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## CASE STUDIES

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# Good Practices of Short Supply Chains around Europe

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ON-FARM: Farming, Food Production and Food Processing with Added Value for Local  
Small and Medium-sized Farmers

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# INTRODUCTION

This PR2 collected the experiences of farmers who have made direct selling a feature of their business as well as an element of their success.

The partners were asked to create and select at least 4 significant realities for each country that could represent good direct selling practices, Ceja have been evaluate case from all europe. All partners actively collaborated in the collection of the cases, producing a mapping of more than 25 successful businesses in 6 European countries (Fig. 1).

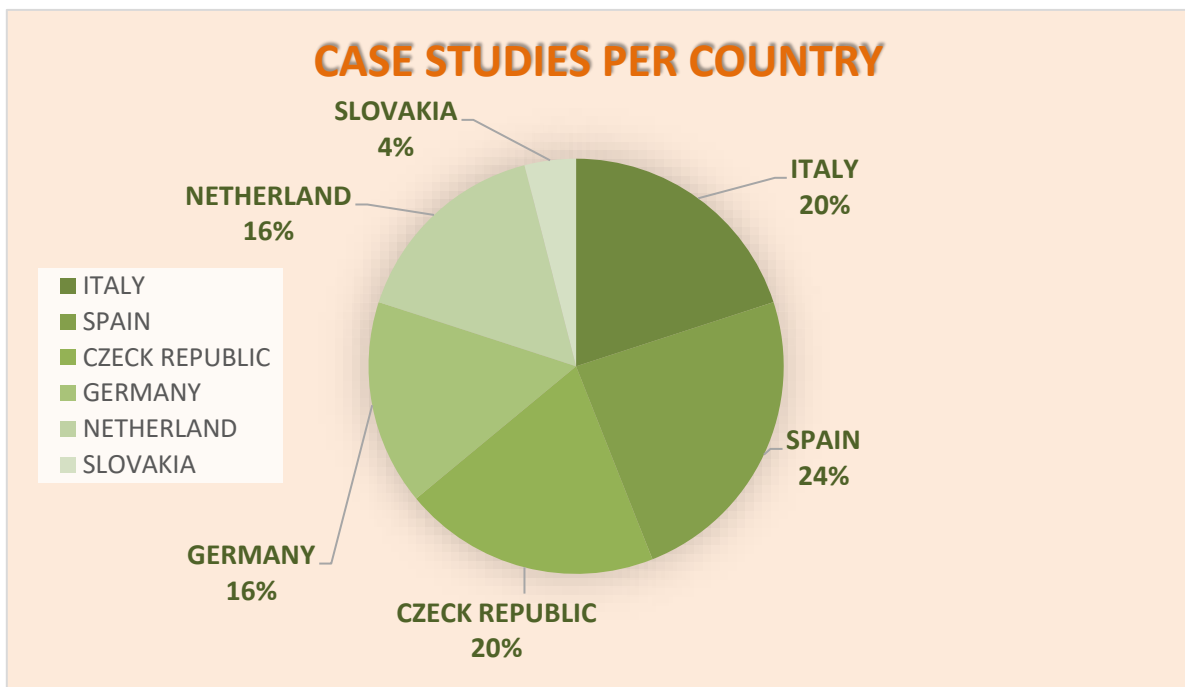


Figure 1 - Share of case studies per country

The case studies were collected in different ways, interviews at the company or partner's premises, video calls or simple voice messages.

The approach given to the collection and subsequent transposition of the cases was in the mode of storytelling, thus giving emphasis to the feelings, emotions and fears that characterised those who started a direct sales activity. This was to allow readers to identify with and see the case story with more familiar eyes.

In fact, a good case study must include the setting, characters, events and conflicts, just like a story full of details (Dooley, 2007).

Particular emphasis in the case structure was placed on the process of developing direct selling, the personal needs that drove them in this direction and the difficulties they faced. Based on the preliminary analysis carried out prior to the project, it emerged that learning from practical examples and in particular from other farmers is a preferred and well-received tool.

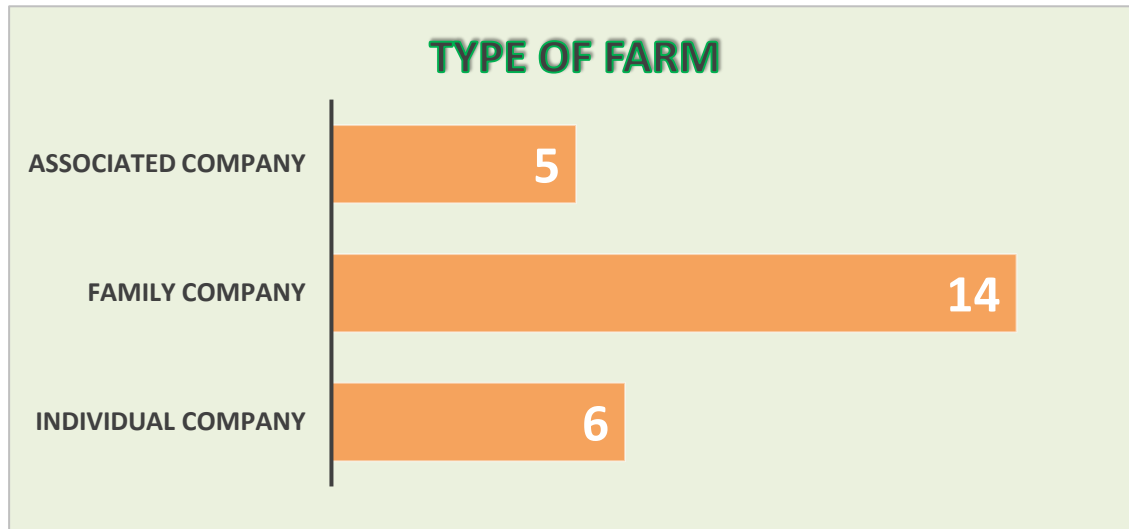


Figure 2 - Case studies according to company type

In fact, this type of training tools are seen as being close to the final recipients of the project such as farmers. The farms involved in the interviews are mainly small- to medium-sized farms run as individuals or associations (Fig. 2).

Case studies are flexible teaching tools and provide the instructor with the opportunity to adapt to the needs of his or her learners. Not only do case studies provide real-world experiences, but they also help learners, and beneficiaries of training tools in general, to connect theory and practice (Akins, 2019).

The examples will help farmers see how others have implemented the farm-to-fork strategy on their farms, what their first steps were when they started their food production, what solutions they use, what obstacles they had to overcome, how they connect with customers, what the effects of their measures are, and so on.

Mainly the farmers interviewed organised their direct sales on their own farm and secondarily at farmers' markets. To a lesser extent, they have structured online direct sales services relying on the most common platforms or via their own website.

A further sales route is to set up their own shops or to sell on behalf of third parties in affiliated shops (Fig. 3).



*Figure 3 - The main sales methods in the case studies analyzed*



# References

Akins, J. L. (2019). Seeking and Engaging: Case Study Integration to Enhance Critical Thinking About Agricultural Issues. *Journal of Agricultural Education*, n. 60, 97-108.

Dooley, K. E. (2007). Viewing Agricultural Education Research through a Qualitative Lens. *Journal of Agricultural Education*, v48 n4 p32-42.

# The Team



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Conseil Européen des Jeunes  
Agriculteurs  
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# ITALY





## IT01 - PROCEVA

### IDENTIFICATION OF THE CASE STUDY

Case number: **IT-01**

Name of company: **PROCEVA**

Title of the case study:

**The Tuscany wheat network**

### MAIN DATA OF THE COMPANY

#### Country

- Italy

#### Company

- Associated company (Company's Network)

#### Farming Activity

- Cultivation

#### Direct selling way

- Direct selling in own or common shop



## SELF – INTRODUCTION OF THE FARMER

I'm Angiolo Simonetti, the President of the company's network PRO.CE.VA.. I manage with my family a farm of 200 Hectares producing wheat and other products.

Together with other four farmers, we decided to create an associated company in form of network (based on a National Law, regulating this type of companies).

PROCEVA - Produttori Cereali Valdelsa, is a group of farmers who have joined together with the aim of promoting and encouraging their agricultural productions as well as exchanging knowledge and experience. The farms are all located in the Empolese-Valdelsa area, the land affected by the crops is about 1500 ha located within a radius of about 15 km from their respective business centers.

More info: <https://www.proceva.it/> and <https://pinfoid.ciatoscana.eu/>

## CHANGES / INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS ADOPTED

The first challenge of the Company's Network PRO.CE.VA., was to participate to a call of Regione Toscana, in the frame of the Rural Development Program, supporting the creation of local integrated chains aimed to valorize the products increasing the add value for farmers inside the chain. An essential aspect of the integrated chain project, has been the inclusion in the proposal of a innovation action managed together with the researchers of the Scuola Superiore Sant'Anna, realizing two years of experimentation about the nutraceutical properties of the wheat. The purpose of PRO.CE.VA.'s project was oriented to the following 2 objectives:

1. Improvement of the quality of wheat and other products, through:

- Innovative production processes (change of cultivated varieties, low utilization of chemical inputs, total elimination of Glyphosate, etc...)
- Producing wheat with high nutraceutical properties

2. Direct management of the whole chain, from the production to the selling:

- Production of pasta and bakery products with the label PRO.CE.VA. (thanks to the agreement with mills and transformation companies)
- Selling, without intermediation, thanks to a direct contract with a supermarket's chain

The commercial agreements reached with Unicoop Florence, ovens, pastry shops and mills, they affect about 40,000 quintals of wheat and 1,500 of durum wheat for a commitment commercial for the duration of the PIF, minimum 5 years.

The nutraceutical properties of the products (pasta and bakery products) has been tested by the University Hospital of Pisa, to a group of persons suffering of Crohn's disease.

## WHY AND HOW YOU DECIDED TO INTRODUCE STRATEGY CHANGES / INNOVATIONS

The main incentive to face this challenge was the objective to give an add value to our wheat and cereals production. Shortly transform a commodity in a product including quality and traceability, able to cross the exigencies of our consumers.

