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PRESENT AND POSSIBLE DIRECTIONS OF UTILISING PERMANENT GRASSLANDS IN POLAND

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Summary
Utilisation of large areas of permanent grasslands has recently been restricted or totally abandoned. Obtained hay yields are relatively small, intensive utilisation means 2-cut meadows and hay production still predominates over silages from wilted meadow sward. Degradation of meadows and pastures proceeds and their productive and environmental potential is being lost.

The improvement of utilisation and overall condition of permanent grasslands may be first of all obtained by the development of animal breeding, mainly dairy and slaughter cattle and other graminivorous animals (sheep, horses) kept e.g in organic farming systems. Grazing of slaughter cattle under conditions of rationed milk quota is simpler and less expensive that the dairy cattle breeding. Restructuring of herds and selection of appropriate races and optimum breeding conditions is necessary to reach this target.

Ecological production, on the other hand, allows for obtaining fodder and animal products of better quality with significantly positive environmental impact affecting mainly water cycling and quality.

Another solution may be the use of biomass from non-exploited grasslands for energetic purposes. Appreciation and utilisation of environmental functions of grasslands is another possibility of their development since an indispensable condition in this case is the use of meadows and pastures by mowing or grazing. Irrespective of the type of grassland utilisation and animal production, the better use of productive potential and enhancement of environmental functions of grasslands might be obtained by improving the technology of fodder production.

Maintenance and proper productive use of grasslands or minimised utilisation within agroenvironmental programmes favour the accomplishment of the idea of sustainable development (cross compliance instrument) which assumes the improvement and care of environmental quality and optimum economic utilisation of environmental resources like soil and water. Well managed permanent grasslands may play important role in their protection.

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