INTRODUCTION

The USDA requires that 30% or more of the cow dry matter intake be from pasture during the grazing season. When well managed, pasture can be a low cost, high quality feed for dairy cows. However, in order to maintain milk production and profit, supplementary feed are often added to the ration. Under these circumstances, ration balancing can become challenging. Furthermore, organic producers, may face additional challenges in procurement of supplemental feed.

OBJECTIVES

The first aim of this study was to describe feeding practices used on distinct Wisconsin dairy farm systems throughout the year and especially during the grazing season. The second aim was to study the impact of those feeding practices on milk production and milk income over feed cost (IOFC).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

A survey instrument including environmental, economic, and production aspects of dairy farm has been developed and field-tested in the summer and fall of 2010. On-farm data collection started in early winter 2010 and will continue through 2011. For this study, farms have been randomly selected from the southwest quadrant of Wisconsin. Dairy farms have been classified across 3 different feeding systems: Conventional, Grazing, and Organic. Preliminary results from 3 organic, 3 grazing, and 2 conventional farms are presented.