

Policy Brief - Grazing in a changing Nordic region

The conference *Grazing in a changing Nordic region* was held in Reykjavík, Iceland, 12-15 September 2016 with 98 participants from 17 countries.

The objective of the conference was to provide an integrated assessment of grazing, its potential for contributing to food security, factors of sustainability including environmental impact, role relative to climate change adaptation and mitigation, biodiversity, socio-economic effects and contribution to ecosystem services. This policy brief provides the main findings obtained from the presentations and discussions held during the scientific program. A conference summary with **additional explanatory text** for each finding is available under www.nordicgrazing2016.org.

Grasslands should be viewed as a resource

- Acknowledge the importance of open grassland landscapes as a part of our cultural heritage
- Valuation of the multifunctional role of grassland landscape

Grazing contributes to landscape management

- Value-based payments for the landscape: amendment of policies to support ecologically sound grass-based animal production
- Financial and knowledge-based support for fencing and restoration of buildings for use as animal shelters
- Gather knowledge on how wild species may be used in grazing and provisioning of ecosystem services
- Evaluate the impact of regulations on extensive grass-based production for example in regard to animal welfare and recording schemes

The sustainability of grazing based production requires suitable grazing management

- Tailor grazing management to the specific local conditions, which includes disease pressure and large predator occurrence
- Management strategies should respect the history and culture of the people and their economy
- Define the desired stocking rate and density in relation to the respective environmental conditions and species/breeds

Regional solutions are required for specific challenges

- Establish regional fora of public and private stakeholders, including the development of a framework for establishing these fora
- Develop regional strategies
- Increase autonomy for regional solutions to achieve common objectives within the agri-environment schemes
- Re-invent co-operatives which take responsibility for regional development

Grazing can contribute to rural development

- Develop incentives to support diversification in the agricultural sector aiming at e.g. restoration and use of semi-natural grasslands
- Support for restoration/modernization of old farm buildings
- Promote successful farmers that use grasslands as good examples for other farmers
- Increase the attractiveness of livestock production especially amongst young people

Niche production can be an economically viable option for farmers

- Establish and/or shorten supply chains for niche products, thus making locally produced products available to the customer
- Make edible niche products available through restaurants or canteens – customers are more likely to pay a higher price in such circumstances
- Add value to meat by processing, thus in particular making less valuable cuts more profitable
- Evaluate the impact of regulations on the possibilities for local small scale niche production

Technological innovation has the potential to increase the sustainability of grazing ■

- Support schemes for innovation with a focus on extensive production systems and management of natural resources
- Valuation of grasslands, their ecosystem services and their management
- Valuation of products from extensively grazed animals, their product quality and their contribution to biodiversity, landscape management and other ecosystem services
- Support the use of abandoned agricultural buildings for the management of grazing animals

The ecological footprint of grazing varies among ecosystems ■

- Increase knowledge on ecosystem processes such as carbon sequestration across ecosystems
- Choose grazers and their management to realise positive and avoid negative effects of grazing
- Develop carbon cycle models that take grazing animals into account

The overall effect of grazing animals on climate change is unclear ■

- Increase the knowledge on net benefits/losses of grazing with regard to climate change

Education and knowledge transfer are instrumental in ensuring the sustainability of grazing ■

- Develop science-based technical applications for decision making for farmers, for instance in regard to timing and intensity of grazing
- Strengthen the role of institutions representing grassland farmers, such as grazing associations, as these could serve as a link between public institutions and farmers
- Provide advice and support to farmers to navigate the whole production chain, including marketing, transport and legal matters
- Promote successful grassland farmers as good examples for others
- Include high nature value farming and especially grass-fed animal production in agricultural school curricula
- Value local traditional knowledge as a resource
- Ensure that farmers' experiences, needs and suggestions are used in policy making

Stakeholders should influence EU and National policy ■

- Speed up dissemination of research knowledge to policy makers within a political cycle
- Increase research focusing on the reform of agricultural policies, particularly the reform of the EU CAP
- Support the development of the CAP and national policies to meet the different needs of diverse agricultural conditions of different regions
- Increase awareness of the need of support policies to respond to growing environmental and sustainability requirements
- Encourage the development of rewarding, as opposed to penalizing, support schemes
- Support farmer economy by valuing management of grasslands and the derived biodiversity and other ecosystem services
- Establish certification of pasture meat

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