

Innovation analysis

Grazing management with suckler cows and regional marketing of beef products



Schornhof/Markus Lintner



The innovation at a glance

Strengths

- Flexible grassland management that combines a flexible rotational stocking with mowing as well as efficient use of the own forage
- Animal breeds are suitable for grazing under the given farm conditions
- Maintenance of the diversity of larch pastures through a lenient grazing
- Improvement of the quality of animal products (beef) because of the summer pasture
- Closed nutrient cycle within the farm without import of off-farm forage, independence from the price fluctuations of concentrates
- Valorisation of the product quality and the environmentally sound management through a targeted marketing referring to it
- Reduction of the labour intensity regarding the stable work during summer (possible combination with another part-time job)
- Minimization of production costs (optimum workload of machineries, low fuel costs, no purchase of off-farm forage) as well as targeted and cost-effective investments



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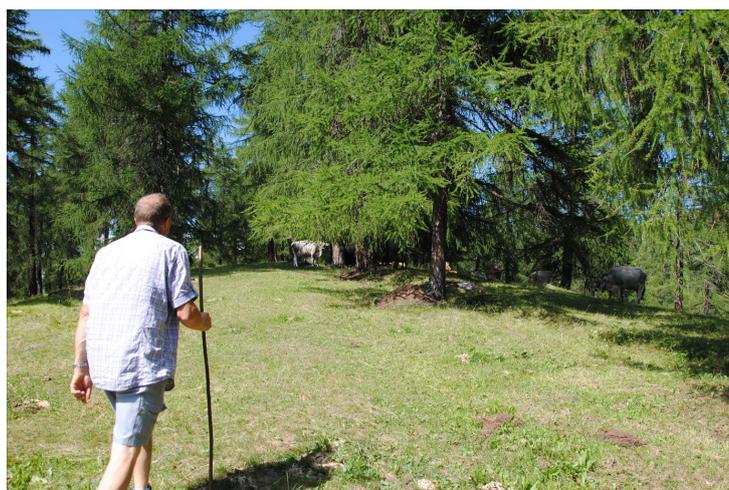
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The innovation at a glance

Prerequisites/weaknesses

- Availability of grassland areas suitable for grazing management (enough contiguous areas located close to the farm buildings, moderate steepness, acceptable distance of the larch pastures from the farm buildings)
- Animal breeds suitable for grazing
- Taking seasonality into account in planning the animal production
- A targeted marketing strategy for the valorisation of the high-quality product is necessary
- Acceptance of the shift of the criteria to evaluate the personal success from maximum yield (revenue-oriented) to an economic productivity of the labour (income-oriented) should be given
- Relatively complex organisation of work; grazing management is not standardised and should be trained
- Management of the grazing herd (cows + bull) requires practical experience





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Economic factors

Prerequisites/weaknesses:

- A market niche for the seasonal, high-quality product should be established and acknowledged by the consumers
- Valorisation of the product quality and the environmentally sound management through a targeted marketing is necessary
- The presence of the entrepreneurial spirit and the willingness to communicate with the customers must be given; the effort for marketing, customer service and merchandising shouldn't be underestimated (a cooperative could be a possibility to compensate the effort of the single farmer)
- Handling the flexible grassland management combining grazing and mowing should be trained; a regular inspection of the grassland areas is necessary
- Enough contiguous grassland areas located around the farm and suitable for grazing should be available
- Animal breeds should be suitable for grazing in mountain environment and able to cover their energy needs through grazing and hay
- Management of the herd requires practice experience
- Collaboration of the family members is necessary

Strengths:

- Regional marketing has economic and ecologic advantages
- A reduction concerning labour intensity, compared to indoor feeding is given, especially during the summer month, because of a labour reduction regarding the stable work. In this way, suckler cow husbandry could be a good alternative to dairy farming and has additional growing potential
- The daily inspection of the pastures has to the farmer a partial recreational component (relaxation in the nature)
- This kind of management can be combined with a part-time job

A deeper insight





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A deeper insight

2

Social factors

Prerequisites/weaknesses:

- Honest and authentic image of the farmer and the farm
- Professional competence, motivation as well as the willingness for continuous training should exist
- Sometimes the management system is questioned by other farmers (for example crossbreeding is seen sceptically)

Strengths:

- The system allows a good time management for part-time job, family and holiday; free time through labour reduction during summer
- Positive image in the village and high appreciation by the tourists accommodated at the farm (*Urlaub auf dem Bauernhof* - Farm Holidays)

3

Environmental factors

Prerequisites/weaknesses:

- The management of grassland must be coherent with the livestock kept at the farm and must be promptly adapted in reaction to the weather conditions during the growing season; this requires good planning of grazing and mowing, but also a certain flexibility

Strengths:

- Operating in a sustainable, closed nutrient cycle within the farm
- Utilization and conservation of the leniently grazed larch pastures

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A deeper insight

4

Technological factors

Prerequisites/weaknesses:

- Efficient use of the existing equipment as well as targeted and cost-efficient investments
 - Machines, tools
 - Conversion of a tie-stall into a loose housing system (if necessary)
 - Effective barn-drying method to ensure the achievement of a high forage quality
- Efficient use of energy (for example no large-scale, but targeted use of over-seeding), minimization of energy consumption (photovoltaic plant is an advantage)

Strengths:

- Consumption of the agricultural fuel was approximately the half of the quantity of the price-reduced fuel provided by the law (UMA)

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Legal factors

Prerequisites/weaknesses:

- The area covered by the larch trees is deducted from the payments for maintaining the larch pastures

6

Political factors

Prerequisites/weaknesses:

- Support of the local media is desirable



What the innovator says about his innovation



Would you do it again?

Yes, I would do it again, because I'm convinced of the ecologically sound operation mode with a closed nutrient cycle within the farm.

The operation mode fits well to the local, small-structured situation and is combinable with a part-time job.

What would you do differently?

I wouldn't do anything different. It's my wish for the future to invest more time into the management of the forest which is part of the farm

Would there be enough market available in your village for three other farmers implementing your innovation?

Yes, principally the potential exists, as the market for organically produced meat is growing.

Prerequisites are the organic farming as well as the guaranteed purchase of the production by the customer. Suckler cow husbandry represents a good alternative to the traditional dairy farming.