

Newsletter ForageMax



Spring check of grass fields

As winter damage has the largest impact on older fields, a good management practice will implement regular reseeded of the pasture. Depleted swards can be improved by overseeding, where young and more productive grass plants are established in an existing pasture. That gives some benefits of rejuvenating the pasture without having to start from scratch.

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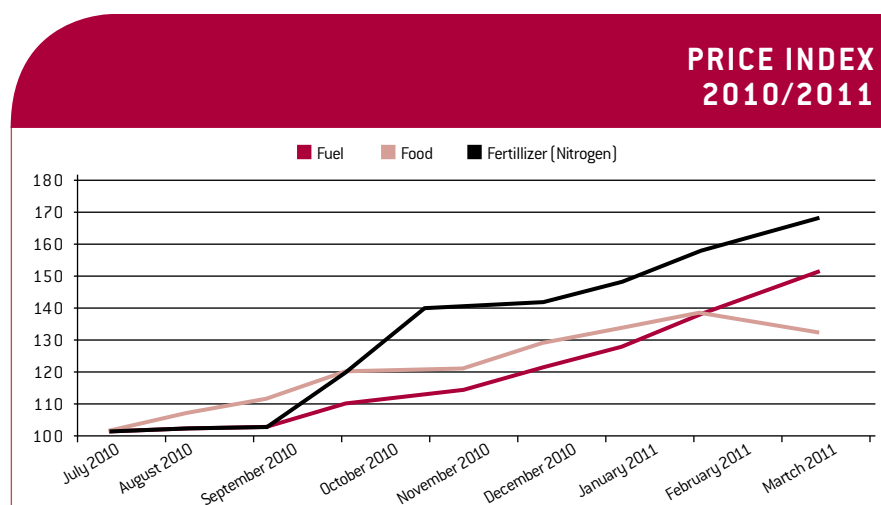
Increased prices in the forage grass seeds markets

High productivity of the forage pasture

The recent winter has put a lot of pressure on the pastures. Snow coverage for several months has encouraged attacks of the snow mould fungus. Furthermore, the pastures have been challenged by black frost when the snow coverage finally disappeared. As a result, we see a big difference in the performance of the pastures ranging from poor, depleted swards to dense and healthy forage fields. This has really been an eye opener and underlines both the significance of good grassland management practice and choosing proven forage mixtures like ForageMax.

Increasing demand for forage grass

Compared to sales season 2009/2010, overall sales have increased significantly. The inventories of forage grass is declining as the expected consumption exceeds the production for both 2010 and 2011. That means that the availability of Perennial ryegrass in general and special varieties in particular, will be limited. The wholesale forage seed prices have responded by increasing strongly during the past months. However, from an overall point of view the development in seed prices is not exceeding the increase in prices for fuel, chemicals, fertilizers and electricity. The figure below illustrates the development in price index in the recent 9 months for food, fertilizer and fuel.



Price index development on fuel, food and fertilizer from July 2010 to March 2011. July 2010 = 100
Source: FOA (Food & Agriculture Organization of the United Nations), OPEC & Ferticon

Whilst grass prices have risen, they remain in the same position in their ranking with other farming input commodities like food and fuel. As a consequence of these overall commodity price rises, the proportion of the farm input spend on grass seed will remain consistent with previous years.



FORAGEMAX

by DLF-TRIFOLIUM

Do not forget the spring check of grass fields

After winter it is time to give grass fields a spring check. If the field has been well looked after last year and the winter has been normal, there is often no problems with the sward, and scarification with a grassland harrow is all what is needed. This operation will "freshen up" the sward, even the surface and remove dead leaves etc.

If the winter seems to have done damage, the conditions must be evaluated and more improvement considered.

Are the plants alive?

Hard frost and temperatures changing between plus and minus can result in dead grass plants. The risk is bigger in older grassfields; where the field has a large surplus of nitrogen or where the field has been harvested too late in the autumn.



Living grass plants will start to grow, as soon as the temperature is above 3-4° C. The first sign is the roots that are white, and soon green shoots will be visible.

There must be 150-200 living plants (grass or clover) per squaremeter in a cutting field and 250-300 plants per squaremeter in a grazing field. Bare spots larger than a footprint should not be accepted – if plants are missing, production is missing too.

Is there snow mould?

Snow mould often appears if the field has entered the winter with a large amount of long leaves – often it is seen in patches in grazing fields. Treatment with a grassland harrow or light trimming as soon as possible is the

recommended solution. If a whole field is affected, it should be ploughed and a new sward established. The yield and quality will very often be too low if the field is left to grow without action.

New field or overseeding?

In older fields with winter damage, the solution is very often a total renewal. The potential in the old but surviving plants will be too small and the loss of yield can be large.

In young fields, where plants are missing on small or large areas, overseeding is the solution. This must take place as early as possible and with the proper equipment – ensuring good contact between seed and soil. Often a rolling is needed after sowing, and on heavy soil a disc seeder is preferred.

Economical benefits or losses?

In continental climate the most winter sensitive grass species are also the most valuable ones in the sward. These are Perennial ryegrass and other Lolium sub-species. Does overseeding really improve forage production or will it be money wasted on seed and field works? Practical experience gives a very clear picture – overseeding done in proper conditions improves not only green mass yields but also quality of the final product (silage).

PROFIT FROM OVERSEEDING

	Old damaged sward	Overseeded sward	Advantage
Number of cuts	2 cuts	3-4 cuts	70 % higher yield
Yield, t/ha DM	8,1	13,8	More cows/ha
Quality, MJ/kg DM	9,1	10,5	Less use of concentrates
Costs for overseeding		31 €/cow*	€
Costs for concentrates €/cow/day	2.1 € (7 kg x 0.3 €)	2.1 € (6 kg x 0.2 €)	Saving 0.9 €/cow/day
Costs for concentrates €/cow/year (285 days)	599 €	342 €	Saving 257 €/cow/year
Profit			226 €/cow/year (257 € - 31 €)

Calculations done by DLF together with feeding experts from Danone Industry (Russia)
Based on milk yield 6.200 l/cow and actual prices for grass seeds and concentrates, Russia, 2011.
* 1 ha = 93 €, DM yield per 1 ha will be enough for 3 cows

The above figures clearly present economical benefits of overseeding of the existing grass fields.