



Swolfs - family farm



Christian Swolfs



35 hectares



animal management

SIESTA GRAZING AS A STRATEGY FOR AUTOMATIC MILKING AND MEASURES FOR IMPROVING GRASS QUALITY

Christian Swolfs from Woudrichem has 60 dairy cows on a mixed farm of 35 hectares. For the past 10 years, he has been milking with a milking robot. His challenge is to graze the cows for as long as possible to increase the grass intake, while ensuring that the cows return indoors on time to be milked.

A selection gate is an important tool for Christian Swolfs to control the movements of the cows as effectively as possible. The selection gate is set up based on siesta grazing: the cows have the opportunity to go to pasture in the morning and in the afternoon. The grazing system differs between seasons:

- Spring and fall: strip grazing with a new strip of grass in the morning and evening.

When the strip is finished, the cows return indoors to be milked.

- Summer: continuous grazing. This way, the cows get enough grass even with less grass growth.

Additionally, Christian improves his grassland in the following ways with the aim of enhancing grass quality:

- Sowing red and white clover to increase nitrogen fixation
- Water level controlled drainage of grasslands using dams in surrounding ditches to maintain grass growth in times of drought

Farmer Interview

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l8GpFCb0MQE>



Photo credit: photos generated from farmer interview - ZLTO