

## Discovering the diverse potential of our forgotten grassland

Around 28% of the total area of the European Union countries is covered by grassland and green shrubs. Today these resources remain underutilized, being left to decay after mowing and thus causing costs and lost benefits for individuals and society. Now the GO-GRASS project which took off this week in Brussels wants to use this overlooked potential strengthening rural communities around Europe. In the next four years the project will develop circular business models and thereby contribute from nutrient recovery, to increased self-sufficiency of some raw materials and the reduction of energy consumption.



“It’s just great that we make use of available resources which would otherwise be wasted or unused,” says project coordinator Philipp Grundmann from [ATB](#). The consortium is built around four promising regional demo sites located in The Netherlands, Sweden, Germany and Denmark which already have started to create new value chains based on unused green fodder.

The Dutch demo site uses road side grass to produce high-quality packaging and paper. In Sweden, reed canary grass is shredded and pressed into briquettes – an innovative material for animal bedding which afterwards can easily be used as fertilizer, as well as for biogas or heat production. The idyllic Nationalpark Unteres Odertal is home to the German demo site. Here grass from the wetlands is converted into biochar, which can be used as fertilizer or to enhance the soils water holding capacity. The fourth demo site in Denmark manages a small grass refinery for extracting protein from grass. The organic protein concentrate can be fed to pigs and poultry enriching their diet and to dairy cows increasing their milk production.

During the Kick-Off-Meeting the EU project officer Agata Pieniadz from the [Research Executive Agency](#) mentioned that these circular bio-based business models and the close collaboration with farmers and farmer associations was one of the primary reasons that [GO-GRASS](#) was selected for funding. Together with [AQUACOMBINE](#) led by the Aalborg University they outrivalled the other 20 projects submitted during the open call under the EU Horizon 2020 Programm.

As the replication of the developed technical and organisational solutions is one main aim of the project, already three follower regions located in Hungary, Romania and Spain have been included into the projects structure. In the longer term the project should generate new opportunities in rural areas throughout Europe. “One fifth of the people in the rural area of the European Union are at risk of monetary poverty. With the findings of and tools to be developed by the GO-GRASS project we try to revitalize rural economies, to create new quality jobs in a circular, climate-friendly sector,” says project coordinator Philipp Grundmann. To realize these ambitious aims the project is also collaborating close with other EU projects working on tools and solutions for business models (like [RUBIZMO](#)) or grassland management.



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