This is the only way to reach a fair income and a good economic result for our farmers, considering the following characteristic of our agriculture:

- Our territory is for the main part composed of hills and mountains, with a low production yields;
- The main parts of our agriculture is composed of little-medium family farmers;
- On the other hand, our agriculture offer a wide range of products of high quality, required by both local consumers and tourists coming in Tuscany

Therefore the challenge to create the conditions for valorize our production of wheat and other cereals, was for us the only possible way to be competitive in the food market.

## WHAT OBSTACLES DID YOU MEET

The first obstacle was for sure the bureaucracy. When we've decided to create this associated network, this new form of company was practically unknown, so that it was not easy to finalize the process and to organize the management of our company.

The second difficulty was due to the long time employed by the Regional administration for evaluating, approving and financing the investments included in our chain project.

The last one was the Covid pandemic, that has stopped all activities for a longtime.

Due to this situation, it was difficult to realize the whole activity foreseen by the project.

## EVALUATION OF THE RESULTS



The President declare to be really very happy for the results of our project. Just in September 2022 the Consortium have submitted the final report of our activity co-financed by the RDP of the Regione Toscana.

The support of the RDP has allowed a good start, and to consolidate our company and the commercial relationship, involving other farmers, increasing our commercial relationship, and promoting a relationship with the local administration to promote the consumption of our production's line by the schools.

The other important satisfaction reason is the good result of the test realized by the hospital of Pisa.

## WHAT WOULD YOU DO DIFFERENT AND WHAT ARE THE PERSPECTIVES IN YOUR MIND

Maybe the starting was a little bit too prudent, maybe it could be possible have a larger involvement of farmers from the beginning.

On the other hand, it was right this prudent approach . At first because is necessary in the first phase to have a great confidence between the partners, putting together only people motivated and united in same goals. The first phase is very delicate, it's necessary to create a mutual trust along the chain, especially with the commercial partners.

Now the group is ready to increase the business, to collect more products, to create new partnership, with the local administrations, with the health authorities, with new commercial partner.

## FINAL SENTENCES

The most important result, at personal level, is that I've really learned a lot, in terms of new skills about entrepreneurship, innovative approach, personal awareness;

Second one, I'm happy that we've demonstrate that is possible improve our agriculture, thanks to the aggregation and cooperation between the farmers;

Third one I'm very happy for the economic result of our project, in terms of increased income for our farmers.

Last one I'm satisfied for the perspective of our company's network, that is ready to increase his activity and business.



## Suggestions for other farmers

Never alone: first of one in agriculture nobody can win alone. It's necessary create relationship, work together with experts, researchers, other farmers, public institutions;

Innovative approach: the first condition for developing a short supply chain, is to reach an high quality: special products, traceability, sustainability are required to attract the consumers.

Communication strategy: a good product costs more than a basic product; the consumers must be aware that he spends more for receiving more



*Pasta produced and sold by the PROCEVA network*



## IT02 - AGRICOLA ELTER

### IDENTIFICATION OF THE CASE STUDY

Case number: **IT-02**

Name of company: **AZ. AGRICOLA ELTER**

Title of the case study:

**AGRI ELTER-An example of heroic olive-growing**

### MAIN DATA OF THE COMPANY

#### **Country**

- Italy

#### **Company**

- Individual company

#### **Farming Activity**

- Cultivation

#### **Direct selling way**

- Direct selling in farm

## **SELF – INTRODUCTION OF THE FARMER**

I'm the owner of Azienda Agricola Francesco Elter, an organic farm located in Calci on Pisa Montains, in Tuscany. Our main product is organic extra virgin olives oil, that we obtain from the cultivation of 4000 olive trees in a close system process. In addition to cultivating olives, we have an oil mill where we produce extra virgin olive oil. Finally we sell our product directly in the company and we take care to communicate the value of our product through tastings

## **CHANGES / INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS ADOPTED**

Since the beginning the farm have worked with the aim of obtaining high quality oil. In the oil mill, starting from olives, were obtained different oils with different organoleptic characteristics. This is possible by working separately the olives of different varieties. The oils obtained from each variety are characteristic and have different aromas and flavors. To valorize these different products was necessary to adopt a communication strategy, explaining the quality of the oil through tasting and combinations with food so that the oil is considered an ingredient and not just a condiment. The farmer realize the tasting activity in the farm shop.

## **WHY AND HOW YOU DECIDED TO INTRODUCE STRATEGY CHANGES / INNOVATIONS**

Considering that the main objective is the quality of oil and the farmer is very interested in increasing quality it was useful to introduce an oil mill to produce oil directly on farms. This allows control of the production in all its phases. Customers can see how the oil is born and follow the process from the olive to the bottle. Knowing the product and the process through which it is obtained leads to customer loyalty.

## **WHAT OBSTACLES DID YOU MEET**

The biggest obstacles are due to bureaucracy. The procedure for obtaining the authorizations to build the oil mill and to start the production are sometimes very long. Another obstacle concerns the difficulty of the consumer to approach our proposal on oil: traditionally extra virgin olive oil is a seasoning product, and the consumer is not able to discern differences from one oil to another. The mission of the farmer is to change this practice by teaching the consumer that there isn't just one oil but many different oils (500 olive cultivars are available) and it can be used not only as a condiment but also as an ingredient.



## EVALUATION OF THE RESULTS

We are satisfied to have acquired new regular customers and above all we are proud to have spread greater awareness of the oil among the consumers themselves. With our work based on communication of oil culture and tasting oil we have increased the knowledge of this important product. Now people are able to recognize different oils and they can appreciate the peculiarities of each of them. A more aware consumer is a more demanding consumer: this will lead to the development of the high quality oil market.

## WHAT WOULD YOU DO DIFFERENT AND WHAT ARE THE PERSPECTIVES IN YOUR MIND

We can be satisfied with what we have done so far. In the beginning we spent the most part of our energy to build the oil mill and maybe we left out aspects of disclosure and sale. We understood that it's important to produce a high quality oil but that it's even more important that customers recognize and appreciate this quality .

## FINAL SENTENCES

Work every time to pursuing an improvement and growth, maintaining values on which it is based: quality, attention to detail and especially environmental and economic sustainability.

## Suggestions for other farmers

Our farm is located in a low-income area where olive cultivation is very difficult mainly due to the orography. In this context it is necessary to work on the enhancement of the products and it is necessary to communicate the quality of the product. The enhancement of products is a tool for maintaining and enhancing the territory and the landscape which, due to their peculiarity, have an inestimable and non-monetizable value. It is important to spread the culture of oil and all that is connected to it; this is possible with tastings and training.



## IT03 - KATIA-KM0

### IDENTIFICATION OF THE CASE STUDY

Case number: **IT-03**

Name of company: **KATIA-KM0**

Title of the case study:

**From hen to consumer - Short chain in eggs production**

### MAIN DATA OF THE COMPANY

#### **Country**

- Italy

#### **Company**

- Individual company

#### **Farming Activity**

- Animal breeding

#### **Direct selling way**

- Direct selling in farm



## SELF – INTRODUCTION OF THE FARMER

KATIA-KM0 is a family business founded by my grandfather who has carried it on throughout his life. For many years the company, although open, was no longer productive because the daughters, my mother and my aunt, did not want to continue with the full-time business and took different paths. The company consists of 22 hectares in the area of Baratti near the sea, in a rather strategic area to develop activities related to agriculture such as camping. The land remained uncultivated for several years until in 2020 I, who in the meantime had been unemployed, with the support of my mother decided to dedicate myself to the land. After the breeding activity we also started with the direct sale of fruit and vegetables with a counter that during the summer season is open every day. In the autumn months we harvest the olives for the production of extra virgin olive oil which is another of our productions. Everything was done step by step, one step at a time and today we are quite happy because now we are known in the area and we have an increasingly important clientele. The sale of fresh vegetables and fruit over the counter helped us get to know each other.

## CHANGES / INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS ADOPTED

The farmer mainly invested in chicken farming. It was the business with which the grandfather had also started and thanks to which he was able to put together the heritage made up of land that today is the basis of our company. Therefore the farmer have always believed that direct selling was essential for the business both to develop the company but also to help it establish itself in the area. It has certainly been an incentive for our work to both improve and grow. There were some obstacles to accomplishing all this and as I said earlier the biggest problem was finding a vet who specialized in poultry farming. However, the farm were supported by the responsible of the institutional offices to which the farmer turned to obtain permits and start the business.

## WHY AND HOW YOU DECIDED TO INTRODUCE STRATEGY CHANGES / INNOVATIONS

This idea was born because in our territory there is a high demand for fresh eggs but no company is structured for the production of eggs. So, the farmer started with a small laying hen farm. The first idea was to raise some laying hens to make a chicken coop and nothing more.

Therefore, the objective was to create a short supply chain based on a new production and oriented to a wide target of consumers, above all during the summertime.



## WHAT OBSTACLES DID YOU MEET

The process to activate the company was rather difficult and long and after we obtained the permits to start our business we had problems finding a veterinarian specialized in the poultry sector who could review and sign our self-control plan. 8 months of company activity has been lost because it was not possible to find a vet. Katia has also searched in other regions of Italy, especially in the North where the farming of laying hens is more widespread. Finally, Katia was able to start with the breeding and it was the first to breed laying hens on the ground with organic method.

## EVALUATION OF THE RESULTS

Yes, in general I am satisfied with the results even if obviously there are some critical aspects such as seasonality. There is also seasonality in egg production and there are periods when hens produce smaller quantities of eggs than others when production is higher. Unfortunately, this does not allow us to always satisfy customer demand as we would like. Unfortunately, in the last year we have had a very substantial increase in production costs, especially for the purchase of feed and this has forced us to increase sales prices, albeit slightly, in order to be able to re-enter production costs and obtain small margins. of earnings. Fortunately, our customers have understood and accepted these small adjustments because with us they share the idea of a healthy diet and of known origin. We believe in the principles of healthy eating and direct sales as a tool to meet the needs of the producer and the consumer at the same time and our business is in line with these principles. In these times when the prices of many foods have risen especially for beef, many customers are oriented to consume more eggs as a source of animal protein.

