

## Farm-based Cheese Dairy SEROWNIA KUCHARY

A dairy farm strikes a balance between farm expansion, intensification of agricultural production, and animal welfare.

### EAFRD-funded projects

**Location:** Kuchary Borowe, Poland

**Programming period:** 2014-2020

**Priority:** P2 - Competitiveness

**Focus Area:** Farm performance, restructuring & modernisation

**Measures:** M04 - Investments in physical assets

**Funding:** Total budget: 117 115 (EUR)

EAFRD: 14 904 (EUR)

National/Regional: 8 519 (EUR)

Private/own: 93 692 (EUR)

**Timeframe:** 25/08/2020 - 25/11/2021

**Project promoter:** Gospodarstwo Rolne / Ilona Michalak

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### Summary

Around 2019, the owner of a family dairy farm in Kuchary Borowe, Poland, decided to diversify into cheese making. The main aim of the project was to produce a variety of cheeses on-site, from the farm's own, high quality, unpasteurised milk. Maintaining high animal welfare standards has always been a key pursuit of the farm, while obtaining the highest quality of milk in terms of fat content, taste and nutritional properties. These qualities were now also to benefit cheese production, whereby the farm owner, Ilona Michalak, was keen to maximise the natural benefits of the milk by using her own recipes to fully eliminate any preservatives and to enhance texture, taste and smell. The prime objective of the EAFRD-funded project was to support the purchase of state-of-the-art computer-controlled dairy equipment to process raw milk into cheese, butter, and yoghurt.

### Project results

- The farm has become well known in the area as a producer of cheeses and other dairy products. It is increasing its share in the local market with great success. In addition, the farm opened a store selling products made on-site.
- The farm now produces eight types of products from the highest quality unpasteurised milk, free from preservatives.
- The products are sold in the store next to the cheese dairy, equipped with a refrigerated cabinet, and a 'tasting area'. The products are also promoted via the Internet.
- The use of energy-efficient technologies allows heat recovery at the milk cooling tank. A 39 KW photovoltaic system installed on the roof of the building enables saving energy costs.

### Key lessons and recommendations

- The introduction of on-farm processing has boosted prospects for the future.
- Being open to people-to-people contacts and being hard-working gives great chances of achieving success.



## Context

Ilona Michalak inherited the family farm from her parents. Her ambition is to systematically enlarge the area of agricultural land and her herd of cattle. Currently, the agricultural holding encompasses 130 hectares, and specialises in raising Holstein-Friesian (HF) cattle. The herd consists of more than 200 heads of cattle, including 100 dairy cows. Genetically, HF cattle have a high production potential, but only when a very high level of animal welfare is achieved. This is often a challenge, and the reason why the owner focuses on animal welfare. As such, the cows are mainly raised in pastures, and are only kept in a shed during unfavourable weather conditions. Being outdoors allows the cattle to breathe 'fully', enabling their bodies to produce milk without any problems. However, when in a shed,



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restricted access to fresh air, light and freedom of movement can cause lung problems and diarrhoea. Therefore, over the years, the living space in the shed had been enlarged by at least 50%, and cow brushes, computer-controlled air mixing fans and raised curtains were installed. In addition, bedding in the shed was improved to provide the highest levels of comfort, and feeding is based on farm-produced feed. The farm was retrofitted with agricultural equipment and modernised to improve animal welfare further.

The plant processes around 1 000 litres of milk daily. In 2019, the decision was taken to diversify into making farm-based cheese on-farm and from the farm's own, highest quality, unpasteurised milk (100%), to meet the highest standards in taste and nutritional properties.

## Objectives

The prime objective of the EAFRD co-funded project was to purchase dairy equipment to process raw milk into cheese, butter, and yoghurt.

## Activities

Project activities included:

- Procuring and installing state-of-the-art, professional equipment for the cheese production plant. This included: a cheese boiler, drip table, cheese tables, cheese moulds of various size and shape, ripening room, refrigeration cabinet, electronic scales, vacuum sealer, washing and disinfection facilities. A separate slicing, packaging and portioning station with a refrigerated cabinet was also established.
- Installing a recuperation system with a computer station to control the flow of clean air at a fixed temperature of 21°C throughout the cheese production hall. The system ensures microbiological purity and temperature uniformity. All the equipment is made of stainless steel, and a majority is on wheels, which facilitates hygiene and makes the work much lighter.

## Main results

- The farm has become well known in the area as a producer of cheeses and other dairy products. It is conquering the local market with great success. In addition, the farm opened a store selling products made on-site.
- Since cheese production began, the farm has produced a wide range of cheeses. This includes ripened hard cheese; rennet ripened cheese with various natural additives (wild garlic, fenugreek, walnut, nigella, cranberry, pickled green pepper, natural pepper, Italian herbs, sun-dried tomato); acid-rennet curd cheese with added garlic and paprika; ricotta type cheese, namely un-ripened cheese made from cow's milk whey; Feta type cheese; natural acid curd cheese; natural yoghurt; and butter.
- The products are sold in the store next to the cheese dairy, equipped with a refrigerated cabinet with a range of cheeses on display, and a 'tasting area' where customers can try the products available.
- The products are also promoted via the Internet on the nationwide 'Polska Smakuje' ('Poland Tastes Good') profile.



- > The use of energy-efficient technologies allows heat recovery at the milk cooling tank (recovery of up to 70% from the cooling equipment of the heat lost during milk cooling). A 39 KW photovoltaic system installed on the roof of the building enables saving energy costs.
- > Since the project began, the business has been successful in a number of competitions, including being the winner of the 20th national competition 'Way to succeed' in 2020; and being accepted to enter the Competition 'Wielkopolska Region's Farmer of the Year 2022'. Its cheeses have also won awards, e.g. 'Pearl of Wielkopolska', for ripening cheese in 2022.

## Key lessons and recommendations

- > The introduction of on-farm processing has boosted prospects for the future.
- > Being open to people-to-people contacts and being hard-working gives great chances of achieving success.

## Quote

*"The Kuchary Cheese Dairy was set up out of love for healthy, natural food. The milk used to make cheeses comes from cows from my own farm, I use natural condiments. The cheeses are always fresh, I also vacuum pack them."*

Ilona Michalak

## Additional information:

<https://serowniakuchary.pl/>

[www.facebook.com/serownia.kuchary/](https://www.facebook.com/serownia.kuchary/)

