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1. Wisconsin Specialty Cheese Production Increases 7 Percent

By Jeanne Carpenter

Numbers released today, June 3, by the USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service show specialty cheese production in Wisconsin continues to expand. In fact, production of specialty cheese rose by 7 percent from 2007 to 2008 and now accounts for 17 percent of the state's total cheese production.

Of the state's 127 cheese plants, 88 are now manufacturing at least one type of specialty cheese, up four plants from 2007. Feta continues to be the state's most popular specialty cheese, with a 3 percent increase in production. Blue, Hispanic types, Parmesan Wheel, Farmers, and Romano wheel cheeses are other growing varieties.

Specialty cheese plants make up the backbone of the state's dairy industry. In 2008, six new specialty dairy plants opened in Wisconsin, with another 14 conducting major expansions. In total, 43 new processing plants have opened and more than 70 have expanded in Wisconsin since 2004.

**SPECIALTY CHEESE PRODUCTION
Wisconsin, 2007 and 2008**

Type	No. of plants	2007 Production 1,000 lbs.	No. of plants	2008 Production 1,000 lbs.
Asiago	9	23,447	10	23,280
Cheddar 1/	29	17,941	28	18,353
Farmers	12	2,123	14	2,752
Feta	8	63,731	8	65,533
Italian Fontina	10	3,617	9	4,885
Hispanic	18	49,906	18	50,412
Limburger	1	744	1	645
Parmesan Wheel	7	40,221	8	45,629
Provolone 2/	5	46,064	5	35,131
Romano Wheel	8	9,338	9	10,503
All Other 3/	50	142,278	58	171,807
Total 4/	84	399,410	88	428,930

1/Includes only specialty types of this variety. 2/Includes Provolone aged > 60 days and other specialty Provolone. 3/Combined to avoid disclosure of individual plant data. Includes: American Grana, Auribella, Bel Pease, Blue, Brie, Butterkase, Camembert, specialty Colby, Edam, Fior di Latte, Fontiagio, Fontinella, Gorgonzola, Gouda, Gruyere, Havarti, Italico, Juustoleipa, Kreme Kaese, Les Freres, Mascarpone, Middle Eastern cheeses, specialty Monterey Jack, Morning Sun, specialty Mozzarella, other specialty Parmesan, Pepato, Peperon, Raclette, other specialty Romano, St. Otho, Semi-soft, Swedish style Fontina, specialty Swiss, and Yogurt cheese. 4/Total cheese plants producing one or more specialty cheeses. Source: USDA, NASS WI FO

Contributing to the state's seismic growth in specialty cheeses is the increasing number of start-up farmstead and artisan dairies. Ten years ago, only six farmstead dairies called Wisconsin home. Today, 23 farmstead operations craft an impressive variety of award-winning artisan and specialty cheeses from cow, goat and sheep's milk, as well as farmstead yogurt and ice cream. At least one additional farmstead dairy is expected to open its doors in 2009.

"We're working hard to ensure dairy remains a vital part of Wisconsin's economy and quality of life," said Dan Carter, Founder and Chairman of the Dairy Business Innovation Center. "Congratulations from the DBIC and all of our partners to every cheesemaker and dairy farmer in the state for their commitment to growing America's Dairyland."

2. DBIC Monthly Message: Challenges & Rewards of Farmstead Dairy



This month we hear from **Abby Bachhuber, Client & Project Specialist for the Dairy Business Innovation Center**. Raised in Madison, WI., Abby has a deep commitment to serving her community through promoting a strong local economy and creating opportunities for underrepresented populations. Abby's career centers on local agriculture and community development. She has experience in developing a youth nutrition program for a low-income community center, coordinating a program to subsidize the cost of organic food shares from local farms for low-income households, and helping coordinate the state's Buy Local Buy Wisconsin program. As a project consultant with the DBIC, she works primarily with small farmstead clients. This month, she tells us more about the "**Challenges and Rewards of the Wisconsin Farmstead Dairy.**"

During the past several years, I've had the pleasure and privilege of working with several farmstead start-up clients through my work with the Dairy Business Innovation Center. As one might guess, significant challenges exist for start-up farmsteaders, and those challenges are often the same for every start-up. Let's talk about the major challenges and the resources available to help:

Financing: many beginners don't realize the investment of money and time it will take to successfully start a business. Most small businesses don't see a profit for at least three to five years. Farmsteaders must be prepared for this profit timeline in order to go into small-scale farmstead dairying. A strong business plan and marketing plan is key in the journey to becoming profitable, but many beginners want to dive straight into production before planning. Most people who get into this business are very passionate, which is a wonderful thing and an important part of why Wisconsin farmstead dairies are so successful. However, it is essential to step back, research (attend business planning workshops, participate in industry conferences, visit other farmstead dairies, etc.) in order to succeed. Here at the DBIC, we offer business planning services and grant writing services to help clients find the funding to get started.

Determining target market(s): I can't stress enough the importance of knowing your customer base before starting your business. Research is key. Be sure to talk with retailers/buyers about your product, and make sure you have solid interest and even commitment from buyers before beginning full production. Knowing how much to produce from the start can save a lot of money and resources (by knowing how much to produce from the start). The DBIC Consumer Focus Groups are great for this purpose – you can test your product out on consumers to find out who your market is – and you can do this at even just the concept stage.

