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 of 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 Wallon dairy farmers with the help of the Comité du lait

Results

965 answers - 31% answer rate (28/2/2016)
90.5% answers = conventional system
9.5% = organic farms
957 farms = grazing vs 35 farms = no grazing

Grazing of lactating cows: 96% farms
96% grazed more than 4 months
74% of farms grazed the lactating cows day and night
Supplement was given in 99% of farms during the grazing period.

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.