

Rotating pasture for pregnant sows

Problem

Feed is the biggest cost in pig farming, especially in free-range systems. In these systems, feed consumption is higher due to higher activity and higher thermal regulation needs. Outdoor sows are usually housed in huts on grass leys.

Solution

During periods of high grass growth, it is possible to reduce the amount of feed and protein content given to sows in order to get the most out of grazing. The concentrated feed can be limited to 80 % of the recommended amount for at least 3 months. At the same time, this "pasture feed" can be lower in protein. Note: from 3 weeks before farrowing, sows need a complete diet.

Benefits

With this practice, feed and production costs can be reduced by 16 % due to lower quantities of concentrate feed and lower costs of "pasture feed" per ton.

Practical recommendations

- Allow time for the grass ley to establish before sows start grazing.
- Enrich the ley with legumes to provide good nutritional value and palatability for sows.
- Harvest/remove less palatable plants that are not eaten by sows.



Sows before accessing a new paddock. Photo: ITAB

Applicability box

Theme

Pigs, feeding and ration planning

Geographical coverage

More efficient in areas of high grassland productivity

Application time

Pasturing season

Required time

10 minutes per week for 50 sows for fence management (not including setting up the fences)

Period of impact

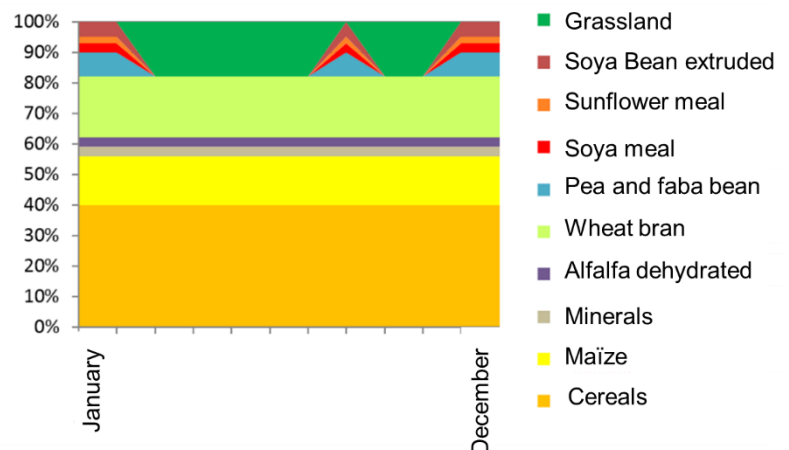
Pasturing season

Equipment

Movable fences to contain/move sows to desired areas; pig feeders

Best in

On-farm feed processing (possibility to process low-protein feed)



Ration planning (concentrate feed and pasturing) for pregnant sows. Graph: ITAB

- To prevent rooting behaviour remove sows when the grass is still high (> 8 cm).
- Encourage the creation of functional areas (lying area, feeding area) and encourage sows to learn to graze on the paddock.
- Provide individual feeding distribution systems to avoid aggression.
- Provide excess grass as silage during periods with no grass production.

Further information

Video

- Have a look at the following video for further instructions (French): [Paturage des truies aux trinottières.](#)

Weblinks

- Check the Organic Farm Knowledge platform for more [practical recommendations on animal husbandry.](#)
- ITAB (2019, online): [Alimentation des monogastriques en agriculture biologique.](#)

About this practice abstract and OK-Net EcoFeed

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Project website: ok-net-ecofeed.eu

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