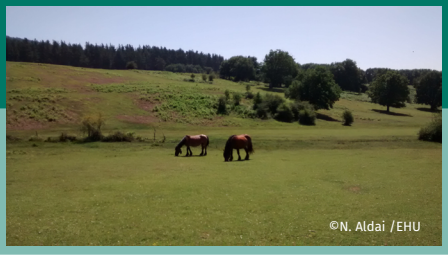
Technical Sheet for Solution Implementation

Access to Grazing Banks



Thematic area: Transversal.

Priority: How to manage issues related to access to agricultural land.

Need: Access to land: How to improve access to land for equine farms?; Give more information to farmers to be able to access communal land, on cooperation between authorities (e.g. construction and environmental services, highway services, etc.), or management of public places with horses (grazing); How to deal with the lack of access to land?

Solution EU number: LA-04.

Content of the solution:
An internet-based grazing bank connects landowners with livestock owners to match available grazing land with suitable grazing animals for sustainable landscape management.

Reasons for Implementing the Solution

Grazing banks support biodiversity conservation and landscape maintenance by enabling the use of grazing animals on underutilized land. At the same time, they create economic and practical benefits for both landowners and livestock owners through structured contractual cooperation.

Description of Solution Strategies

The grazing bank functions as a digital matchmaking platform that brings together landowners offering grazing areas and animal owners seeking pastures for their livestock. Landowners can advertise vacant or seasonally available pastures, while livestock owners can search for suitable land to graze sheep, cattle, horses, or other grazing animals.

Beyond basic matching, the platform typically provides additional support services such as access to fencing specialists, animal transport providers, and advisory services related to grazing management. Information resources, including grazing guidelines, legal requirements, and model contracts, help reduce uncertainty and transaction costs for both parties.

By promoting contract grazing, the solution encourages the maintenance of traditional biotopes and semi-natural landscapes, which are essential for preserving biodiversity and endangered species. Grazing also improves animal welfare, especially for horses and ruminants, by offering varied vegetation, natural movement patterns, and shelter from weather conditions.

While the service is primarily internet-based, it is designed to complement local and regional information channels, recognizing that effective grazing arrangements often depend on geographical proximity and trust between partners. Advisory organizations or agricultural service providers typically maintain and finance the platform to ensure neutrality, accessibility, and professional support.

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Implementation Steps

1. Platform Development or Adaptation: Develop or adapt an online platform that allows landowners and livestock owners to create profiles and list available pastures or grazing animals.

2. Stakeholder Engagement: Involve agricultural advisory services, environmental organizations, and rural development actors to promote the platform and build trust among users.

3. Information and Support Services: Provide clear guidance on grazing practices, animal welfare requirements, legal obligations, and model contracts for contract grazing.

4. Integration of Complementary Services: Include or link services such as fencing, animal transport, and veterinary or advisory support to reduce practical barriers.

5. Local Outreach and Communication: Support the digital service with local information channels (e.g. farmer networks, municipalities, associations) to reach users with limited internet access.

6. Monitoring and Quality Assurance: Ensure compliance with animal welfare regulations, including regular supervision of animals, pasture condition checks, and clear responsibilities between contracting parties.

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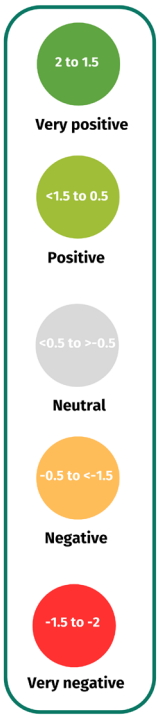
How Will this Solution Impact the Performance of your Farm?

TOPIC	SCORE
Social	0
Economics	0
Welfare	1.00
Health	0.50
Environmental	0.67
Pasture access and management	1.00
Global	0.71



Socioeconomics: This solution will not have effect on the social performance of the farm because a grazing bank mainly functions as a digital matchmaking tool to exchange information on available land and grazing animals, without directly changing the farm's social outreach, reputation, or quality of working life. While it may facilitate contacts between landowners and horse owners, these interactions are largely administrative and indirect, and any social benefits only materialize once grazing arrangements are already in place.

This solution will not have effect on the economic performance of the farm because the tool itself does not generate income or reduce costs directly. Although access to free or low-cost pasture can eventually lower feeding expenses and support land maintenance, the grazing bank only provides information and coordination. The time needed to search, negotiate, and manage shared grazing arrangements, especially when horses from different owners are involved, tends to offset potential short-term financial gains, resulting in an overall neutral economic impact.