## WHAT WOULD YOU DO DIFFERENT AND WHAT ARE THE PERSPECTIVES IN YOUR MIND

In the future, the company will probably be fully owned by me and my goal is to give work to my family members and to expand also considering the strategic position in which my land is located a few hundred meters from the sea by developing services for tourists. I am certainly thinking of innovative projects for the company but I do not forget the link with the territory and with the past since everything comes from my grandparents' work. I would like to develop the company by creating services for tourists who are very numerous in these areas especially in summer.



Already for next year I plan to organize some tastings in the company of products of our production. I am thinking of the tourist reception activity in the form of agri-camping in order to offer the customer a rustic and natural environment where he can relax, where he has contact with nature and where he can eat healthy food. I would like customers to discover a different and more genuine way than what unfortunately is often imposed on us today.

## FINAL SENTENCES

The way of the direct selling is was the best solution for our little farming activity. The effort to reach the quality and traceability of our product was rewarded by the commercial results.

## Suggestions for other farmers

I would suggest that they take the plunge not to be afraid to undertake an activity they believe in. When I decided to start the business I was not always understood and someone tried to discourage me by presenting me with a myriad of problems but the closest people have always believed in me because knowing me they knew that the link with this territory and with the tradition of my grandparents it was very strong for me and could guide me in my choices. It is not an easy path full of obstacles to overcome and problems to solve, but with perseverance and determination and I add a lot of passion, very satisfying results can be achieved. I would like to suggest starting with a small project to start and then develop and expand it. The effort will pay off. In my project of offering product tasting I think of using products from other companies in the area, especially from companies of young entrepreneurs. I would like to network with them to ensure that all together we can also develop our territory.



## IT04 - COOPERTATIVA IL FORTETO

### IDENTIFICATION OF THE CASE STUDY

Case number: **IT-04**

Name of company: **COOPERTATIVA IL FORTETO**

Title of the case study:

**FORTETO-The supermarket of the countryside**

### MAIN DATA OF THE COMPANY

#### Country

- Italy

#### Company

- Associated company

#### Farming Activity

- Cultivation
- Animal breeding
- Product's transformation on farm

#### Direct selling way

- Direct selling in farm
- Direct selling in own or common shop



## SELF – INTRODUCTION OF THE FARMER

Il Forteto is an agricultural cooperative founded in 1977. Today it has 72 members, including workers and contractors and over 80 employees. Over the years, the cooperative has specialized in the production of fresh and aged cheeses, and is one of the most important dairies within the Consortium for the Protection of Pecorino Toscano DOP. But the cooperative has never betrayed its agricultural vocation and in the almost 500 hectares of property on the hills of Mugello, between the municipalities of Vicchio and Dicomano, cattle are raised and fodder and wheat are produced. The agricultural sector is completed by the cultivation of apples, from which we also produce an excellent juice, the cultivation of vegetables for direct sale in the company shop and the production of extra virgin olive oil from our olive trees located in the most hilly part of the property.

The flours we produce are ground in the company's stone mill, are on sale in the shop and allow us to produce wood-fired bread that has always been one of our pride.

## CHANGES / INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS ADOPTED

Il Forteto was born as a company that produces cheeses. At the beginning it was a small, very artisanal dairy. Over the years it has grown and introduced technical innovations and acquired professionalism. The dairy was and remains the forteto's most important production. The dairy was then joined by other equally important productions. The animal breeding activity was introduced and developed with the breeding of Chianina cattle which finds favor with customers for the quality and characteristics of its meat. Fruit growing was introduced with the cultivation of an apple orchard for the production of apples which are highly valued for their freshness and quality. Subsequently the cooperative started the activity of selling plants in our garden and more recently we started the administration and consumption on the spot of products in our restaurant. I am not talking about a restaurant because in fact it is more of an agricultural restaurant where it is possible to taste and consume the products of our production. With the restaurant business, the cycle of the short supply chain from producer to consumer is completed. Those who come to eat here at the Forteto, know that they find a very special restaurant, perhaps with less table service, but where it is possible to taste the meat produced on the farm, and the pasta obtained from flours produced on the farm. Today, when consumers are increasingly attentive to the quality and origin of products and food, we find full satisfaction for their needs. The positive response of customers to our offer is not linked to an idea of savings but of product quality. In fact, for the most part our customers do not place as the first element of choice the economic saving but the quality of the products they consume and buy. And we work to guarantee and respect the quality of the product.



The company is a particularly articulated company. They range from the production of cheeses, to cattle breeding, to the production of fruit. Because of our heterogeneity, we meet a lot of interest from schools. Thanks to this interest, in recent years we have developed the part of the didactic visits especially aimed at students of agricultural institutes and cooking schools. Students are accompanied on a path that crosses all stages of production from breeding or cultivation to transformation to processing in the kitchen.

## **WHY AND HOW YOU DECIDED TO INTRODUCE STRATEGY CHANGES / INNOVATIONS**

Those who founded the Cooperative introduced direct sales because they certainly had the need to sell the products they produced, to obtain job and economic satisfaction. Initially the intent of the company was to put the products it produced on the market making them available to local consumers who were already oriented to purchase on the farm for some agricultural products. So it cannot be said that everything was born to develop the concept of "short supply chain" considering that in these areas the habit of buying from the producer has always been a reality. The speech of the short chain was born later. Subsequently, the concept of a short supply chain took shape because the consumer also became sensitive to this topic. And when there was more awareness in the consumer and the need for local products increased, Il Forteto was already oriented in this direction and was already structured to provide the customer with a satisfactory direct sales service.

## **WHAT OBSTACLES DID YOU MEET**

The most important problems in the management of the point of sale and catering is the uncertainty of the agricultural sector for the supply of products. As we know in agriculture, nothing is taken for granted: meteorological and seasonal situations can occur that affect crops and productions. The difficulty in always maintaining the same standards both from a quantitative and qualitative point of view can have a negative impact on sales and consumption in the company. In our shop and in our restaurant we also offer and use agricultural and agri-food products supplied by local producers. We have become a reference point for many local producers who have become our suppliers.



Unfortunately, it happens that even the productions deriving from our suppliers are subject to fluctuations in terms of quantity and quality due to the uncertainty to which the agricultural sector is subject. However, we are optimistic and we see a future of growth as in recent years many of our suppliers are young farmers who are very interested in the health aspects of food and sensitive to the cultivation of the good and close on the table.

## **EVALUATION OF THE RESULTS**

We are not alone. More than twenty agricultural and agri-food companies in Tuscany give their products to the Forteto. From milk producers, sheep and cattle, such as the Tuscan Pastoralist Producers Association, to the horticultural companies that supply our greenhouse. This is one of the most important result along the development process of our cooperative.

The relationship with the producers has always been strong and is in the DNA of this cooperative, also for this reason, for the production of our cheeses we use mainly Tuscan milk and in any case 100% Italian. Another important result is the constant improvement of the quality of our products. Il Forteto is one of the 18 Tuscan dairies that is part of the Consorzio Tutela del Pecorino Toscano DOP.

## **WHAT WOULD YOU DO DIFFERENT AND WHAT ARE THE PERSPECTIVES IN YOUR MIND**



Those who want to take this path must not aim for and expect immediate and certain earnings. He must be convinced of what he is doing, especially the project he intends to carry out because, as I have already said, the agricultural sector is a sector where there is certainly nothing. If you are convinced of what you are doing you can overcome many obstacles thanks to the important values linked to agriculture and food. Young people are the future. One of our most important objectives is to involve young people and to transmit the values of agriculture and good food. We try to achieve our goal through teaching. We have been very successful with schools and our teaching proposal is very much appreciated. Our very spacious environment with open spaces also allows us to welcome children from kindergartens and primary schools. Contact with animals and the countryside is very educational as well as fun for them. Thus we begin to train an aware consumer who knows how the products he feeds on are born and manages to appreciate their value. An activity like ours, if well conducted and developed, can be an added value for the territory through the involvement of local companies, as we have already said. It allows us to maintain a bond with the past as well so as not to forget where we come from.

## FINAL SENTENCES

The evolution of our cooperative allowed to overcome many difficulties and problems. IL FORTETO is today one of the most important landmark of our territory. All our products reach an high quality and are appreciated by the consumers. The commercial network includes both the direct selling and important partners.

## Suggestions for other farmers

In our experience it was very important aim on the multifunctionality of our mission. We think that this is one of the challenge for the future. The farming activity cannot be limited to produce following only the productive yield. Quality, touristic and gastronomic valorization, social function, are important part of a successful entrepreneurial activity in agriculture



*Some products on sale at the Il Forteto's shop*



## IT05 – MOLARE’S

### IDENTIFICATION OF THE CASE STUDY

Case number: **IT-05**

Name of company: **MOLARE’S**

Title of the case study:

**Multifunctional farm**

### MAIN DATA OF THE COMPANY

#### Country

- Italy

#### Company

- Individual company
- Family company

#### Farming Activity

- Cultivation
- Animal breeding
- Product’s transformation on farm

#### Direct selling way

- Direct selling in farm
- Direct selling in farmer markets

## SELF – INTRODUCTION OF THE FARMER

Molare's is a "birrificio agricolo" ("agricultural brewery"), located in Cremolino (AL), in the Alto Monferrato region of Piemonte (Italy) and owned by the 28-year-old Caterina Ferrario.

Molare's has around 90 hectares, including barley fields from which 5 different typologies of beers are produced and 3 hectares of native vineyards (Dolcetto and Cortese) for the wine production. Moreover, the farm has 30 beehives and a tap room, where they directly sell wines and beers and make tastings with food pairings. Periodically, Caterina organizes gastronomic events, with local producers and artists.

Molare's is defined as "birrificio agricolo" as they produce minimum of 70% of the barley used for the beers. Apart from the hops, the entire supply chain of the beer is internal and they plant on average 1 hectare of barley per year.

Caterina studied at the University of Gastronomic Sciences in Pollenzo, she holds a Master's in wine marketing and she is wine sommelier.

