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# GRAZING FOUNDATION ANNUAL REPORT 2023

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# 2023 SUMMARY

## SHARE OF DAIRY FARMERS WITH MEADOW GRAZING SHOWS SLIGHT DECLINE

After years of increasing participant numbers, 2023 was the first time there was a slight decline in the number of dairy farms that graze their cows. In 2023, 77.0% of dairy farmers grazed their dairy cows for at least six hours a day for at least 120 days a year. Some 5.8% of dairy farmers allowed some of their dairy cows or young stock to graze. The reason for the slight decline may be attributed to greater attention to various other sustainability challenges. However, at 82.8% the percentage of meadow grazing is still above the target of 81.2%. This target was set in the Grazing Covenant in 2014. More than 80 organisations cooperate in this covenant to support dairy farms with grazing practice.

Year	Total	Full grazing	Partial grazing
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).

## INTEGRATE GRAZING INTO FARM MANAGEMENT

The focus of the foundation’s knowledge activities is 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 both criteria contributes to the efficiency and revenues of dairy farmers and helps achieve other sustainability goals.

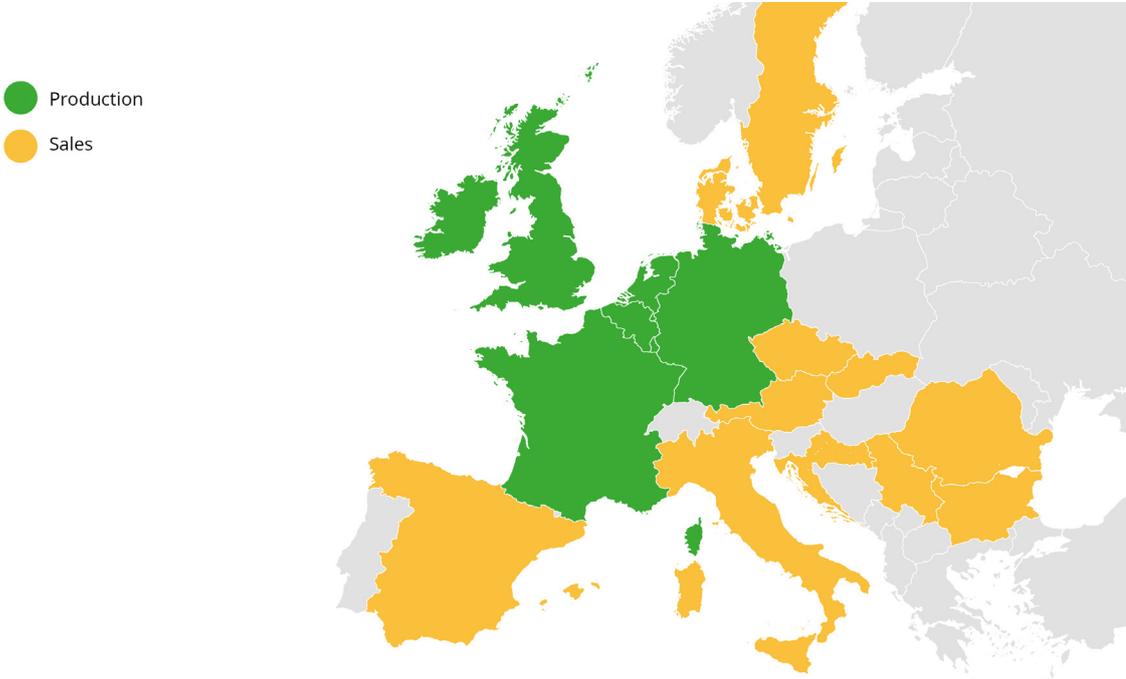
In the context of the Grip on Grass project, GrazingCoaches mentored 250 dairy farmers individually and in study groups in order to gain experience with more grazing, combined with a reduction in the crude protein content in the ration.

