

# Grazing practices, perception and expectations of Walloon dairy farmers.

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## Introduction

The advantages of grazing are multiple:

- Environmental:**

Permanent grassland = carbon sink

Preservation of landscape

- Economical:**

Grazing => decrease in feeding costs

Positive effect on cows' health

- Societal**

Good image for the consumer

**However** grazing is decreasing and grassland areas are disappearing.

**The aim of the survey:**

To get an overview grazing practices and farmers' expectations

Thus to suggest ways of improving these practices and limiting grassland loss disappearance.

## Material and Methods

A questionnaire of eighteen questions focused on

- the description of the farm
- the grazing practices
- the perceptions and expectations

sent on 10/12/2015 to 3.152 Walloon dairy farmers with the help of the Comité du lait

## Results

1004 answers - 32% answer rate

90.7% answers = conventional system

9.3% = organic farms

957 farms = grazing vs 35 farms = no grazing

**Grazing of lactating cows: 96.5% farms**

96% grazed more than 4 months

74% of farms grazed the lactating cows day and night

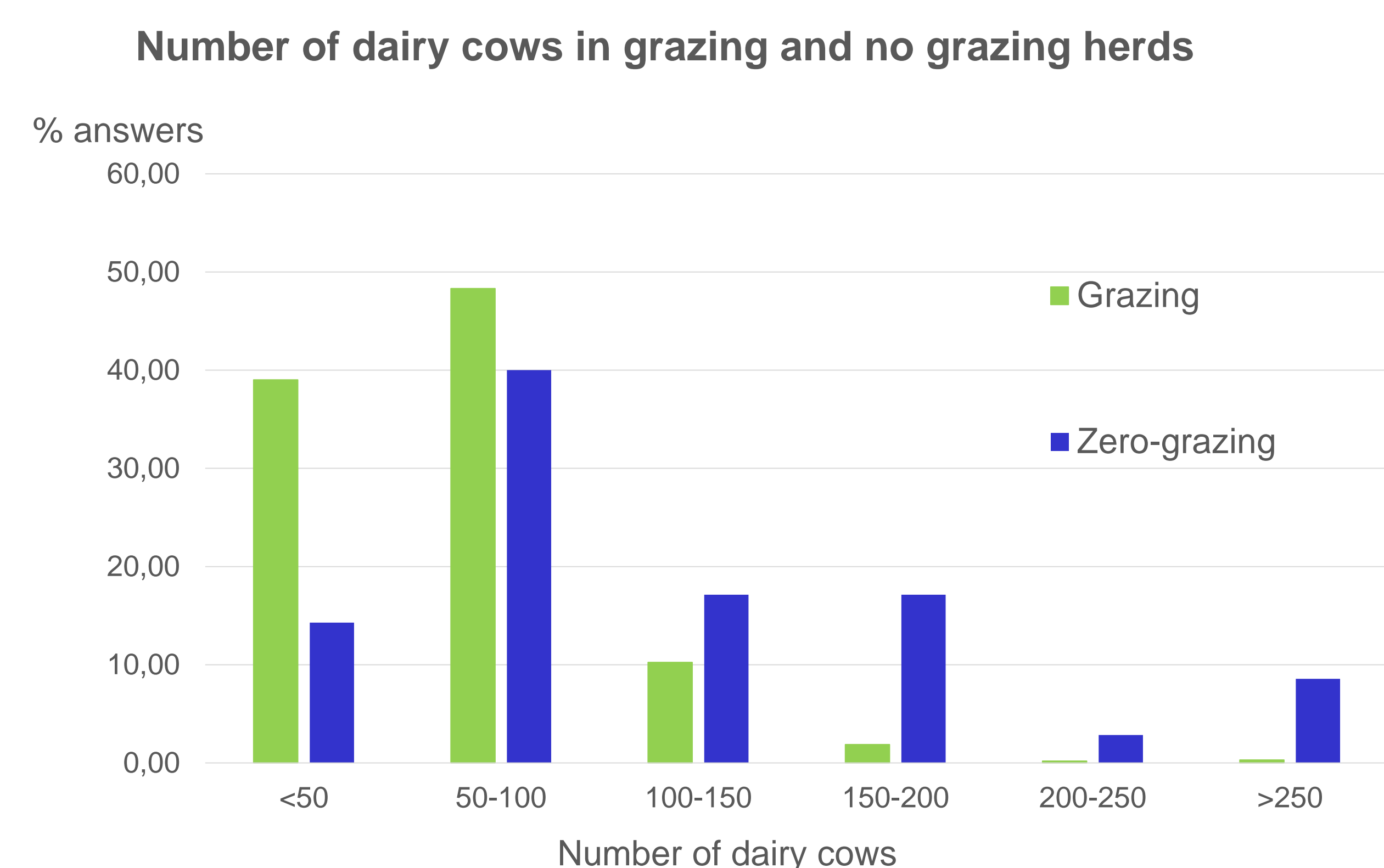
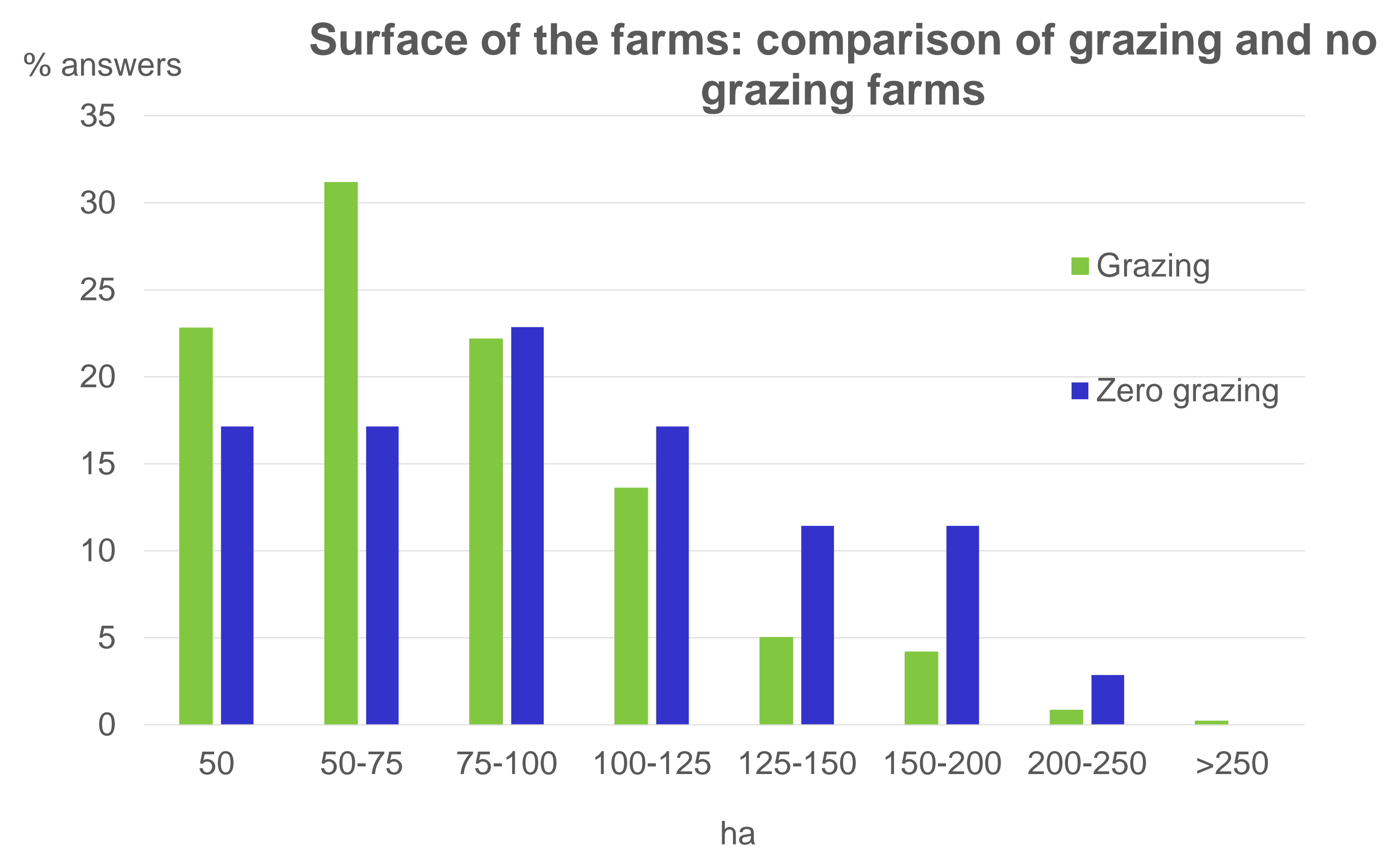
Supplement was given in 98% of farms during the grazing period.

Estimated grazed grass in cows' diet (% TDMI*)	<25%	25-50%	50-75%	>75%	Do not know
% of total answers	11,7	27,2	37,7	5,5	14,2

\* TDMI: total dry matter intake



## Comparison grazing - no grazing farms



## Reasons for no grazing

- Environmental reasons: 9/35 farms
  - bad weather
  - poor soil conditions
  - both
- Management difficulties: 27/35 farms
  - difficulty to manage cows in pasture (18/35),
  - the distance to pastures (12/35)
  - limited grazeable areas (20/35).
- Economic reasons: 14/35 farms
  - lower milk production at pasture
  - other

## Discussion - conclusion

- Grazing is still very common in Wallonia.
- The increased herd/farm size seems hinder grazing
- Management difficulties are the most common reason for no grazing
- In grazing farms, the proportion of grass in cows' feed was moderate, even during the grazing period and a high level of supplementation was reported.

**This may suggest low confidence in grass quality and quantity.**



