

55 Questions to Answer Before you Begin Cheesemaking Commercially

After completing the Dairy Value-Adding Skills Assessment, consider these additional questions developed by Dave and Mary Falk. Some of the questions may overlap with the skills assessment just completed, but others may help guide your thinking when it comes to planning for this process. These questions will get you thinking about things you must consider BEFORE launching into a cheesemaking or dairy processing business.



LoveTree Farmstead Cheese compiles the following list of questions they felt were crucial to be asked (and answered) before “the plunge” is taken. These questions aren't being asked in order to discourage anyone, but to shed a “ray of reality” upon the subject. In order to be successful, you will need to know the answers to ALL of these questions before you get started.

- What income are you going to live on the first five years?
- What kind of cheese/product are you planning on making?
- Is the market saturated with that type of cheese/product? If it is, why would your product be successful?
- Where is your market located?
- Who is going to contact the buyer?
- Who is going to service the buyers?
- Do you know how to service a dairy account?
- How are you going to get your product there?
- How much are you going to charge for your product?
- What does your competition charge for their product?
- What kind of advertising do you think that you will need?
- Have you ever demo'd products in public before?... If you haven't...do you think you will be comfortable doing it?... if not... who will do it for you?
- Have you ever sold products directly to the public before? If you haven't... wil you be comfortable going it? Is not...who will do it for you?
- Who is going to answer the phone?
- Who is your competition?
- Have you written a business plan?
- How much do you think your product is going to cost to produce?
- Where are you going to get your equipment?
- Is the equipment approved for production through DATCP (for Wisconsin residents)
- How much will it cost to modify the equipment to make it legal?
- What lab are you going you use? What do they charge for component testing> (quality control)
- Who is going to do the plant record keeping?
- What do you have planned for your “Standards of Practice?”
- Do you have a HACCP program outlined?
- Who is going to do the accounting?
- Who will be doing the banking and dealing with the loan officers?
- Do you qualify for a merchant credit account (receiving payment for customers via credit cards)... if you don't how are you going to handle phone orders?
- Do you have a plan for when something goes “wrong”? (What do you do in the case of a

“recall”...liability and insurance issues)

- Who is going to do the construction?
- Who are you going to call when something goes wrong in the aging room or cooler (product quality). Is he/she available on weekends and holidays?
- Who will service your stainless equipment and will he/she show up on weekends/holidays?
- Who will service your refrigeration equipment and will he/she show up on weekends/holidays?
- What are you going to do for packaging?
- What size of product are you going to package
- What about labels? Do you have a logo? Who can design one for you?
- Where are you going to get your packaging materials?
- Where are you going to get your shipping materials?
- What about brochures and leaflets?
- Who is going to fix your computer, and will he/she show up on weekends/holidays?
- Do you have a fax machine?
- Who is going to help you and how are you going to pay him/her?
- Who is going to deal with UPS when they refuse to make good on lost order?
- Who is going to collect on outstanding accounts?
- Who is going to be in charge of herd health?
- Who is going to do the milking?
- Who is going to do the farming (having crops, etc.)
- Who is going to do your laundry?
- Who is going to do your cooking?
- Who is going to clean the house?
- Who is going to watch the children?
- Who is going to clean cheese room when you want to sleep?
- Who is going to turn cheese when you want to sleep?
- How long can you go without sleep?

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