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New turnout to pasture's practices to improve grassland management in the ewe milk production

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Grasslands are now being acknowledged for their multifunctional role. However the intensification of livestock production has led to a decrease in grassland use. In the production of the French cheese named Roquefort many farmers have abandoned natural grassland use to feed the milking ewes. This trend is less pronounced in few farmers' group wishing reduction in farm input and environmental impact while using the grassland. In order to maintain the level of the milk production the farmers have to innovate in new grazing systems and turnout to pasture practices. Designing new grazing practices requires understanding of links between the animal feeding and grassland management. To develop the necessary knowledge we have built a research project involving farmers. This project study has focused on the benefits from the large diversity of cultivated grasslands providing more flexibility in the farm management. We have conducted 20-farmers' interviews to have an insight into the grassland and herd management's practices, and milk production results. A Multivariate Analysis has permitted to define 5 patterns of turnout to pasture managements. For each pattern we have described a different milking curve for two-first months of pasture. The milking curves are based on the milk level and the milk persistency. The main results report on links between feeding practices and milk production. Further analysis of the different patterns could identify the predisposing factors of the milk persistency. We have showed that some practices such as large diversity of grazing grassland use are favorable for maintaining the high level of milk production. The two main conclusions are firstly the traditional feeding system can be used to the lower levels of milk production. Secondly, the livestock intensification needs protein supply use combined with the large diversity of cultivated grassland. These two points can be easily applied while advising farmers.