 22:00.
- After an inspection with the outcome 'doubtful' or 'incomplete', the grazing calendar must always be up-to-date and may no longer be updated afterwards.

These amendments will take effect from 2025.

SAFEGUARDING GRAZING YOUNG STOCK

The certification scheme 'On the way to PlanetProof' for milk includes a criterion stating that young stock must be grazed. To enable farmers to demonstrate compliance, the Grazing Foundation developed the certification scheme Grazing Young Stock. A participating dairy farmer must establish a grazing plan prior to the grazing season. This plan indicates how the young stock on the farm will be given meadow access for grazing. There are two ways to do this:

- Choose from one of the three grazing schemes for young stock issued by the Grazing Foundation.
- Establish their own grazing plan for young stock.

Dairy farmers who subcontract the rearing of their young stock to a specialised rearing farm must conclude a contract that details the required criteria for grazing young stock. In this case, the rearing farm must establish a grazing plan.

In 2024, 781 dairy farmers and young stock rearing farms participated in the scheme for young stock farming. 375 inspections were performed on these dairy farmers. 87.5% complied with the requirements, less than 1% failed to comply. 9.1% of the inspections had an outcome 'doubtful' and 2.6% 'incomplete'. 35 follow-up inspections were performed, of which 79.4% were found to be satisfactory and 20.6% were again concluded with 'doubtful'.

3 FINANCIAL STATEMENT

REVENUE AND EXPENDITURE

REVENUE	2024	2023
ZuivelNL; secretary	21,454	16,271
ZuivelNL; knowledge development and sharing	143,546	136,621
Grip on Grass subsidy	389,627	330,142
Dairy farmers/dairy companies' own contribution for advice and training for grazing	32,925	2,000
Contribution-transfer certificate holders and CBs for Meadow Milk safeguards	325,465	299,354
Contribution eco-activity Grazing	161,164	–
Total revenue	1,074,180	784,387

Revenue Grazing Foundation, 2023-2024.

OPERATING EXPENDITURE	2024	2023
Secretary	42,907	32,543
Knowledge development and sharing	187,288	138,621
Grip on Grass	389,627	330,142
Raising Level Peat Meadows and Grazing	–	214
Safeguarding Grazing	359,869	248,165
Total operating expenditure	979,691	749,685

Operating expenditure Grazing Foundation, 2023-2024.

BALANCE	2024	2023
Balance	94,489	34,703

Balance Grazing Foundation, 2023-2024.

ASSETS AND LIABILITIES AS PER 31 DECEMBER 2023

ASSETS	2023	2023
Receivables		
Accounts receivable	13,539	12,245
Other receivables	5,418	25,555
Accrued assets	170,050	153,682
<i>Total receivable</i>	<i>189,007</i>	<i>191,482</i>
Liquid assets		
Payment Accounts	576,739	837,573
Total assets	765,746	1,029,055

Assets Grazing Foundation, 2023-2024.

LIABILITIES	2024	2023
Equity capital		
Capital	454,369	359,881
<i>Total equity capital</i>	<i>454,369</i>	<i>359,881</i>
Short-term liabilities		
Accounts payable	88,207	72,860
Accrued liabilities	223,169	596,314
<i>Total short-term liabilities</i>	<i>311,376</i>	<i>669,174</i>
Total liabilities	765,746	1,029,345

Liabilities Grazing Foundation, 2023-2024.



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