# NEW CERTIFICATION SCHEMES FOR GRAZING YOUNG STOCK AND THE ECO-ACTIVITY GRAZING

Grazing Foundation has introduced new certification schemes for grazing young stock and the eco-activity Grazing. The certification scheme for grazing young stock is used by the 'On the way to PlanetProof' certification scheme and from 2024 is also accessible for other sustainability schemes. The certification scheme for the eco-activity Grazing has been approved by the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality which safeguards the eco-activity Grazing from 2024. The eco-activity Grazing is part of the Dutch implementation of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP).

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

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 Grazing Foundation; in total there are over 14,000 participants. Meadow dairy is sold across Europe. The most important markets are the Netherlands, Belgium and Germany. 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 and the Better quality label of Dutch supermarket chain Albert Heijn.



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

# INTRODUCTION

In this annual report, we report on the activities and results of the Grazing Foundation in 2023. 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.

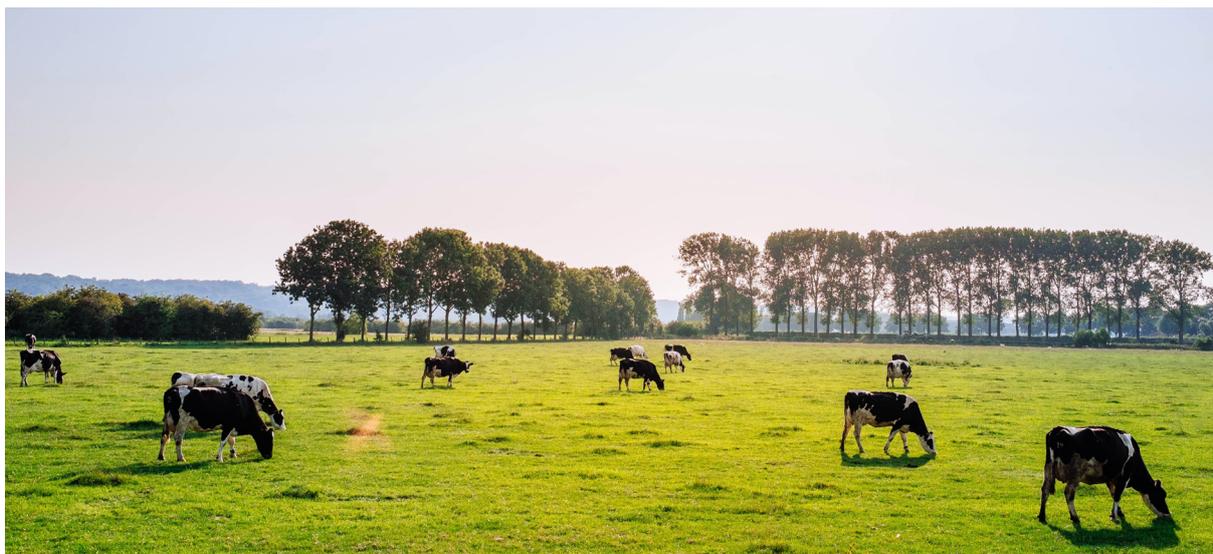
The focus of the knowledge activities is on stimulating as many dairy farmers as possible to graze their cattle outdoors and to maximise the benefits of meadow grazing. Two focal points were chosen to this end:

- Advice and guidance for dairy farmers on better grazing practice or how to start grazing. This is given by the GrazingCoaches and GrazingTeachers, via the Meadow Man and by developing new grazing concepts.
- Better integration of grazing into general farm management practice. We do this by expanding New Dutch Grazing into a total package for grassland and forage management. 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 2023 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 companies, agricultural consultancies, accountants, compound feed producers, seed companies and agricultural universities of applied science. They 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 also contribute its expertise to the content of research programmes and policies such how meadow grazing is organised.