Health & Welfare: This solution will support the everyday farm's health performance by helping to maintain low levels of pain, mortality, and drug use through more nature-like environmental conditions when the equines can choose their diet, shelters and, possibly, anthelmintic plants on abandoned pastures that have, possibly, more diversity-enhanced plant compositions. Attention should be paid to the appropriate fencing and guarding of animals in new environments. Also, to avoid injuries, potential social mixing of different groups should be cautious and monitored in the first few days of common grazing.

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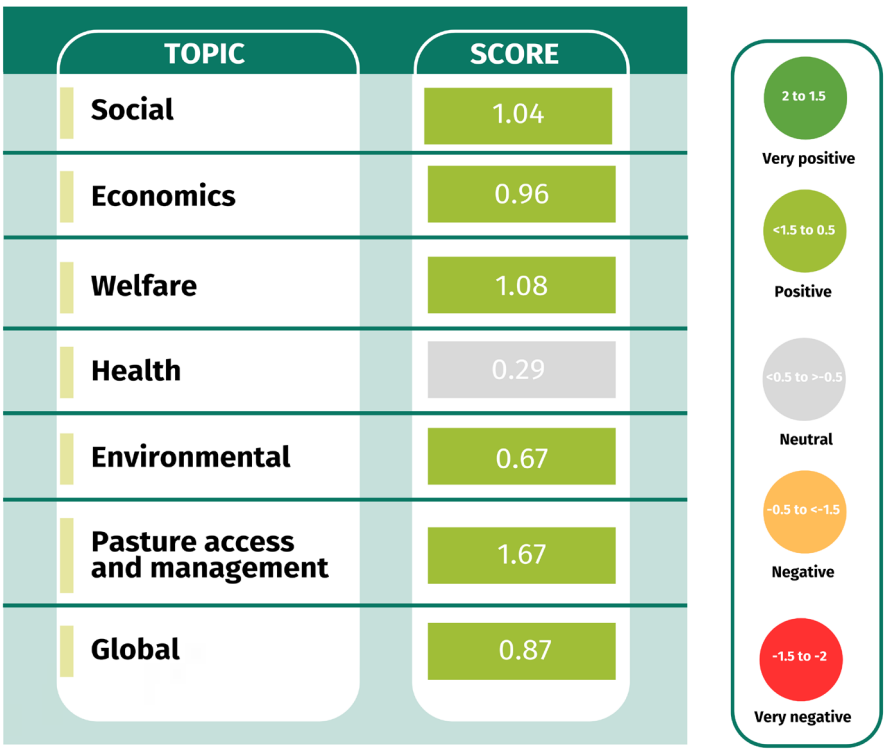
This solution will support equine welfare performance by maintaining a positive emotional state and provision of welfare-friendly housing conditions, since, after the period of adaptation, the animals usually have access to the forage and present unrestrained locomotor activity during grazing, fulfilling the 3F aspects of welfare.

Environmental sustainability: This solution will support on the environmental performance of the farm because although it is mainly digital tool, it enables grazing on the areas that would use as pastures in which would not be used at all. It connects landowners that need do not have grazing animals of their own and equine and other animal farms that need areas for pastures. These areas are often traditional biotopes, grazing supports climate change mitigation, as grassland acts as a carbon sink, grazing provides ecosystem services and halts biodiversity loss and support water management.

This solution will support on the land access or management performance of the farm because pastures that would otherwise be unused will be maintained and kept in good condition. Farms that have limited access to land are able to use better land management practices and avoid over grazing with addition areas found via grazing bank.

How Will this Solution Impact the Resilience of your Farm?



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Socioeconomics: This solution will support social performance of the farm facing external challenges assessed because facilitating access to grazing land promotes more natural horse management, which aligns with societal expectations regarding animal welfare and responsible land use. Reduced stable-based workload during grazing periods can ease pressure on staff, improve quality of working life, and enhance the farm's image as resilient, welfare-oriented, and environmentally aware, even under challenging conditions.

This solution will support economic performance of the farm facing external challenges assessed because easier access to grazing land lowers dependence on purchased feed, commercial inputs, and intensive labour, thereby reducing operating costs. During periods of uncertainty, this flexibility helps farms maintain activity with fewer resources, optimize land use that would otherwise remain unused, and adapt more efficiently to constraints such as rising costs or limited workforce availability, strengthening overall economic resilience.

Health & Welfare: This solution will not have an impact on health performance when the farm faces external challenges since it does not directly reduce pain, mortality, or the need for extensive medication. However, it can have slightly positive indirect effects, as it might save equine health by changing pasturing areas, thus limiting the concentration of the pathogens compared to traditional stabling.

This solution has a highly positive effect on the welfare performance of the farm when faced with different external challenges. It provides the satisfaction of all 3Fs but also provides environmental diversity thanks to changing pasturing location, mimicking natural food searching activity, and thus enhances environmental enrichment crucial to behavioural health.

