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"Moormilch": Dairy farming on wet peatland soils - Options, Grassland Management and Valuation

Tuesday 15 July 2025 10:10 (15 minutes)

Raising water levels in peatlands is an important component in reducing greenhouse gas emissions and therefore achieving the legally defined climate protection targets. However, high water levels on agricultural land require adapted management, which usually results in changing existing work and operating procedures.
Peat soils in Baden-Wuerttemberg are mainly located in the southeast of the state. Rather small dairy farms, partly using drained fens for intensive grassland management, characterize this region. Many management options for wet peatland, such as the cultivation of paludiculture for fiber usage, are hard to integrate into dairy farms. In addition, the agricultural land is crucial for fodder production. Practical concepts that are specially adapted to dairy farms are therefore essential to reach rewetting goals.
The aim of the "Moormilch"project is to develop practical, yet climate friendly and profitable solutions for agricultural use of fens, with a special focus on the Allgaeu and Upper Swabian region in Baden-Wuerttemberg. In particular, utilization options for cattle feeding will be developed and demonstrated for practitioners. Prior experiments have identified the cultivation of tall fescue (Festuca aundinacea) as a viable option on wet fens with an acceptable fodder value. Therefore, tall fescue will be cultivated on experimental and demonstration sites to gain experience in the cultivation and to transfer knowledge to practitioners. Beyond that, the climate relevance of these measures will be investigated and evaluated by means of greenhouse gas measurements on the experimental sites.
Additionally, a feeding trial with tall fescue as part of the feed ration in dairy cattle will be conducted to use as an in-house fibre source and evaluate pros and cons in animal performance. As part of the project, product valuation to compensate for the higher costs of such management will be investigated, with local dairy plants being a crucial stakeholder in this process.

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