The foundation also communicates via the Meadow Man in Veeteelt and Melkvee Magazine about grass and grazing skills. 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 2023, 15 advisers from animal feed companies, veterinary practices, accountants and independent consultancies signed up for training to become a GrazingCoach. The training will be provided by Bert Philipsen (Wageningen UR) and Onno van Eijk (Blikopeners) and will start in January 2024.

## GRAZING YOUNG STOCK

In order to create a good grazing cow, it is important to graze young stock. Being able to graze at a young age teaches cows to graze properly and create and develop immunity to gutworms and lungworms. Allowing young stock to graze also has a positive effect on the development of bones and muscles. Giving young stock good grazing experience means that dairy farmers can enjoy their herd for the entire life of the cow.

The Grazing Foundation has published a handbook for Grazing Young Stock in cooperation with veterinarian Gerrit Hegen and Bert Philipsen (Wageningen UR). The handbook offers three different schemes that farmers can follow to teach their young stock how to graze properly. Each has advantages regarding learning to graze, building up immunity, utilisation of the grass ration and the labour input involved. The handbook also presents tips for monitoring the build-up of immunity, mineral supplies, grazing management and supplemental feed for young stock.



## 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 in 2022 and 2023 to gain experience with more grazing, combined with a reduction in the crude protein content in the ration.

Grass not only plays an important role in grazing; as the main protein source in the dairy ration, it also plays a key role in reducing the crude protein content in the ration. Moreover, steering with grass can be an essential part of achieving broader sustainability goals.

The project not only focuses on sharing knowledge between dairy farmers about grass and the skills of grazing, but also on describing best practice. In 2023, for example, development started on a tool that will give dairy farmers greater insight into manure management in relation to the changes to the current manure derogation. The role of grazing has also been explained in more detail to show dairy farmers that meadow grazing does not have to be an obstacle to manure disposal.

## 2 SAFEGUARDING GRAZING

In addition to safeguarding Meadow Milk, in 2023 the Grazing Foundation started safeguarding the grazing practice of young stock and has made preparations to safeguard the eco-activity Grazing from 2024.

### 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](http://www.weidemelk.nl) under 'Conditions'.



### AMENDMENTS TO GENERAL TERMS AND CONDITIONS MEADOW MILK

In 2023, preparations were made to amend the general terms and conditions for Meadow Milk as of 1 January 2024. The amendments concern:

- Further requirements for dairy farmers stating that on a grazing day cows must graze for at least two hours between 6 am and 10 pm and that after an inspection with the outcome 'doubt' or 'not completed' a dairy farmer may no longer adjust the grazing times afterwards.
- It is also possible to claim 'Belgian Meadow Milk' on the condition that the dairy is made exclusively from Meadow Farm Milk that originates from dairy cows that graze on Belgian meadows
- The requirement that traders should also be certified has been explicitly included in the general terms and conditions.
- The general terms and conditions also refer to the eco-activity Grazing.

## 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 2023, there were a total of 171 farms with one or more valid Grazing Certificates. Together, they hold 304 partial certificates. An up to date overview can always be found on [weidemelk.nl/nl/certificaten](https://weidemelk.nl/nl/certificaten).

	NL	BE	DE	FR	GB	LU	Total
Number of farms*	127	26	7	9	1	1	171

\*Number of certified farms, categorised per country.

## RESULTS INSPECTIONS 2023

The table below shows the results of the inspections performed on dairy farms in 2023 by Certifying Bodies.

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Number of participating dairy farmers	16.837	16.259	15.470	15.771	14.986	14.198
Inspected Dairy Farmers total	47,4%	44,6%	48,2%	47,7%	29,0%	27,8%
by CB after risk assessment	15,7%	15,1%	27,3%	29,7%	12,9%	11,0%
by CB	22,9%	25,8%	14,8%	10,8%	13,5%	14,6%
By Dairy Company	8,8%	3,6%	6,1%	7,1%	2,5%	2,2%
Repeat inspections*	3,3%	4,7%	3,4%	3,2%	12,2%	9,8%
Positive assessments*	98,9%	98,6%	99,5%	99,4%	98,9%	98,9%
Negative assessments*	1,1%	1,4%	0,6%	0,6%	1,1%	1,1%

Inspection results dairy farms, 2018-2023.