Molare's has 9 employees: Caterina, one manager of the vineyards and 7 employees for the agri-touristic part (chefs and waiters). Moreover, Caterina's parents occasionally help at the farm.

At Molare's, the entire production chain is internal, as well as the selling of the products, sold for almost the totality directly on the farm or in local markets. Beer is the most sold product, mainly in the tap room. Caterina benefits from being one of the few beer producer of the area, historically devoted to wine-production. They produce according to the organic philosophy, but they don't have an organic certification. They don't sell through online channels.

## CHANGES / INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS ADOPTED

Molare's was initially created by Caterina's dad, who used to work in the industrial sector. When Caterina was studying at the University of Gastronomic Sciences, her dad became passionate about agriculture and together they started some rural hobbies (beekeeping and beer production). Without any expectation, Molare's soon became a professional farm.

When Caterina took over in 2019, she decided to buy a farmstead and renovate the farm. Thanks to the financial help from the family, some regional funds as a female young entrepreneur and some bank loans, Caterina managed to introduce some innovations: she enlarged the tap room, invested in new machineries (tractor) and installed solar panels. When Caterina bought the farmstead, she inherited from the neighbors three hectares of local vineyards: she decided to take care of them and started producing wine.



## WHY AND HOW YOU DECIDED TO INTRODUCE STRATEGY CHANGES / INNOVATIONS

According to Caterina, many of the innovations that she introduced came naturally. For example in the initial plan, she didn't consider to include an agri-touristic part. However, as Alto Monferrato saw an increase in tourists after the Covid-19 pandemics, the demand to visit Molare's and directly taste the products increased and Caterina decided to introduce the tap room.

Caterina decided to base the selling strategy directly on farm, to have more independence from third parties and increase the revenues.

## WHAT OBSTACLES DID YOU MEET

Initially, the majority of challenges came from the financial situation: according to Caterina, the financial support from the parents and the loans from the bank were essential to install her activity, especially considering that obtaining European funds is very bureaucratic and time-consuming and often not successful.

Extreme weather events posed also serious challenges. In 2019, she had to face the consequences of a heavy flooding. The road that leads to the farm was condemned and they had to close for some months. Similarly, the pandemic of Covid-19 impacted the production and decrease the revenues.

According to Caterina, managing a farm requires a good problem-solving attitude, especially when it comes to managing the staff or the relations with clients. Moreover, while working with the parents, natural tensions can arise.

## EVALUATION OF THE RESULTS

Caterina is very satisfied with her activity. In her opinion, working as a rural entrepreneur in direct selling requires many competences, including good relational skills to work directly with the public and the capacity to use social media effectively. Moreover, knowing many languages is an important asset.



## WHAT WOULD YOU DO DIFFERENT AND WHAT ARE THE PERSPECTIVES IN YOUR MIND

Caterina is very satisfied of the choices made in the past. In the future, she would like to expand the farm and introduce new changes: for example, she would like to create some rooms for overnight stays.

## FINAL SENTENCES

Molare's is an inspiring example of a multifunctional farm based on on-farm processing and direct selling. Molare's concept – based on farming, beekeeping, transforming and selling products on-farm and agritourism - highlights the importance of diversifying revenues for an economically viable farming activity.

Caterina is a model of the young farmer from our era: well-educated, with good relational and social media skills, aware of the potential of agriculture to valorize the territory, create social dynamism and preserve the environment.

Molare's, a successful example of a farm entirely based on direct selling, shows the importance of creating on-farm experiences for the public (e.g. tastings, events). Gastronomy has a role to play in this direction.

## Suggestions for other farmers

When asked to provide a piece of advice to a young farmer interesting in short food supply chains, Caterina stressed the importance of having passion for the rural work and a positive attitude to step up to challenges and overcome difficulties. Moreover, it's important to be aware that working as a farmer can be hard as there are no rest day or holidays. However, passion and commitment are the key ingredients.



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# GERMANY





## DE01 - HOFGUTKAPELLENHOF

### IDENTIFICATION OF THE CASE STUDY

Case number: **DE-01**

Name of company: **HofgutKapellenhof**

Title of the case study:

**HofgutKapellenhof - regional organic sheep dairy in the Rhine-Main area**

### MAIN DATA OF THE COMPANY

#### Country

- Germany

#### Company

- Individual company

#### Farming Activity

- Cultivation
- Animal breeding
- Product's transformation on farm

#### Direct selling way

- Direct selling in farm
- Direct selling in farmer markets
- Direct selling in own or common shop



## SELF – INTRODUCTION OF THE FARMER

The farm is a certified organic farm. It is located in the state of Hesse, in Hammersbach. It is a certified organic farm and the farm manager Mr. Kütke is studied Dipl. Ing. Agrar. It employs four full-time employees and 12 temporary workers. The company does not employ family labor, it is 100% outside labor. In 1998 was the beginning of organic farming. The farm manages about 75 hectares of arable land and grassland: cultivation of wheat, barley, spelt and field beans These are used as feed grain or also as food grain.

A main income brings the breeding of sheep (Lacaune sheep flock), for milk and lamb meat sales. He owns a sheep dairy and makes his own products (sheep cheese, yogurt, fresh cheese, ice cream, sausage, etc.).

He offers a farm-gate sale (self-service store (24hours)). Direct marketing 15-10% of the total turnover.

The products are marketed through different partners in the region (e.g., supermarkets). The farm offers farm tours, cheese and wine evenings.

## CHANGES / INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS ADOPTED

Since July 2018, the company produces organic sheep cheese and has the claim as the only organic sheep milk cheese dairy in the Rhine-Main area to produce high-quality and exclusive cheese creations. Awards at various competitions show that he are on the right track.

Opening of farm sale/self-service shop (self-service; 7 days a week, 24 hours a day)

Introduction of offer of farm tours, cheese and wine evenings: Knowledge transfer: exclusive look behind the scenes, get to know farm processes and learn interesting facts about organic farming. From the stable /meadow, to the milking parlor, the cheese dairy to the finished product, all processes are explained.

Wetland biotope project: A kind of Noah's Ark is to be created on an area of approx. 6 hectares. Here, a retreat for endangered birds, amphibians, insects and plants is to be created for the native flora and fauna.



## WHY AND HOW YOU DECIDED TO INTRODUCE STRATEGY CHANGES / INNOVATIONS

The impulse for the reestablishment of the farm was the memory that the Kapellenhof had been run as an agricultural business since time immemorial. It was only in the 1970s that the farm had ceased to operate. We wanted to continue the tradition and practice agriculture again.

In 1998, the farm entered organic farming with only two hectares of arable land. Today it cultivates about 75 hectares of arable land and grassland in Hammersbach and the surrounding area.

Strategy changes/innovations have come about on their own. Since it is an organic farm, animal husbandry was needed. Sheep milk products did not exist in the Rhine-Main area before. So, the decision was not difficult to establish a sheep milk processing at the location. Economic constraints led to the development of direct marketing since direct marketing is where the added value is highest. However, Covid's operation was more or less steered into this situation on its own. In addition, the protection of species and biodiversity is far in the front of the farm. Thus, the decision was made to create a 6-hectare wetland where nature can find a retreat that is not intensively farmed.

The impulse for the establishment of the sheep herd and the sheep dairy was the consideration that animal manure for their own fields are needed to maintain and improve soil fertility in the long term. Only in this way can ensure the basic ideas of organic farming with a circular economy.

The first breeding animals of the Lacaune sheep flock come from a breeders' cooperative from Auvergne in France. The decision much decided on the robust Lacaune sheep because they are optimally adapted to climatic conditions and have a good milk yield.

The quality of the products is very important and close to the heart. For this reason, it also participates in competitions with its products.

## WHAT OBSTACLES DID YOU MEET

Actually, it can be said that the operation has encountered few obstacles. Since the farm owner is financially secure, there were no financing problems. There are always hurdles to overcome with the authorities. However, the strategy in all projects is to involve the authorities as early as possible. For this reason, we can develop suitable strategies together from the beginning and everyone is satisfied. As the company has grown with Covid or during Covid and is one of the profiteers, it has had no problems reaching the market. On the contrary, the company had to see that it could meet the demand.



## EVALUATION OF THE RESULTS

It is difficult to answer this question. Since there were no established structures on the farm due to the young age of the farm, the farm manager knows no other condition than the further development and implementation of new ways.

## WHAT WOULD YOU DO DIFFERENT AND WHAT ARE THE PERSPECTIVES IN YOUR MIND

The farm manager thinks that, in retrospect, he should have focused on direct marketing from the beginning. However, it is difficult to judge what would have happened without Covid. That's why it's hard to judge. A certain flexibility to adapt to changing conditions is essential in today's world, he thinks. See Corona and the Ukraine crisis.

On the farm, the expansion of direct marketing and the creation of a farm restaurant has absolute priority in the future. The farm manager assumes that it will become more and more important to create reasonable alternatives. Customers must be convinced of the quality in order to pay a justifiably high price.

## FINAL SENTENCES

The farm manager says: "My experience is that we have to be mega flexible. Just because I have set my mind on a certain product and am convinced of it, doesn't mean that the customers will also like it. Especially in the beginning, you have to constantly readjust and be ready to change. That helped me a lot. Above all, you have to find your own way, stand out, find a gap, but not be too specific."

## Suggestions for other farmers

In any case, you have to have a great desire for it and be prepared to have to fight against a lot of resistance. There are a lot of things that come your way that you didn't expect beforehand. Absolute focus must be on product quality and reliability. Large fluctuations in both topics are absolute no go's. You have to be the type for that. As nice as the whole thing is, you have to approach it realistically and critically.



## DE02 - BIOHOFLECKER

### IDENTIFICATION OF THE CASE STUDY

Case number: **DE-02**

Name of company: **BiohofLecker**

Title of the case study:

**BiohofLecker - Organic family farm**

### MAIN DATA OF THE COMPANY

#### Country

- Germany

#### Company

- Family company
- Associated company

#### Farming Activity

- Cultivation
- Animal breeding
- Product's transformation on farm

#### Direct selling way

- Direct selling in farmer markets
- Online selling

## SELF – INTRODUCTION OF THE FARMER

Biohof Lecker is an organic family farm.

