

Outcome

A three-day conference focusing predominantly on alternative functions of grassland had three sections (Non marketable functions of grassland, Alternative use of grassland, Methods of grassland preserving) and did not evade any of the crucial issues of agricultural production.

- 1) In the Czech Republic (similarly in Poland, Slovakia and other countries) the number of cattle has dramatically decreased in the last years , grassland renovation is still decreasing and domestic consumption of grass and legume seed for these purposes is almost zero.
- 2) On the other hand, there is an increase in the area of permanent grassland which is managed very extensively. This is, however, profitable for the owners, considering the present subsidy policy.
- 3) In the Czech Republic the area of permanent grassland used for pleasure, sport and recreation is increasing.
- 4) In the Czech Republic the number of localities with native grassland revitalization and biodiversity renewal is getting higher.
- 5) Production of hay from meadows and pastures is starting to be used for bio-energetic purposes.

The objective of the conference was not to resolve all the problems of today's Czech agriculture. However, the contributions concerning these issues generated a lively discussion and emphasized that these are not just regional problems (milk, permanent grassland, seed), but international and European problems which must be urgently solved. The conference also highlighted the importance of grassland for relaxation, sport and leisure-time activities. Co-operation and research in this area are necessary. Of equal importance was a confrontation of findings from the field of bioenergetics (combustion, gas and others). The non-marketable importance of grassland lies also in the richness of flora and fauna and in preserving rich biodiversity. This is a universal problem and it is cheering that it is perceived by the Czech public as the right and necessary step. International cooperation and exchange of experience among international teams was discussed not only in the auditorium but also in poster sessions.

The 15th EGF Symposium fulfilled the expectations and confirmed that the alternative value of grassland is as important as its production function.