

SchafAlp – Nachhaltige Schafsömmierung

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Key words

alpine summer farms, alpine pastures for sheep, high alpine pastures, alpine sheep keeping, alpine sheep production, profitability of sheep farming in summer pastures, biodiversity, erosion, continuous grazing, rotational grazing, permanent observed, permanent shepherding

Aim of the study

Several fields of study were identified, which include biodiversity on alpine summer pastures for sheep, ground stability and erosion, loss of sheep during the summer period, meat production and meat quality, as well as profitability of alpine summer pastures. The aim of the study was to improve the overall situation on alpine summer farms for sheep.

Material and methods

In all the 5 moduls have be done among literatur research also fields research.

Results and significance

The results of the study have shown several areas of improvement in the field of alpine sheep keeping during the last 10 to 15 years. The two most important improvements are:

1. The percentage of sheep that are kept on pastures with rotational grazing or permanent shepherding has increased as compared to permanent pastures. The former two pasturing systems show a higher biodiversity and result in a better quality of the pastures. With respect to biodiversity and quality of pastures, permanent shepherding is preferred over rotational grazing.
2. Total losses of sheep could be reduced to 2 percent on average.

With respect to profitability, it has been shown that rotational grazing, given the same amount of sheep per area, results in higher feed conversion efficiency than permanent pastures. In terms of total economic efficiency, rotational grazing has yielded the largest profit per farm of the investigated pasturing systems. Permanent shepherding is profitable only in farms with more than 1000 sheep. Due to the salary of the shepherds, permanent shepherding is only more profitable than rotational grazing if the terrain is unfavourable for rotational grazing.

As a result of the Ordinance Concerning the Summer Pasturing Contribution (Sömmerungsbeitragsverordnung SöBV), the amount of sheep that are kept on pastures with rotational grazing or permanent shepherding has increased. The Ordinance Concerning the Summer Pasturing Contribution has therefore resulted in an improvement in sheep management. Nevertheless, as a result of the findings of SchafAlp we suggest to make the following adjustments:

Rotational grazing and permanent shepherding should be promoted. Permanent pastures should not be further supported. It might at most be necessary to implement a rule of exception if the farmer can prove that permanent pasturing is the only possible method of sheep management.

If it is the aim to pursue permanent shepherding as a separate system of pasturing, then it has to receive a more pronounced official support (i.e. financial contributions, education). This is because total costs are higher as compared to rotational grazing. In addition, herds with less than 1000 sheep should also be kept in permanent shepherding.

For farmers on alpine summer pastures with more than 100 sheep, it is recommended to use the pasture as rotational grazing. If due to unfavourable terrain (for example long fences in difficult terrain) labour effort and expenses are too high for rotational grazing, it might under these circumstances be financially profitable to use the pasture as permanent shepherding.

For pastures with less than 100 sheep, rotational is only profitable if the terrain is favourable and the necessary amount of pastures can therefore be established with an acceptable effort. To utilize the economies of scale (bigger pastures are more profitable) it is recommended that small alpine summer farms are searching for possible ways of cooperation.

Publications, posters and presentations

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Werder C., 2012: Abgänge und Verluste von Schafen während der Söämmerung, Forum Kleinwiederkäuer, 10/2012

Project

1.11.20

Project duration

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