A conversion to organic farming took place in 1994.

Three farms are managed:

- The Urbanhof in Niederheining (free-range chickens; pasta manufacture; LaufenerLandweizen).
- The Lirzerhof in Schiffmoning (dairy cows; farm dairy)
- And the farm in Hinterau (arable farming; orchards)

The farm grows or produces products such as eggs, pasta, vegetables, apples, dairy products, etc.

A big focus and a main source of income is the so called Ökokiste, a food delivery service. The farm is also a member of the Ökokiste association. The own products can be purchased as well at the stalls at the weekly/farmers markets. More than 90% of the farm's turnover from direct marketing comes from the organic box delivery service. The rest comes from sales at the weekly markets. The Ökokisten delivery service was founded in 2009.

In addition, we offer large selection of recipes on the homepage

## CHANGES / INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS ADOPTED

Biohof Lecker has adopted several innovative approaches by changing production methods, developing new products and engaging with like-minded partners in the region. A big innovation was converting to organic farming. One of the innovative products are the cultivation of Laufener Landweizen, an old cultivar mentioned as early as the 16th century. Despite the fact that Laufener Landweizen is mentioned on the slow food list for regional varieties, only about 20 farms in Europe or probably in the world wide are producing it today. Depending on the size of the area, we cultivate the Laufener Landweizen annually on approx. 2 ha. The grain products are marketed via the eco-box delivery service. Partly the flour is also processed by the nearest baker. The breads are also marketed through the delivery service.

The farm is a partner of the UNESCO Berchtesgadener Land biosphere region since 2022. The aim is to help shape and promote sustainable development in the Berchtesgadener Land region. This includes the implementation of many sustainability measures in the business processes of the company and we are acting as an ambassador for the biosphere region.



The "Gockelprojekt" since 2015: The background to this is the fact that male chicks of specialized breeds of laying hens are sorted out and killed after hatching. The company wants to do something about this unethical practice of industrial egg production. Among other things, it is contrary to the company's philosophy in dealing with living creatures. Therefore, at the BiohofLecker the male chicks are also raised.

The Biohof Lecker is a co-founder of the association Ökogenuss Waginger See in 2020. The aim of the association is to market organic products from the region via an online platform. Maintenance of the platform and logistics will be taken over by us.

We are also part of other initiatives and are contributing to climate protection through the Greensurance Foundation that is compensating greenhouse gas emissions through a moor project. The regional savings bank Sparkasse Berchtesgadener Land is financing a humus reclamation project, which is implemented on our farm.

## WHY AND HOW YOU DECIDED TO INTRODUCE STRATEGY CHANGES / INNOVATIONS

As an organic farm, sustainability and responsibility for future generations are very close at hand. With the membership in the Ökokistenverband and strengthened by the first common good balance sheet, the sustainability aspects that go beyond the organic production of food play an increasingly important role in the company's further development. It is important to participate in the goal of maximum climate warming by 1.5 °C as a company, to promote fair and equitable trade and to push regional economic cycles.

## WHAT OBSTACLES DID YOU MEET

Many of the corporate goals of the operation are not business oriented. The ability to achieve them depends on the financial resources that are available.

Practical obstacles of the production of Laufener Landweizen was to produce enough seeds. After two years, there were enough seeds so we could start producing our own.

An old variety like Laufener Landweizen requires high quality products and direct marketing of products in order to recover the costs. Although the old variety is very well adapted to the conditions in the region, modern varieties are characterized by a higher productivity. Nevertheless, the specialty products like pasta or bread increase the product range by adding a unique and interesting product to the delivery box.



## EVALUATION OF THE RESULTS

Working in a company that is "fit for grandchildren" offers a great deal of personal satisfaction. The company also communicates these values to the outside world and can thus achieve that employees also want to work within the company because they find personal fulfillment in meaningful work. Likewise, many of our customers honor the path of sustainability we follow.

## WHAT WOULD YOU DO DIFFERENT AND WHAT ARE THE PERSPECTIVES IN YOUR MIND

The current market situation is very volatile. A high demand in the corona years 2021 and 2022 meets the buying restraint in the current Ukraine conflict. The company will continue to follow its path, as it believes that sustainable business has a future!

## FINAL SENTENCES

Biohof Lecker has been operating its organic box delivery service since 2009. Meanwhile, it is well established in the market and still making exciting new experiences and insights.

## Suggestions for other farmers

Do it! Be authentic and live your values! The production of food always has a future.



## DE03 - DECKERSBIOHOF

### IDENTIFICATION OF THE CASE STUDY

Case number: **DE-03**

Name of company: **DeckersBiohof**

Title of the case study:

**Demeter organic farm and gardening**

### MAIN DATA OF THE COMPANY

#### Country

- **Germany**

#### Company

- **Individual company**

#### Farming Activity

- **Cultivation**
- **Product's transformation on farm**

#### Direct selling way

- **Direct selling in farm**
- **Direct selling in farmer markets**
- **Direct selling in own or common shop**
- **Online selling**



## SELF – INTRODUCTION OF THE FARMER

Christoph Decker, 38 years old, is a master gardener and manager of the organic farm.

The farm is located in Bühl (Baden-Württemberg), which is part of the Black Forest National Park Region.

The land has been cultivated according to Demeter principles since the early 1970s. Since 2004, the farm has been managed by von Deckers Biohof, also according to Demeter principles and values.

Number of employees: approx. 100, including 4 family members.

The farm participates and is involved in the organic model region "Mittelbaden+"; an action of the ministry of nutrition agriculture and consumer protection Baden-Württemberg.

The 20 hectares of arable land is divided as follows: ten hectares of open land, two hectares of orchards, and half a hectare of greenhouse facility. The remaining area is used for shrubs, hedges and habitat for insects, birds, etc.

The farm grows the following products itself: e.g. potatoes, various types of cabbage, onion plants, beets and cut lettuces. It buys other products from other regional organic partners and farms.

The products are marketed in different ways: through the farm store directly on the farm, which has existed since 2007. Also Deckers Biohof owns and runs its own managed organic markets in the region (Baden-Baden and Sinzheim) with homegrown and manufactured produce and additional products. Likewise, he sells his products through market stalls. Also exists an online shop with delivery service and very large focus on the organic boxes.

On the homepage exists a free offer of a large recipe selection.

## CHANGES / INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS ADOPTED

Expansion of direct marketing in the form of our delivery service.

Expansion of e-mobility in our fleet.

Expansion of the customer service and communications department.

## WHY AND HOW YOU DECIDED TO INTRODUCE STRATEGY CHANGES / INNOVATIONS

The reasons are/were:

- Strengthening of sales
- Closer contact with the end consumer
- More flexible adaptation to the sales market
- Faster response to new trends

Topic: E-mobility:

- Rising energy costs for combustion engines
- Independence from external influences in the energy sector (produce electricity yourself)

## WHAT OBSTACLES DID YOU MEET

- E-mobility: higher acquisition costs, shorter delivery range.
- Delivery service (direct marketing): extremely high personnel costs (finding employees)

## EVALUATION OF THE RESULTS

- Delivery service: very satisfied, higher sales of own agricultural products.
- E-mobility: expandable

## WHAT WOULD YOU DO DIFFERENT AND WHAT ARE THE PERSPECTIVES IN YOUR MIND

No changes need to be made in the delivery service; satisfied.

E-mobility: start focusing on e-mobility earlier, start expanding self-produced electricity earlier

## FINAL SENTENCES

The company has existed for about 30 years and has experience in the areas of store, weekly market, nursery, delivery service and administration. The combination of office management, customer service in the farm stores as well as customer service in the online store and directly at the source in the nursery, creates a holistic added value of know-how in our family business



## Suggestions for other farmers

- Create marketing concept and search/find reliable buyers
- Adjust annually
- Seek advice in cultivation and areas that cannot be covered by oneself
- Choose the most sustainable form of cultivation (organic cultivation)



*Christoph Decker in the company greenhouse with products from his own farm*



## DE04 – LAUTERACHER ALB-FELD-FRÜCHTE

### IDENTIFICATION OF THE CASE STUDY

Case number: **DE-04**

Name of company: **Lauteracher Alb-Feld-Früchte**

Title of the case study:

**Organic producers association for field crops**

### MAIN DATA OF THE COMPANY

#### Country

- **Germany**

#### Company

- **Family company**
- **Individual company**

#### Farming Activity

- **Cultivation**
- **Product's transformation on farm**

#### Direct selling way

- **Direct selling in farm**
- **Direct selling in own or common shop**
- **Online selling**

## **SELF – INTRODUCTION OF THE FARMER**

The company is located in Lauterach, a municipality in Baden-Württemberg. In Lauterach lentils are grown and processed since 1985.

In 2009, Lutz Mammel took over the "Alb-Leisa" branch of the business. Since 2014, this organic processing farm is called Lauteracher Alb-Feld-Früchte.

The company has employed four full-time employees and eight part-time employees. The farm is certified organic according to the guidelines of Bioland.

The farm grows the following products itself: e.g. Alb-Leisa - lentils from the Swabian Alb, buckwheat, camelina oil, noodles, linseed, hemp seed and naked barley.

Under the protected brand name Alb-Leisa, only organically grown lentils from the organic producers' association Alb-Leisa are sold by Lauteracher Alb-Feld-Früchte.

The field crops are supplied by more than 140 organic farms, which grow the organic raw materials on approximately 500 hectares of arable land in the Swabian Alb region.

The farm purchases additional products from other regional organic partners and farms.

The marketing of the products takes place through different channels. Since 2014, there is a farm store directly on the farm. There is also an online store through which the products can be purchased.

On the homepage there is a free offer of a large selection of recipes.

## **CHANGES / INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS ADOPTED**

- Founding of the Alb-Leisa eco-producers' association: the important goal of the foundation of the eco-producers' association is the economic efficiency of the lentil cultivation, thus permanent preservation on the Swabian Alb is possible.
- Possibility of propagation and cultivation of the old varieties of Alb lentils
- In addition, the diversity of crops in the area of cultivation is increased by the cultivation of buckwheat, camelina, linseed, millet and hemp.



