Use of calf manure as alternative to fertiliser in ornamental plant cultivation

The combination of the energy crisis and political factors has led to a significant increase in slurry prices, with costs rising by as much as 300% over the past year. This has forced many farms and ornamental growers to explore alternative solutions. The use of slurry may offer a solution here, as it is a nutrient-rich residual product that is readily available in the Central West Flanders region. At present, this is only applied in outdoor crops in accordance with the Nitrates Directive. Meanwhile, 87 million kilograms of nitrogen are used in Flanders from artificial fertilisers (obtained through an energy-intensive process), 6% of which is used in horticulture. A more circular approach would be required to utilise nearby slurry manure (and, by extension, other fertilisers) directly in place of artificial fertilisers.

The project will therefore examine how slurry derived from calves of the White-blue breed can replace the use of artificial fertilisers. It will identify which trace and main elements are sufficient, too much or too little, and what other practical concerns there may be when used in ornamental cultivation.

This collaboration between an agricultural company and an ornamental plant cultivation company has the potential to be mutually beneficial for both types of companies, and by extension, for all companies with closed cultivation systems in the Central West Flanders region and beyond.

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