



Press Release 25-03-2013

Robotic Milking for Grazing Dairy Cows

- AUTOGRASSMILK -

Integration of automatic milking (AM) and grazing dairy cows is the subject for a consortium of farmers, researchers and dairy advisors in a joint European project named AUTOGRASSMILK.

Automatic milking is becoming more common in the European dairy sector. At the same time we do in general see a decrease in grazing dairy cows, which leads to a loss in the potential economic benefit of grazing.

The objective of the AUTOGRASSMILK project is to develop and implement improved sustainable farming systems that integrate the grazing of dairy cows with AM, which is appropriate to the different approaches to dairy farming found in different regions in Europe.

The project will focus upon 5 main objectives during the 3 year project period. The subjects are:

1. Develop optimum feeding strategies for dairy cows incorporating grazed grass and AM for various production systems in Europe
2. Optimise the integration of AM with cow grazing using new grazing management technologies and new AM technologies.
3. Increase sustainability of integrated grazing and AM technologies.
4. Develop tools that will allow dairy farmers to optimise economic efficiency when combining grazing with AM systems.
5. Continuously disseminate new technology to end-users in a form that is easily accessible and locally adapted to improve farm efficiency.

The partners in the project are:

- European associations of dairy farmers/producers/processors (SME-Ag's) in Ireland, , Denmark, Sweden, Netherlands, France and Belgium.
- 2 pilot farmers, one in Ireland and one Denmark and 4 to 6 monitor farms in each country participating in the project.
- Research institutes in Ireland, Sweden, Denmark, Netherlands, France and Belgium.

This innovative project 'AUTOGRASSMILK' is funded by the EU FP7 programme under 'Research for the benefit of SME Associations' and the project is worth € 3.1 million in total.

The project is being co-ordinated by Dr. Bernadette O'Brien of Teagasc, Moorepark, Ireland.

In robotic milking cows come voluntarily to the milking unit and milking is distributed over a 24 hour period. In recent years dairy farmers in most EU countries have adopted robotic milking at an accelerating rate for reasons such as improvement in lifestyle, less physical work and lower labor costs. However this has been associated with a decrease in cows grazing with a corresponding increase in indoor feeding systems. The objective of this project will be to develop grass-based systems of milk production using robot milking.

Currently there are more than 10,000 commercial farms using one or more AM system to milk their cows.

The application of project findings will be targeted towards the dairy farmer/producer/processor associations, their members who are engaged in dairy farming, and thereafter all EU dairy farmers. Dissemination will be via a website called www.AUTOGRASSMILK.eu factsheet, workshops, seminars and conferences, policy documents and scientific papers.

For further information about the project and persons to contact, see the homepage www.AUTOGRASSMILK.eu or contact the person in charge of the dissemination: Chief advisor Ole Kristensen, Knowledge Centre of Agriculture Denmark, mobile +45 21 71 77 84 e-mail olk@vfl.dk