Alfalfa to get back into planetary boundaries

2025 world alfalfa congress
FRANCE REIMS-CHÂLONS

Agronomic session

Honoré LABANCA

Practical workshop session 1

FROM 03 › TO 06 nov. 2025

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Alfalfa : a pillar of economic stability for farms – the case of the Champagne Chalk region over the last decade

Thomas HERBIN - CDER

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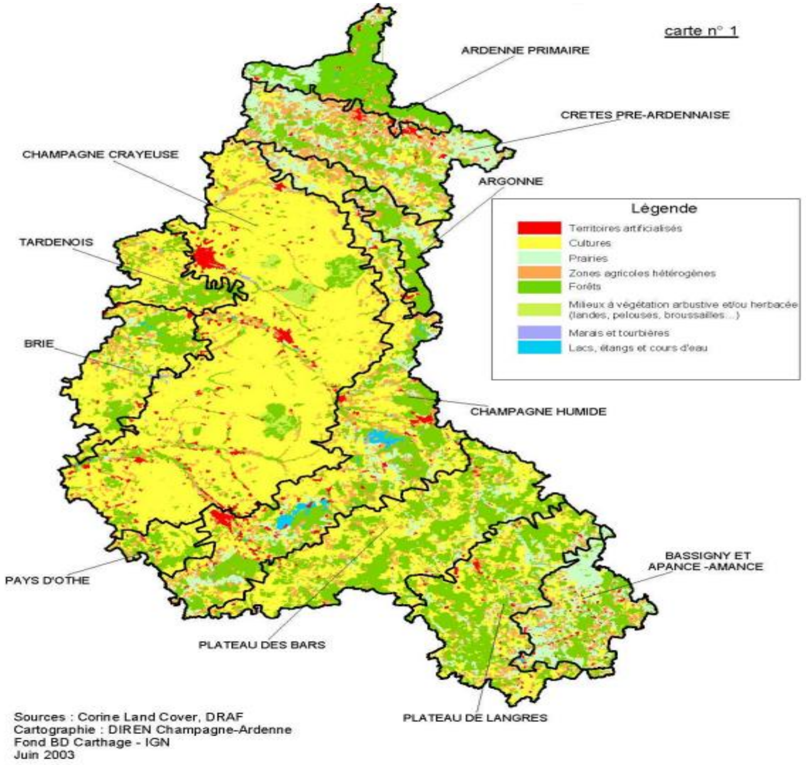
FROM 03 TO 06 nov. 2025

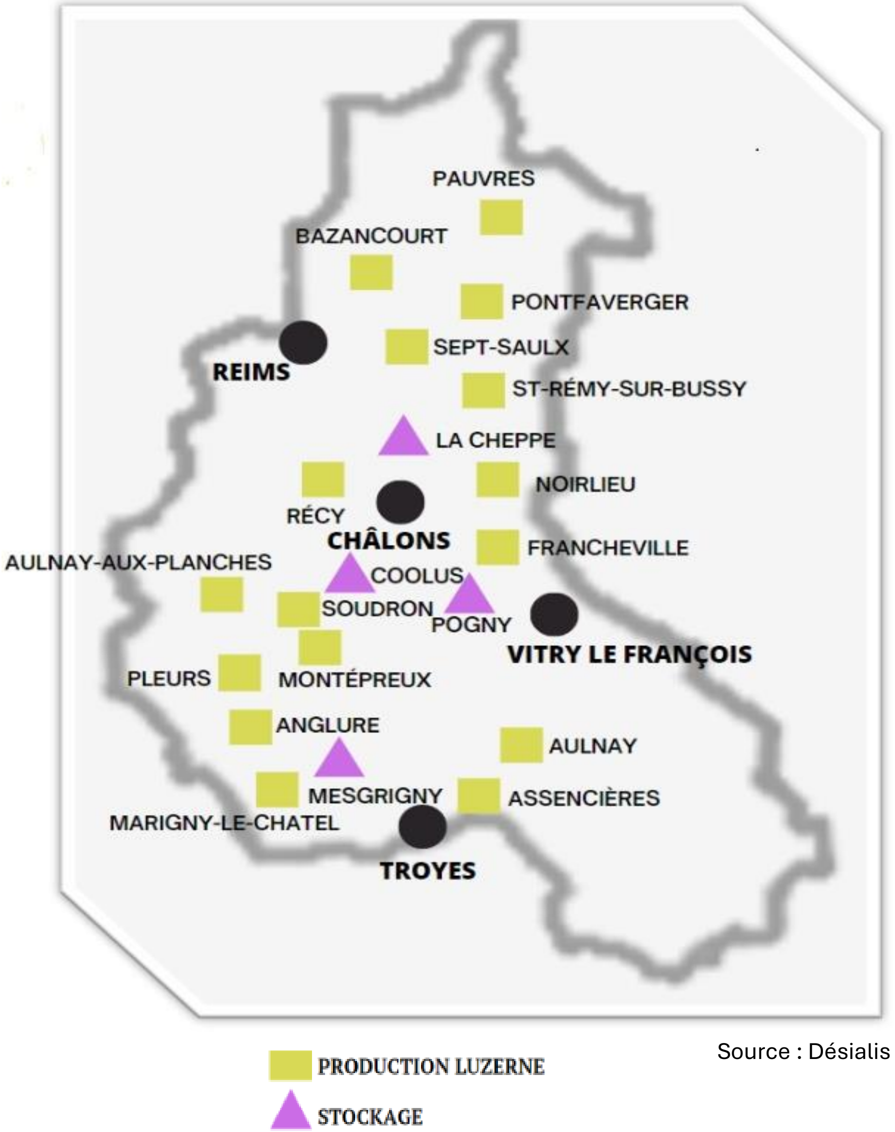
Geographical location of the Champagne Chalk region