## WHY AND HOW YOU DECIDED TO INTRODUCE STRATEGY CHANGES / INNOVATIONS

The cultivation of special crops such as lentils, buckwheat, etc. requires special knowledge and complex and expensive technology, especially in the processing operations. This is hardly affordable for a single farm. Therefore, these processes and expenses are borne by many farms in the producer group. This enables stable payout prices, above-average income contributions and a very good group dynamic in the community.

## WHAT OBSTACLES DID YOU MEET

- Problems at member farms due to highly fluctuating yields and complicated cultivation methods.
- Strong dependence on weather influences, e.g., the rainy year 2021 caused a poor harvest.
- Necessary cultivation break for lentils (only every 6 years) reduces the availability of the product.

## EVALUATION OF THE RESULTS

- Cultivation of lentils, buckwheat etc. is safer and more interesting in a producer group.
- High product and processing quality at Lauteracher-Alb Feld-Früchte secures and increases market share.
- Lentil cultivation increases biodiversity in the fields, creates awareness among growers (families) and consumers.

## WHAT WOULD YOU DO DIFFERENT AND WHAT ARE THE PERSPECTIVES IN YOUR MIND

- Optimize on-farm organizational structures
- Inspire even more organic farms in the Swabian Alb to grow lentils.
- Add additional crops to the range in order to have further footholds and reduce cultivation risks.



## FINAL SENTENCES

Visionary approach to legume cultivation (since 1985) today meets the spirit of the times and the need for climate-smart agriculture.

The cultivation of lentils, buckwheat strengthens biodiversity, ecology and economy of the farms involved.

If the taste of the product and the quality of its processing are good, the consumer will accept a higher price.

## Suggestions for other farmers

- Product and grower must be authentic.
- Cultivation and processing must be honest and transparent.
- If the consumer can recognize an added value (also an ecological one), he is also willing to pay a higher price for it.



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# THE NETHERLANDS





## NL01 – DE STADSGROENTEBPER

### IDENTIFICATION OF THE CASE STUDY

Case number: **NL-01**

Name of company: **De Stadsgroenteboer**

Title of the case study:

**CSA De Stadsgroenteboer in Amsterdam**

### MAIN DATA OF THE COMPANY

#### **Country**

- **The Netherlands**

#### **Company**

- **Individual company**

#### **Farming Activity**

- **Cultivation**
- **Product's transformation on farm**

#### **Direct selling way**

- **Direct selling in farm**



## SELF – INTRODUCTION OF THE FARMER

Andres Martinez Jara is originally from Colombia but now he works as a farmer, producer and entrepreneur in the outskirts of Amsterdam. In the end of 2018 together with a group of friends (all alumni of the University of Gastronomic Sciences in Pollenzo, Italy), they took over De Stadsgroenteboer, a project of 1 ha of community supported agriculture, where they practice regenerative and bio-intensive farming techniques. They grow more than 15 different vegetables, 14 herbs and 10 different edible flowers. They deliver a crate of freshly harvested vegetables to the community members every week. From the Covid-19 crises in 2020 he also started the company “JARA”, to preserve unsold vegetables due to the closing of the HORECA sector. JARA is now working with 14 different farmers who grow diverse varieties vegetables (greet tomatoes, unconventional chilis...), the company buys them in advance and when the vegetables are harvested, they transform them into different sauces which they sell directly to consumers. The transformation of the sauces happens at Kitchen Republic, a community kitchen which supports sustainable food start-ups in Amsterdam.

## CHANGES / INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS ADOPTED

In Stadsgroenteboer they are experimenting a lot, for example with intercropping. The more varieties you have, the more harvest you get, the easier it is to control weeds and pests and the more CO<sub>2</sub> the soil absorbs. The more plants you get in the soil, the healthier it gets. An example are spring onions interplanted with carrots or tomatoes with basil.

With JARA, the Dutch is a culture who really likes dips (for bread, vegetables...) but on the market there are not so many healthy dips. JARA's products don't have any additives nor preservatives. That also means that spoilage gets quicker, but they accept this as part of the concept of the product. Also they developed the “FAVAMOLE” to counteract the unsustainable consumption of Avocado. They are making a guacamole-like dip out of fava beans. They use fresh fava beans but they are now experimenting with dried beans as well.

## WHY AND HOW YOU DECIDED TO INTRODUCE STRATEGY CHANGES / INNOVATIONS

Intercropping at De Stadsgroenteboer: in order to improve the soil's quality and to increase the production on farm.

JARA's sauces: to develop sustainable and healthier sauces / dips for the market.



## WHAT OBSTACLES DID YOU MEET

At De Stadsgroenteboer the challenge is to be able to feed more people. They have now 0.8 hectares and legally they are not even considered farmers but “gardeners”. They have 200 members and a waiting list of 450 people. The need to scale it up by getting some extra land but still without using tractors or intensive agricultural practices. Manpower is not a problem because there is a lot of people who wants to support the project as volunteer, as freelance farmers and also as partners of the CSA.

The obstacles at JARA: first of all the name. At the beginning it was called HERBANO, but they didn't check the trademark because they didn't really believe in the project. But when it started to grow and sell in Germany, they got sued for using a name already on the market. So they had to change quickly and they registered JARA trademark in the Benelux.

Another obstacle at JARA is communication and marketing: they want to change the system and don't want to be dragged into social media, but they don't know which strategy to adopt yet. They are doing a lot but they are not telling enough.

## EVALUATION OF THE RESULTS

Stadsgroenteboer: Looking back they are very happy with the amount of people they are feeding. They started with 35 people and now have 200. The first year they didn't have a salary but now they have, so that is also an achievement. They don't have a high salary but they have the best food ever, so from that aspect they feel very rich and they do what they love.

JARA: they work with more than 8 tons of vegetables, plus some limited editions to use vegetable that are refused by the market (for example “ugly carrots”), etc. So they are playing a huge role in food waste reduction. They have also contributed in increasing local biodiversity by asking farmers to grow unconventional vegetable varieties.

## WHAT WOULD YOU DO DIFFERENT AND WHAT ARE THE PERSPECTIVES IN YOUR MIND

Stadsgroenteboer: do a proper research of your surroundings and geography before starting. They didn't do it, so they were lucky for the water (in Netherlands it rains a lot) but for example they had a cold wind from one side and plants were very stressed. So they had to build an edge to protect them. Also understand the soil you have and do one year of green manure before starting the agricultural activities.



JARA: he would have done a proper business plan at the beginning and a strategy. They have it now but at the beginning they were just coping with the Covid-19 situation and see how they could help in that situation.

## FINAL SENTENCES

Positive evaluation: looking back at what he did, he followed his dream together with his friends and after the initial challenges things are now going very well.

The future looks bright: there is a lot to do for the following years at the Stadsgroenteboerand for JARA they want to extend selling in the whole Netherlands.

## Suggestions for other farmers

Go for it! Don't be afraid of starting your farm. Before that "live the farm" not only in the nice summer weather but also in the winter times. When it's rainy, windy and cold: that's also to take into consideration. But if you put your energy working towards it, you can achieve it. Passion also has to be supported by knowledge: so make your research as well. Nowadays there are many people who wants to get their hands into the soil, so it's a good moment for it.

For product transformation the advice is to put the hours of people working on it in the products as well and the unforeseen costs as of the beginning.



## NL02 – REMEKER

### IDENTIFICATION OF THE CASE STUDY

Case number: **NL-02**

Name of company: **Remeker**

Title of the case study:

**Remeker: Sustainable cheesemaking**

### MAIN DATA OF THE COMPANY

#### Country

- The Netherlands

#### Company

- Individual company

#### Farming Activity

- Animal breeding
- Product's transformation on farm

#### Direct selling way

- Direct selling in farm
- Online selling



## SELF – INTRODUCTION OF THE FARMER

Peter Van de Voort is a young farmer of 35 and cheesemaker in Lunteren. He produces raw milk organic cow cheese with natural crust. In the farm they have 60 young cows and 90 productive Jersey cows farmed without antibiotics. At the farm they only feed the cows with grass and some grains (rye mainly) that they grow at the farm itself. They don't use any soy or corn. He has taken over Remeker, his family farm, which has existed since the 1600s! They sell their cheese at the farm shop and also in Eden they have a small farm with a farm shop, plus they sell online to consumer and they sell to other cheese shops in Netherlands, Germany and Belgium. He knows the shops owners personally, so that he knows exactly what goes well and wrong. The prices are the same both when they sell directly to consumers and to the small shops, so there is no discount for wholesalers.

## CHANGES / INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS ADOPTED

When he started working at the farm they transitioned from plastic cheese crust to natural crust. During the transition they were facing different challenges and doing a lot of trial and error.

## WHY AND HOW YOU DECIDED TO INTRODUCE STRATEGY CHANGES / INNOVATIONS

The plastic cover worked perfectly in the past, because it protected the cheese despite changes of humidity and it was good to produce a large volume. But this clashed a lot with all the effort they were putting in keeping the farming process so natural. They were feeding the cows with grass and grains, using no antibiotics and then the first thing they would do after making the cheese was to cover it with plastic glue.

Instead of using plastic, they could have washed the cheeses like in the mountains but they didn't want to make mountain cheese. Instead, they wanted to keep making a Gouda-based recipe cheese: they wanted the cheese to have a crust and not being so salty.

One day, one of the cheesemakers suggested using ghee to cover the crust and this worked very well, so they adopted it as part of the standard production process.



## WHAT OBSTACLES DID YOU MEET

The natural crust cheese lost more water than the plastic cover cheese, so they had to regulate the humidity in the warehouse. They also faced the threat of cheese mites, which slowly eat up the cheese, so they started to regularly spray air on the surface of the cheeses to keep away cheese mites.

## EVALUATION OF THE RESULTS

Great result: the cheese is now 100% natural and in line with the farm's values. The taste of the cheese has also changed because they started using the ghee.