\* % of inspected dairy farmers.

The results of the inspections clearly reflect the impact of the introduction of the Grazing Indicator inspections in 2023. The Grazing Indicator inspections concerned 9,166 (64.6%) of the 14,198 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 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. The number of repeat inspections performed demonstrates the ability of the Grazing Indicator to identify farms with a risk. In 2023, 183 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

Two new licences for the use of the Meadow Milk logo were issued in 2023. The Grazing Foundation concluded licence agreements with a total of 49 parties.

## SAFEGUARDING ECO-ACTIVITY GRAZING

The Grazing Foundation has developed a certification scheme for the eco-activity extended 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 will implement this scheme as a Certifying Body for the foundation. By being approved, the foundation can ensure that certification of the eco-activity extended grazing is harmonised as far as possible with certification of grazing for meadow dairy.

## SAFEGUARDING GRAZING YOUNG STOCK

From 1 January 2023, 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 2023 general terms and conditions were also developed for safeguarding grazing of young stock to enable other sustainability standards to also use the certification scheme Grazing Young Stock.

### 3 FINANCIAL STATEMENT

#### REVENUE AND EXPENDITURE

<b>REVENUE</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2022</b>
ZuivelNL; secretary	16.271	19.597
ZuivelNL; knowledge development and sharing	136.621	123.627
ZuivelNL; New Grazers project	0	18.475
Ministry of EA; New Grazers project	0	18.475
Dairy farmers/dairy companies' own contribution for advice and training for grazing	2.000	3.663
Contribution-transfer certificate holders and CBs for Meadow Milk safeguarding	299.354	301.383
RVO contribution: Raising Level Peat Meadows and Grazing	330.142	392.689
Grip on Grass subsidy	<b>784.387</b>	<b>877.908</b>
<b>Total revenue</b>	<b>877.908</b>	<b>757.140</b>

Revenue Grazing Foundation, 2022-2023.

<b>OPERATING EXPENDITURE</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2022</b>
Secretary	32.543	39.193
Knowledge development and sharing	138.621	125.877
New Grazers project	0	38.363
Safeguarding Meadow Milk	248.165	191.179
Raising Level Peat Meadows and Grazing	214	0
Grip on Grass	330.142	392.689
<b>Total operating expenditure</b>	<b>749.685</b>	<b>787.300</b>

Operating expenditure Grazing Foundation, 2022-2023.

<b>BALANCE</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2022</b>
<b>Balance</b>	<b>34.703</b>	<b>90.607</b>

Balance Grazing Foundation, 2022-2023.

## ASSETS AND LIABILITIES AS PER 31 DECEMBER 2023

<b>ASSETS</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2022</b>
<b>Receivables</b>		
Accounts receivable	12.245	6.934
Other receivables	25.555	20.565
Accrued assets	153.682	180.588
<i>Total receivable</i>	<i>191.482</i>	<i>208.088</i>
<b>Liquid assets</b>		
Payment Accounts	837.573	1.061.257
<b>Total assets</b>	<b>1.029.055</b>	<b>1.269.345</b>

Assets Grazing Foundation, 2022-2023.

<b>LIABILITIES</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2022</b>
<b>Equity capital</b>		
Capital	359.881	325.178
<i>Total equity capital</i>	<i>359.881</i>	<i>325.178</i>
<b>Short-term liabilities</b>		
Accounts payable	72.860	67.728
Suspense accounts for VAT	596.314	876.439
Accrued liabilities	669.174	944.167
<i>Total short-term liabilities</i>	<i>1.029.055</i>	<i>1.269.345</i>
<b>Total liabilities</b>	<b>1.269.345</b>	<b>963.282</b>

Liabilities Grazing Foundation, 2022-2023.



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## CONTACT

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

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