- Chalky soil characteristics : well-drained, supports deep roots, slightly alkaline pH, retains enough moisture to stabilize growth.
- Mostly arable crops : cereals, oilseeds, sugar beets, field vegetables.
- Little livestock, mostly confined.

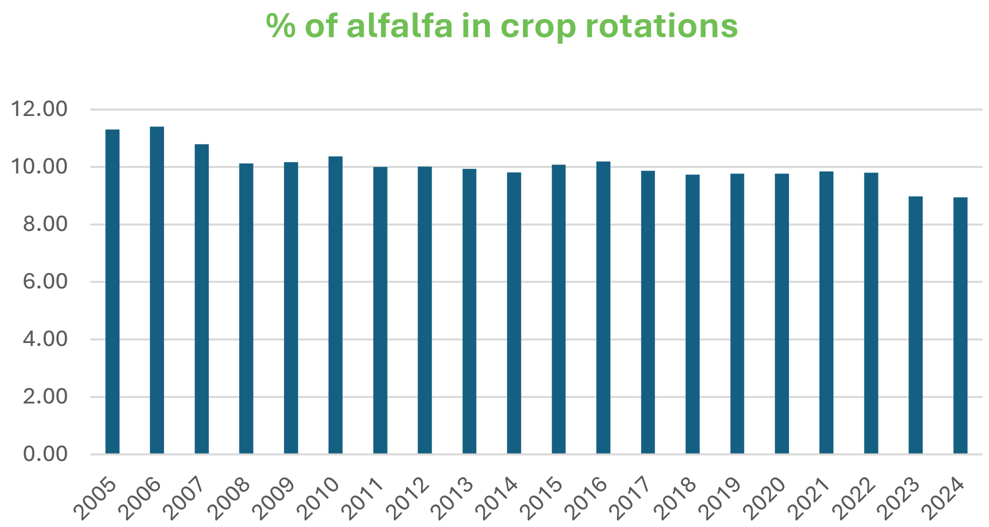
Alfalfa : an important crop for farmers and the local economy

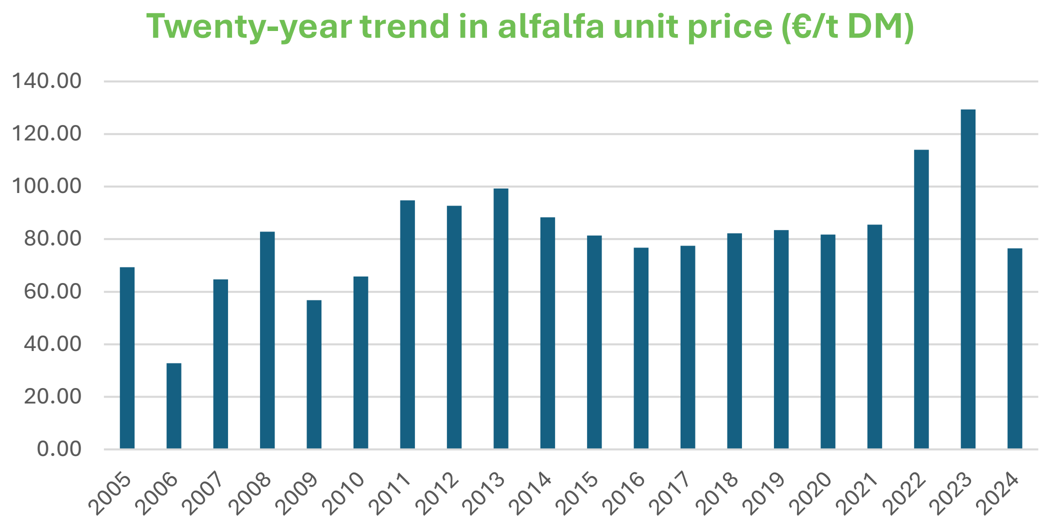
- 55,000 ha under cultivation → 80% of French production
- Agronomic and ecological benefits
- Present on 8 out of 10 farms
- Represents approximately 9% of the total cultivated area
- 16 production sites
- 4 storage centers
- Supports local employment