Some students of the University of Wageningen made sensory analysis tests and they saw an increase in flavour complexity in the natural crust cheese compared to the plastic cover cheese. In addition to this, they also could find back in the cheese flavours found in the mouldsand meadows of the environment where the cows live.

## WHAT WOULD YOU DO DIFFERENT AND WHAT ARE THE PERSPECTIVES IN YOUR MIND

There are always opportunities you didn't take and decisions you would have taken differently with the knowledge of afterwards, but it's important to learn with our mistakes. So he wouldn't have changed anything in particular.

## FINAL SENTENCES

Sometimes people that come to the farm told him that even if they get sick when eating common cheeses, when they eat Remeker cheese they don't feel sick. So these are the things that make him the happiest: to produce a healthy and sustainable cheese good for the environment, for the cows welfare and the consumers. Also they were the first to have an organic farm producing raw milk cheese from antibiotic-free Jersey cows. So he is proud to be one of the pioneers.



## Suggestions for other farmers

If you want to make your own product it has to be something special. In my opinion the difference is in the taste: focus on a good taste. The story is good for consumers who buy once but if you want customers who come back they have to like the quality of the product.



*Peter Van de Voort with his cheeses in the ripening chamber*

*Christoph Decker in the company greenhouse with products from his own farm*



## NL03 – BUITENGEVONEVARKEN

### IDENTIFICATION OF THE CASE STUDY

Case number: **NL-03**

Name of company: **Buitengevonevarken**

Title of the case study:

**Circular pig farming**

### MAIN DATA OF THE COMPANY

#### **Country**

- **The Netherlands**

#### **Company**

- **Individual company**

#### **Farming Activity**

- **Animal breeding**

#### **Direct selling way**

- **Direct selling in farm**

## SELF – INTRODUCTION OF THE FARMER

Josse Haarhuis is 24 years old, he is a farmer and entrepreneur. His farm is called Buitengewonevarken, he farms pigs kept outdoors all their life and he sells the meat of about 400 pigs per year directly to restaurants and consumers. The pigs are slaughtered at small slaughterhouse nearby every two weeks and then the meat is given to a local artisanal butcher who transforms it into the final products. The last step of the chain is again in the hands of Josse who delivers the final products to its customers (1 day per week).

The farm was started 4 years ago by Josse together with a business partner. He started the business in the last year of his studies and also graduated on it (he studied Animal healthcare and behaviour). He wanted to work with pigs and be an entrepreneur focusing on animal welfare. The farm doesn't have a bank loan so all profit it makes is currently invested back in the company. The current ambition is to arrive to 500 pigs slaughtered per year.

They have 25 different locations where they rent a land (owned by another farm for example) and the pigs spend their life there with a specific goal: education, weeding, etc. When the pigs are big enough, they slaughter them and they give back small piglets to the land owner. They also sell the meat back to the location or to customers (restaurants, shops) close to the location.

At the moment they have one single storage location, which they are also renting.

Pigs are slaughtered according to how quick they go (winter and summer are different: in winter they grow slowly) so between 9 and 12 months. If they want the pigs to do weeding, they feed them less so that they eat more weed and due to that they also grow slower.

Most restaurants order via WhatsApp or via the website. When they order via WhatsApp he updates the website's stock. They serve about 200 different restaurants and have about 40 clients per week. 10% is sold directly to the consumers.

## CHANGES / INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS ADOPTED

1. One of the biggest innovation they have recently adopted is to use an online database of the pigs and the pieces of meat available in the storage. It's really useful to keep an eye on the availability of the products and to know how efficiently they used the whole pig. They can also use it to know which parts are more sold than others and change the butcher indication accordingly.



2. A second innovation is to find a way to catch the pigs when they are free in the wild. For this they use a wooden cage where they place feed inside and when pigs enter they close them in the cage. Before catching them they repeat the feeding process in the cage for some time so that the pigs get used to it.
3. Another innovation is that they castrate young piglets in order to keep the whole families together. In order to do that they train the sow to get fed in a far place so that when she goes to eat they quickly castrate the piglets without her knowing it (she is so far she doesn't hear the piglets screaming).
4. Another innovation is that they use some special extra feed: they use waste from beer production and also some pellets made of leftovers from bread and bakery. They only feed their animals with waste from our food system, so they that there is no need to waste extra energy and land to produce animal feed.

## WHY AND HOW YOU DECIDED TO INTRODUCE STRATEGY CHANGES / INNOVATIONS

1. In order to keep an updated database;
2. The cage was thought to catch the pigs in the wild;
3. They want to keep two different breeds for males (Duroc) and females (Berkshire). The males give a great taste to the meat, while the female breed has good milk production, is great in taking care of the piglets and gives a good taste to the meat as well. So if you have the mix of these two lines you have the best piglet breed. If you would leave the piglets reproduce themselves without castrating them, you would have a mix of breed without consistency and also you wouldn't be able to control timing and space availability. When sows are pregnant they get different feed and also when they breast-feed the piglets they get some extra proteins. They buy the males while the females they reproduce themselves by injecting the sperm they buy into the females.
4. The reason is to have a sustainable and circular system.

## WHAT OBSTACLES DID YOU MEET

Climate aversion is something you cannot control when you have piglets outdoors: due to the heavy rains in the past two years they have lost some piglets and sows.

Also they have tried to use a lighter cage to catch the pigs from the wild, but the animals were able to break it and to remove it from its place.



## EVALUATION OF THE RESULTS

Very positive evaluation of the first 4 years.

## WHAT WOULD YOU DO DIFFERENT AND WHAT ARE THE PERSPECTIVES IN YOUR MIND

He wouldn't do anything different because everything is a learning lesson. He is also very proud that they are driving only electric vehicles to transport the piglets, they are using solar panels at the farm and the next step would be to have their own storage for the meat and not only to rent it. They would grow only if they can keep high quality standards and a good price.

He also wants to find a way to sell well all parts of the pigs and have zero waste. At the moment the most difficult parts to sell are pork skin and fat.

## FINAL SENTENCES

In general it's important to try to reconnect consumers in the city and producers in rural areas. It's essential that everyone who eats meat is aware that when they buy a piece of meat an animal died for it. When you are buying you are making a choice. When you buy cheap meat you promote a type of farming where animals are grown in a cage. So, as consumers, we all have the key to change the food systems.

## Suggestions for other farmers

If you haven't started yet: get your idea, start with it and follow it.

While working at the farm, take your time to do an evaluation and check out what you can do differently to improve what you do and reach the next level.



## NL04 – LANDSCHAPS- & ZORGBOERDERIJ DE RÖKKER

### IDENTIFICATION OF THE CASE STUDY

Case number: **NL-04**

Name of company: **Landschaps- & Zorgboerderij De Rökker**

Title of the case study:

**The Biggest Little Farm in Eastern The Netherlands**

### MAIN DATA OF THE COMPANY

#### **Country**

- **The Netherlands**

#### **Company**

- **Family company**

#### **Farming Activity**

- **Cultivation**
- **Animal breeding**

#### **Direct selling way**

- **Direct selling in farm**
- **Direct selling in farmer markets**
- **Direct selling in own or common shop**



## SELF – INTRODUCTION OF THE FARMER

Landschaps- & Zorgboerderij “De Rökker” is a mixed farm in the Eastern part of The Netherlands, here the family Kiewik is farming in an extensive way with social values. Henk Kiewik is the head and is 67 years old, with his wife Ine (64) he transformed the traditional mixed farm with dairy cows and pigs into a small scale dairy farm which produces milk and provides a place for disabled people to have daycare. There are currently 50 milking cows, on 45 hectares. In the past, their son Jorrit (30), produced dairy products, bread and meat from all the products available at the farm. This was sold in both local markets via a food cooperation, as well in restaurant. Currently, the only food directly sold is honey via the local supermarket, vegetables at the farm itself, where as milk and meat find the way via cooperations and local processors.

## CHANGES / INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS ADOPTED

In the past years, the farm has been developing to diversify more, starting to grow wheat, a variety of nuts and fruits. Next to that we started working with a local beekeeper to produce honey. With regards to direct trade the farmers sale the wheat to the local mill and honey via the local supermarket.

## WHY AND HOW YOU DECIDED TO INTRODUCE STRATEGY CHANGES / INNOVATIONS

We’re seeing the power of biodiversity and the need from local consumers to eat more local. From that perspective we need to produce more biodiverse, in order not to feed just dairy to our local consumers.

## WHAT OBSTACLES DID YOU MEET

The main obstacle is finding funding within your business model. We’re not willing to take every subsidy in order to develop a farm that is future proof. This money should come from the market. With this in mind, we are looking to integrate slow tourism in our farm but are facing obstacles implementing that.



## EVALUATION OF THE RESULTS

I'm happy to see that the farm is being led by the family, more than just one generation. This gives inspiration, promotes entrepreneurship and strengthens the family. Next to that, our farm diversifies, making it more resilient for the future.

## WHAT WOULD YOU DO DIFFERENT AND WHAT ARE THE PERSPECTIVES IN YOUR MIND

We currently transform our farm mainly with own funds in order not to get dependent from subsidies. Instead, it takes a long time to create alternative income. Which would have been easily resolved by not broadening our scope so much. Yet, we believe it's an essential part of our development.

## FINAL SENTENCES

We are happy with how our family farm is moving forward, it moves from a closed space which is distanced from society to a hub where people gather and a variety of high quality foods are being produced. We can't wait to see where this process will bring us and look back on the process we made in the past period of time.