Food safety regulations: following Wisconsin food safety regulations in terms of location of animals/barns/milk house/processing plant/etc is essential to the long term success of your business. The DBIC helps organize an annual dairy/food safety meeting to help farmsteaders get to know food safety officials, receive updates on regulations, and ask questions. The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, July 8 in the Wisconsin Dells. Email me if you're interested in attending.

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Avoiding the "I'm Overwhelmed" Factor: for a small farmsteader trying to do everything – milking the animals, making the cheese, bottling the milk, and then marketing and even delivering the product, it's easy to become overwhelmed. You need connections with folks who have done this before, and that's where the DBIC can help. We provide networking opportunities through workshops, field days, special events, as well as a mentor program to pair you with others who've done this before. It's also important for every farmsteader to decide in advance just how big they want to get. Don't commit beyond your capabilities and capacities. Start slowly and expand strategically.

Despite these challenges, I am always heartened to see more and more dairy farmsteaders continue to call the DBIC and ask for our help in starting up an operation. For many, the rewards outweigh the challenges. Some rewards I've seen for farmstead producers include:

- Meaningful family business to pass down for future generations
- More satisfying lifestyle than their previous career (some farmstead operators are new to the dairy industry and have left corporate jobs to pursue a more satisfying lifestyle)
- Increased profitability - consumers are very interested in the story behind the farm and farmstead dairies. That's why it's important to have a good story. Consumers will often pay more for products from these types of farms
- Pride in carrying on/advancing the Wisconsin dairy tradition
- Transforming a current commodity business into something more sustainable and profitable
- Enriching Wisconsin from the commodity dairy state to the artisan/specialty dairy state
- Developing personal relationships with retailers and consumers

And for many Wisconsin dairy farmsteaders, crafting a product from the milk of their animals is the most meaningful way for them to connect with their their animals and land. Farmstead dairying is its own art form. I'm proud to play a helpful role in it.

3. American Cheese Society Judging Entries Due June 12

The American Cheese Society is accepting entries for its annual Judging & Competition, held this year, August 5 – 8, in Austin, Texas. **Cheesemakers must submit entry forms to headquarters by Friday, June 12**, to pay the regular rate of \$55 per entry. Entries received from June 13 - June 19, 2009 will be subject to an additional late fee. Entries will not be accepted after June 19, 2009. To download entry forms, visit:

<http://www.cheesesociety.org/displaycommon.cfm?an=1&subarticlenbr=113>



Cheesemakers may also now sign up for a table at Meet the Cheesemaker. This event is another chance for cheesemakers to present their cheeses to attendees at the ACS conference. While only in its third

year, Meet the Cheesemaker is already a favorite and a not-to-miss event at the ACS conference. Go here to sign up: <http://www.cheesesociety.org/displaycommon.cfm?an=1&subarticlenbr=169>

Lastly, even if you aren't a cheesemaker, you can still partake in all of the fun. Register online to secure your spot at the conference. To register, go here: <http://www.cheesesociety.org/> See you all in Austin!

4. Industry News

- ❖ **Honduras Dairy Industry Report:** In January 2009, Wisconsin Cheesemaker Bob Wills, of Cedar Grove Cheese, Plain, Wis., and Norm Monsen, a representative of the new organization, Partners for Global Dairy Development (PGDD), traveled to Honduras to study that country's dairy industry. PGDD, coordinated by The Babcock Institute for International Dairy Research and Development, intends to use the experience to help spur economic development in Honduras using the expertise of Wisconsin's educational institutions and dairy industry experts. Read the report prepared by Bob Wills, describing the dairy industry of Honduras, at: <http://babcock.cals.wisc.edu/artisan/WillsHonduras.pdf> and stay tuned for more information about Honduran cheesemakers visiting Wisconsin this summer.



5. Upcoming Important Dates

- **July 21 – 23: Wisconsin Farm Technology Days. Waterloo, Wis.**
Farm Technology Days is the largest agriculture exposition in Wisconsin--a three-day outdoor event that showcases the latest improvements in production agriculture. Each year, it is held in a different Wisconsin County on a different host farm. This year, hosting is the Crave Brothers Farm, LLC, located two miles North of Waterloo, WI in Dodge County. Hours: Tuesday & Wednesday 9 a.m. - 5 p.m., Thursday 9 a.m. - 4 p.m. Admission is \$5. More information: <http://www.wifarmtechnologydays.com/>
- **Oct. 30 – 31: 2009 Focus on Goats Conference. Sinsinawa, Wis.**
Save the date for this year's Focus on Goats Conference, to be held at Sinsinawa, Wis., near both the Illinois and Iowa borders, in the heart of Upper Midwest Dairy Goat operations. The conference will include several producer panels and keynote speakers. Watch for updates at: <http://www.wdga.org/>

The Dairy Business Innovation Center offers technical assistance to dairy producers and processors in developing value-added dairy products, business planning and market development. For more information, visit www.dbicusa.org or contact Jeanne Carpenter at 608-358-7837, email: Jeanne@wordartisanllc.com.