Environmental sustainability: This solution will support environmental performance of the farm facing external challenges assessed because it supports environmental sustainability i, especially from halting biodiversity loss perspective if equine farm faces any of the assessed challenges.

This solution will support land access or management performance of the farm facing external challenges assessed because this solution will help farmers to find new pastures, when needed, for all assessed challenges. It is the perfect solution to mitigate land use problems by combining farmers with complementing needs.

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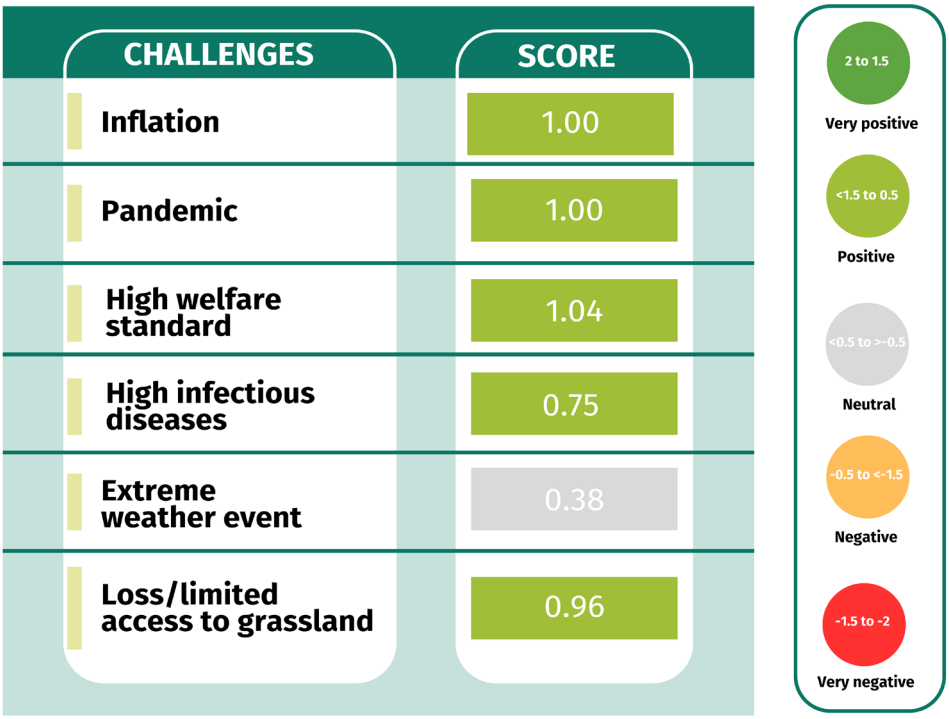
How can this solution help your farm to face specific external challenges to be more resilient?



Inflation & Social Crises: Social challenge: This solution will support the global performance of the farm facing pandemics because access to grazing land reduces daily labour needs and close human–horse interactions in stables, allowing horse care to continue with fewer staff while maintaining welfare and easing social pressure during workforce shortages.

Economic challenge: This solution will support the global performance of the farm facing inflation because grazing lowers reliance on purchased feed, energy, and labour, helping farms contain rising production costs and maintain financial balance by using land resources more efficiently instead of expensive external inputs.

Welfare & Diseases: Health challenge: This solution will support the global performance of the farm across all three areas when facing infectious disease challenges because having the equines spread over different and changing areas, the solution will help prevent and deal with potential disease outbreaks. In such conditions, when animals can be quarantined or transported to different locations, it may be easier to reduce the spread of the disease and the resulting pain and mortality rate.

Welfare challenge: This solution will support the global performance of the farm when faced with high welfare standards legislation, because it assures the fulfilment of 3Fs criteria, so, as result, it assures a positive emotional state of animals.

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Climate Change & Access to Land: Environmental challenge: this solution will not impact the global performance of the farm facing abnormally low temperatures, excessive raining, windstorms and/or flood because most of the effects are neutral. There were also some positive effects related to social outreach, profitability, environmental sustainability and land access.

Land access/management challenge: this solution will support the global performance of the farm facing loss or limited access to agricultural land because it has been designed for these kinds of situations. This solution will help farmers to find new pasture. Iti s the perfect solution to mitigate land use problems by combining farmers with complementing needs.

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Cost-benefit Analysis

Costs

Socioeconomics:
- Uncertainty about a fair cost structure (subsidies, rent, pasture management, fencing, shelters).
- Responsibility for daily animal checks may be unclear.
- Labor required for transporting animals and installing fences.
- Time needed to find suitable partners and agreements.