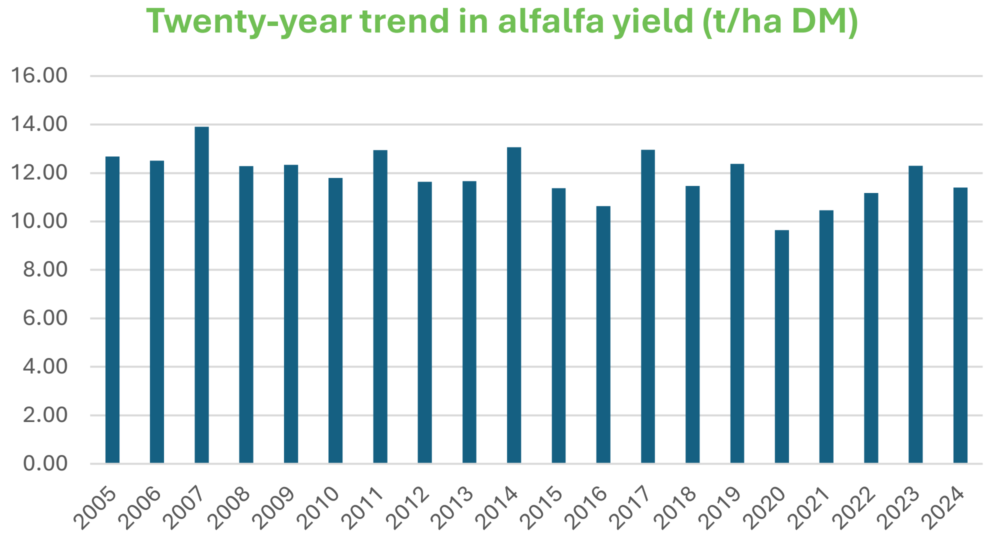


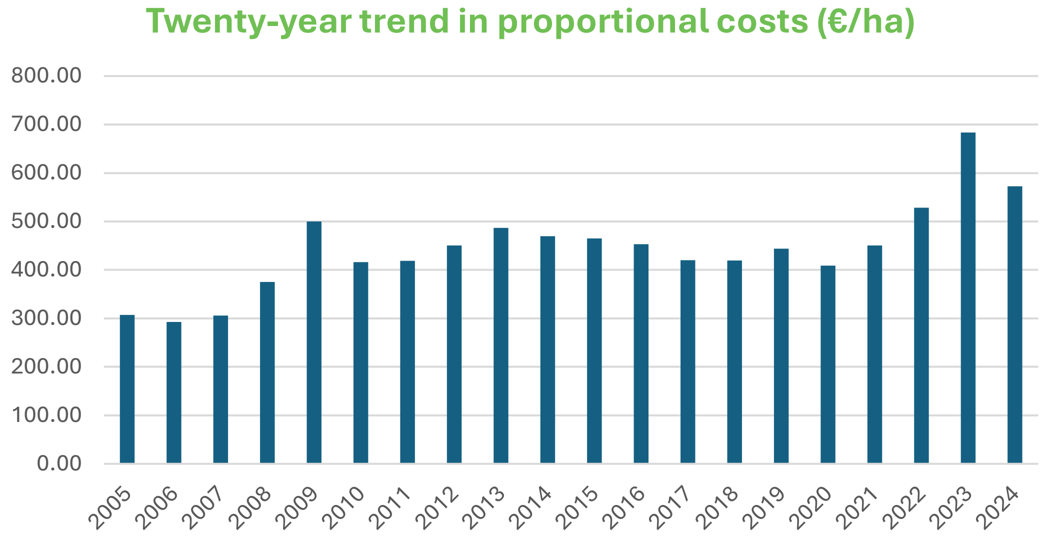
Source : Désialis

And a major crop in Champagne Chalk rotations

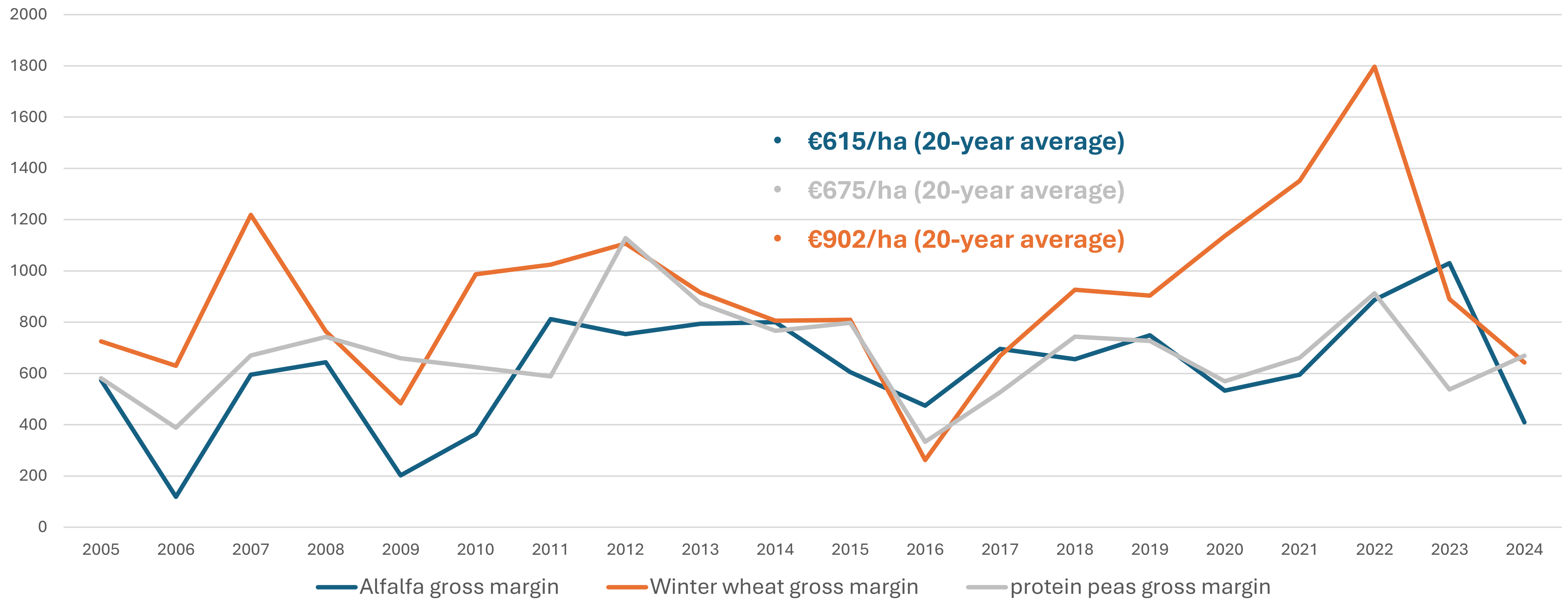








Comparison of gross margins between alfalfa, protein peas and winter wheat



=> Significantly lower structural costs for alfalfa production
=> And major co-benefits for subsequent crops

