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.
• 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

Publishers:
Institut de l’agriculture et de l’alimentation biologiques (ITAB)
149, rue de Bercy, FR-75595 Paris
Phone +33 01 40 04 50 64, www.itab.asso.fr
Research Institute of Organic Agriculture (FiBL)
Ackerstrasse 113, Postfach 219, CH-5070 Frick
Phone +41 62 865 72 72, info.suisse@fibl.org, www.fibl.org
IFOAM EU, Rue du Commerce 124, BE-1000 Brussels
Phone +32 2 280 12 23, info@ifoam-eu.org, www.ifoam-eu.org

Author: Antoine Roinsard
Contact: antoine.roinsard@itab.asso.fr
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