Health & Welfare:
- Safety risks from large predators or unsecured pastures.
- Challenges due to weather, insects, and parasites.
- Lack of appropriate shelter or water on distant/large pastures.
- Complexity of installing mobile fencing; legal restrictions in some countries.

Sostenibilidad medioambiental:
- Risk of overgrazing on small or sensitive areas.
- Potential spread of parasites between pastures.

Cooperation between farms:
- Potential conflicts if benefits and responsibilities are unevenly distributed.
- Organizational effort to establish clear agreements.

Benefits

- Improved image of animal husbandry as a contributor to maintaining natural habitats.
- Attractive landscapes and well-managed countryside.
- Reduced labor for feeding and maintaining meadows.
- Ability to graze animals instead of feeding costly hay.
- Satisfaction for landowners when both animals and pastures thrive.

- Increased movement and natural social interaction for animals.
- Diverse nutrition from species-rich pastures, improved vitamin and mineral intake.
- Better overall health if fences and shelters are appropriate.
- Encouragement of natural behaviors, e.g., grazing and chewing patterns.

- Supports biodiversity by maintaining grasslands, wetlands, and species-rich meadows.
- Preserves traditional habitats crucial for endangered species.
- Natural landscape management via grazing instead of mechanical methods.
- Grassland is carbon sink.

- Mutual advantages in optimal partnerships: land maintenance for the owner, grazing space for the animal keeper.
- Strengthening of networks and cooperation between farms.
- Possibility of mutual support in management tasks (fencing, animal checks).

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Additional Resources

Case Study: Finland – Laidunpankki

- **Platform:** Internet-based service https://www.laidunpankki.fi /connecting landowners with livestock owners.
- **Features:** Listing vacant pastures, searching for animals, access to fencing and animal transport services, grazing guidelines, and model contracts.
- **Objective:** Increase contractual cooperation for mutual benefit and promote sustainable landscape management.
- **Animal Welfare:** Daily checks of animals, fences, and water supply in accordance with national regulations.
- Financing & Maintenance: Free for users; supported by ProAgria, an agricultural advisory organization in Finland.
- **Results:** Improved maintenance of traditional biotopes, enhanced horse welfare, and strengthened local cooperation between farms.
- Myllymäki, M., Särkijärvi, S., Herzon, I., Schreurs, C.& Saastamoinen, M. (2017). Horse welfare and natural values on semi-natural and extensive pastures in Finland: Synergies and trade-offs. Land (Basel), 6(4), 69. https://doi.org/10.3390/land6040069

Note for EU Application

- The system can be adapted across European countries, using local advisory networks, regulations, and digital platforms to match landowners with livestock owners while considering local ecological and welfare requirements.

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Annex

Ideas to Animate a Workshop About the Solution

- Ask an agricultural advisor, grazing consultant, or farm supply company specialized in pasture management or equine husbandry to sponsor the workshop
- Find a model farm where the workshop can take place
- Complete the required tasks and let the participants take part in these demonstration tasks so that they can get to know the system

Proposed Structure for the workshop on Grazing Banks for Equines Farms

1. Introduction to the solution
- What is a Grazing Bank?
- Key features: pasture-animal matching, support services, advisory information
- Types of systems/platforms available (online, local advisory, hybrid).

2. Benefits of Grazing Banks in Equine Farms
- Reduced labor for feeding and pasture maintenance.
- Cost savings by using natural grazing instead of purchased feed.
- Increased efficiency in pasture management.
- Access to a network of local farms for mutual support.

3. Practical Applications on equine farms
- Listing vacant pastures and animals.
- Managing fencing and shelter requirements.
- Checking and monitoring animal welfare.

4. How to Choose the most suitable grazing arragement
- Evaluate pasture size and animal needs.
- Assess infrastructure and fencing.
- Compare services and platforms available locally.
- Cost considerations (rent, transport, labor).

5. Hands-On Demonstration
- Demonstrate matching animals to pastures.
- Practice installing temporary fencing and checking animal welfare.
- Participants try out tasks under supervision.

6. Maintenance and Troubleshooting
- Routine checks of fences, shelters, and water sources.
- Addressing challenges like distant or large pastures.

7. Case Studies and Real-World Examples
- Example: Laidunpankki in Finland.
- Discussion of lessons learned and best practices.

8. Cost Analysis and Return on Investment (ROI)
- Compare initial setup costs with long-term benefits (labor savings, better pasture management).
- Discuss financial incentives or subsidies if available.

9. Q&A Session
- Open discussion for participants' experiences, concerns, or doubts.

10. Wrap-Up and Resources
- Summary of key points.
- Further resources (websites, local advisors, online communities).
- Optional partnership discounts for suppliers or consultancy services.