

Farmstead Cheese Production: An Opportunity for Small Scale Producers

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Abstract for Poster

Farmstead cheese production is a viable opportunity for many small-scale dairy producers including cow, sheep and goat milk operations. Cheese production and marketing can be profitable on a small scale because of the relatively high price that is received for specialty cheese. Specialty cheese can command a premium of up to 900% of the price of commodity block cheddar cheese prices. This premium price received for specialty cheese more than offsets the cost of producing and processing cheese on a small scale. Specialty cheese can receive a significant price premium if it has an excellent overall flavor profile. This flavor profile is determined by milk flavor and quality, as well as processing and aging procedure. This poster profiles three farmstead cheese operations: one sheep milk (Green Dirt Farm; Weston, Missouri), one goats' milk (Jumpin' Good Goat Dairy; Buena Vista, Colorado) and one cows' milk operation (Chapel Hill Creamery; Chapel Hill, North Carolina), and presents mini-case studies highlighting their launch and success.

Selection of Illustrations to Be Included

1. Graphic showing location of farmstead cheese operations (map of U.S.; information from American Cheese Society).
2. Value chain for Goat, Sheep and Cow Milk Cheese.
3. Profile of Entrepreneurs with Photos.
4. Bar Chart Comparison on Revenue/Cost for Commodity Block Cheddar (Based on California Department of Agriculture Statistics, 2011) and farmstead returns from cheese operation.

About the Author

Ann Wilkinson, Ph.D., Origin Farms, specializes in working with emerging food companies in the livestock and dairy industries, and has extensive experience working with producer owned organizations. Prior to establishing herself in consulting, Wilkinson served as product manager of branded retail and food service products for two major food companies, Farmland Foods and Smithfield Foods. Further, Wilkinson was employed as a research economist handling strategic planning and project feasibility studies for Farmland Industries, at the time, one of the nation's largest agricultural cooperatives. She holds a Ph.D. in Agricultural Economics from the University of Missouri, Columbia, a M.A. in economics from University of Missouri, Columbia, and a B.S. in economics from the Colorado State University.