



Vargiu e Valenti - family farm



Francesco Cossu & Valentina Vargiu



74 hectares



animal management

BREEDING A DUAL-PURPOSE BREED TO PRODUCE GRASS-FED CATTLE MEAT IN A SILVOPASTORAL SYSTEM

The demand for more sustainable livestock farming systems, high quality and authentically genuine animal products by consumers can be a challenge to satisfy for many farms that raise high-specialised breeds in milk or meat production. Breeding dual purpose breeds could be a more sustainable option than specialised breeds. This is the choice made by two Italian farmers that decided to raise the Italian Red Pied cattle breed in their silvopastoral farm with the aim to produce high-quality, possibly grass-fed and authentically genuine meat for the local market using their own pastures and hay stocks. The Italian Red Pied has a docile temperament, an exceptional adaptability to the hot temperatures during summer and a good health as it is highly resistant to diseases. Also, the calving is easy and usually does not require veterinary interventions. This breed performs well on the natural pastures of the farm.

Moreover, it has a high carcass quality and suckling cows' longevity is high as well (20 years). The farmers chose to raise the breed according to the cow-calf line, but unlike the traditional way diffused in local beef farms, where calves are sold for fattening after weaning, they keep calves on pastures until the age of 14-16 months before slaughtering (650 kg). Moreover, they opted for natural mating and outcrossing, with no birth synchronisation, and wild grazing in wooded paddocks used under a rotational scheme to promote pasture re-growth. Their animals are free from stress and the quality of their meat is excellent. Moreover, the farmers can reconcile work and family life, thanks to the workload reduction associated to this animal management.

Authors: Melis R.A.M., Nieddu D., CNR

Farmer Interview

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h_9YugX39No



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