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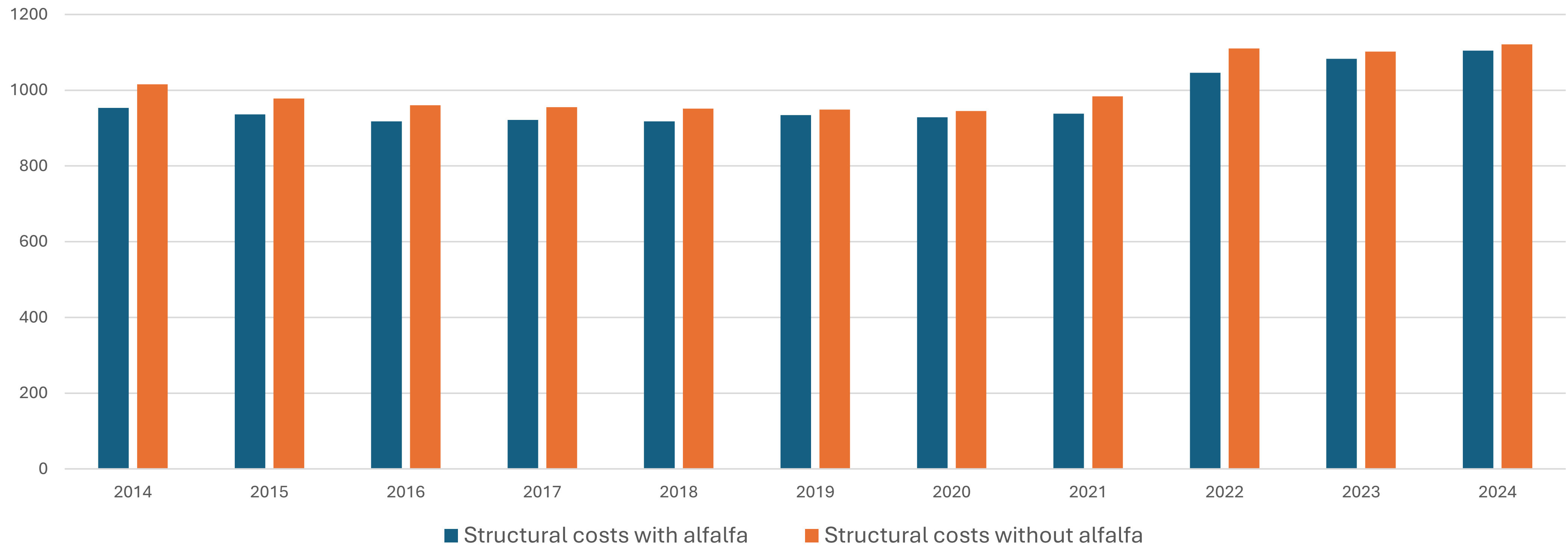
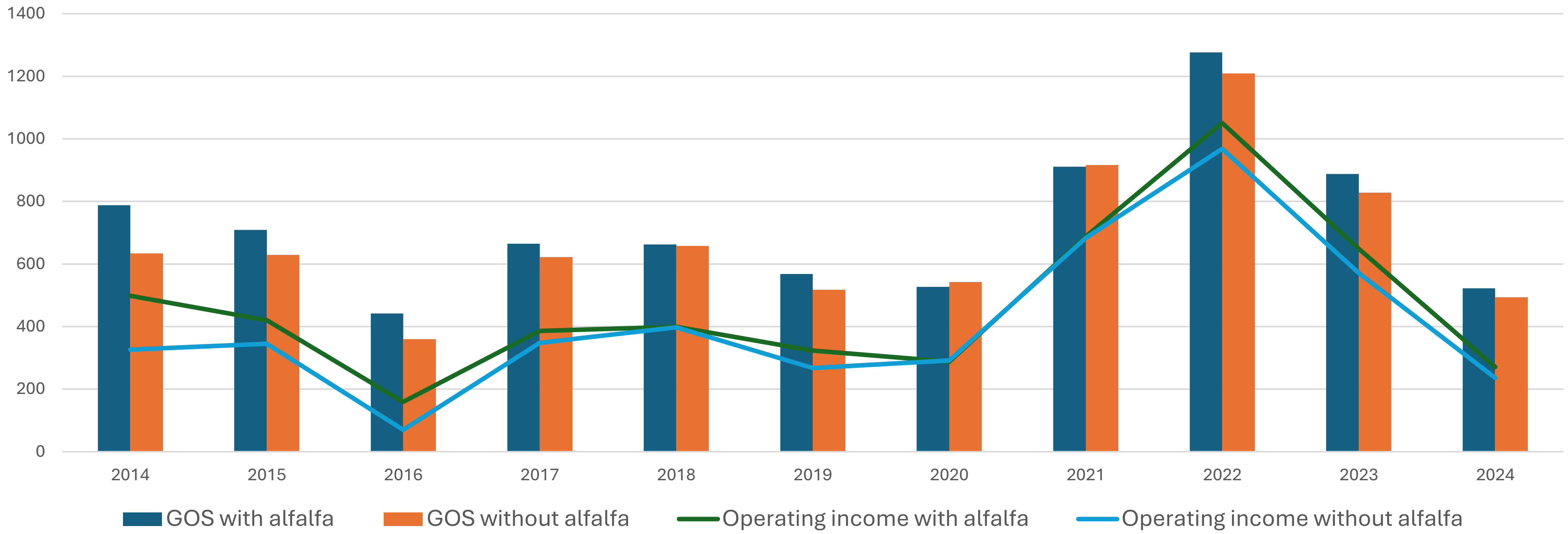
Comparison of structural costs (€/ha) between alfalfa and non-alfalfa farms



=> Alfalfa-based farms have €36/ha lower structural costs

What is the impact on gross operating surplus (GOS) and operating income* ?



*Operating income before manager's remuneration and taxes

=> Alfalfa-based farms show €50/ha higher GOS and €57/ha higher operating income

Thank you for your attention