## Suggestions for other farmers

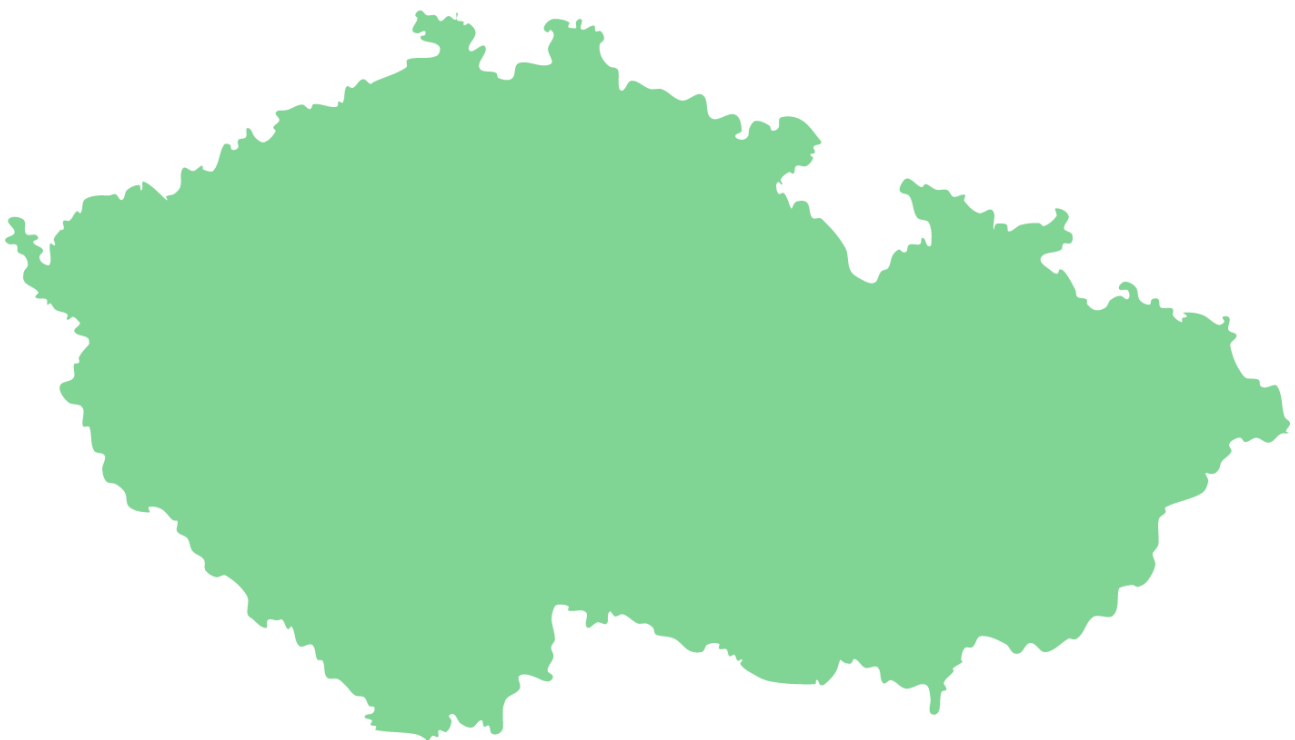
As a family we fully trust our next generation. Next to that we've been working with creatives and architects from outside agriculture in order to create plans for our future. This opened a lot of opportunities and created a strong team of professionals who are actively engaged in developing our farm.



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# THE CZECH REPUBLIC



**CZ01 – FARMA BASAŘOVI**



## IDENTIFICATION OF THE CASE STUDY

Case number: **CZ-01**

Name of company: **Farma Basařovi**

Title of the case study:

**Meat Butchery with vending machines (meat machines)**

## MAIN DATA OF THE COMPANY

### **Country**

- Czech Republic

### **Company**

- Family company

### **Farming Activity**

- Animal breeding

### **Direct selling way**

- Direct selling in farm
- Direct selling in own or common shop



## SELF – INTRODUCTION OF THE FARMER

The Basař farm is a family farm in the Podkrkonoší region. It cultivates over 500 hectares of agricultural land, breeds over 200 cattle, produces electricity and heat in a biogas plant, runs a guesthouse, and provides agricultural services. It focuses mainly on cow breeding and subsequent beef production.

## CHANGES / INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS ADOPTED

The most important change, or innovation, was the establishment of our own meat butchery on the farm. Another innovative solution is the launch of a network of vending machines for our products (meat machines).

## WHY AND HOW YOU DECIDED TO INTRODUCE STRATEGY CHANGES / INNOVATIONS

In the beginning, the family was forced to slaughter and subsequently carve up their animals using the service of a company located 100 kilometers from the farm. After carving up the meat was moved to the farm, where they sold it from their fridge on a yard of the farm. Thus the customer had to physically come, find somebody in the yard, and then the sale of the meat happened. After some time they thought that through this way they'll not sell enough products. Also, the final stage of handling over the meat was inefficient, because the customer must find somebody from the family in the yard, which interrupted members of the family from work on the farm. Because at the farm they didn't have any opportunity to employ somebody, who could sell the products full-time, so they realized the final sale through "meat machines". The Basařovi family finds a lot of positives in this solution. The final meat product is transported to the machine and they don't have to care about things like opening hours of the shop, employees, and so on.

## WHAT OBSTACLES DID YOU MEET

The biggest obstacle was administrative in general. Basařovi had to deal with the requirements from the state veterinary administration, hygiene, building authority, and so on. Also, the neighbors were worried that the meat processing plant would disturb them because of the smell. It was difficult to explain that the smell will be very limited because when thinking about the meat processing plant, most of the people imagine large meat processing plants like "Kostelecké uzeniny" etc.



## EVALUATION OF THE RESULTS

Basařovi evaluates the meat machine very positively. It doesn't improve the products themselves by this innovation, but it helped the farm with the efficiency of their work. In the beginning, meat sold from the meat machine made approximately 75% of their income but currently the share because of the war in Ukraine and the general crisis is approximately 40%.

## WHAT WOULD YOU DO DIFFERENT AND WHAT ARE THE PERSPECTIVES IN YOUR MIND

"If I could, I would prefer to realize the project more gradually." This idea was further developed by the farm owner: "For example in the beginning I would make a smaller meat processing plant on the farm. But nobody could expect the current situation. In the beginning, the size of the meat factory was adequate, but due to the current decline in purchasing power it would be more reasonable to have the project on a smaller scale."

## FINAL SENTENCES

In general, personal and entrepreneurial experiences are seen as positive by the farmer. Thanks to the wide range of entrepreneurial activities, it can be seen how many things are connected together. Also, every day brings some new experiences, which can be used in the future even in seemingly unrelated activities.

## Suggestions for other farmers

"It's difficult to give a concrete answer. But in general, I'd recommend diverse income, seek possibilities to reduce expenses, and mainly hold when the situation isn't going as you've planned."



## **CZ02 – LEVANDULOVÝ STATEK BEZDĚKOV**

### **IDENTIFICATION OF THE CASE STUDY**

Case number: **CZ-02**

Name of company: **Levandulový statek Bezděkov**

Title of the case study:

**Lavender massages in the field and franchise**

### **MAIN DATA OF THE COMPANY**

#### **Country**

- Czech Republic

#### **Company**

- Family company

#### **Farming Activity**

- Cultivation
- Animal breeding
- Product's transformation on farm

#### **Direct selling way**

- Direct selling in farm
- Direct selling in farmer markets
- Direct selling in own or common shop
- Online selling



## SELF – INTRODUCTION OF THE FARMER

Lukáš Drlík, 40 years old, is a former manager of a hotel complex, now for 8 years a farmer on the family Lavender Farm in Bezděkov. His main success is a well-running farm with 10 hectares of farmland, a network of own shops, online sales and sales at events. He manages to sell all his production in the retail network. His wife, brother and his wife work with Lukáš in the family business and their retired parents are helping out with the business. The farm also employs external staff, mainly at the farm shop or as summer temporary workers.

## CHANGES / INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS ADOPTED

Three examples from their practice:

1. Field – inter seeded with grass - sheep grazing in lavender. An unused area of brownfield has been turned to use with a grass system.
2. Product - massages directly in the lavender with our own essential oil.
3. Marketing - development of own sales network - franchise.



## WHY AND HOW YOU DECIDED TO INTRODUCE STRATEGY CHANGES / INNOVATIONS

1. Field - Before the innovation, the field area was unusable due to the fact that topsoil was washed off the surface and the soil was generally rotavated which was uncomfortable for agro-tourism. Now the area has great added value due to the grass system in place. The former brownfield can be now used for weddings, festivals, and other events. Another use of the area is grazing for our sheep, which brings with it other business opportunities such as the sale of lamb meat etc.
2. Product –As the biggest added value is seen in the possibility to use oil massage directly on the farm. Lukáš Drlík describes the process: “We grow the lavender at the farm, distill it and mix it with a carrier oil. The resulting lavender oil is used just for massages on the farm. This is where we see the biggest advantage and a certain exclusivity, because the vast majority of oil producers sell their product to smaller companies that further process the oil, for example combining it with other oils. Then the oil from these places goes to massage companies that sell the resulting massage.” At Levandulový statek Bezděkov is possible to buy a massage using pure and unprocessed lavender oil directly from farm.
3. Marketing –Lavender farm is focusing on franchising their stores for sales, which has undeniable benefits.

## WHAT OBSTACLES DID YOU MEET

The biggest obstacle is for Lukáš Drlík the bureaucracy. “In my recent experience, excessive bureaucracy was present during the negotiations with the Building Authority, and consequently with the Planning Authority. I see the fact that the concept of agro-tourism does not exist as a major problem and a disadvantage.”

## EVALUATION OF THE RESULTS

In the family business, personal satisfaction is crucial, and Lukáš Drlík tries to achieve it together with all members. “We enjoy the fact that our activity has a positive impact on the market through our café or e-shop, and thanks to our franchise concept we create both jobs and business opportunities for other entrepreneurs.”



## WHAT WOULD YOU DO DIFFERENT AND WHAT ARE THE PERSPECTIVES IN YOUR MIND

When asked whether Mr. Drlík would do anything differently today, he answers positively: “In retrospect, there were countless changes that could have been made. But with a bit of perspective, the fact comes to mind that every mistake we have made has made us stronger and more experienced in the future, and we know what to avoid and what to watch out for.”

## FINAL SENTENCES

The life experience is truly priceless.

## Suggestions for other farmers

Each advice for each farmer will be individual and different. But for those who are starting with farming: “Make the most of your initial enthusiasm, excitement, and a certain naivety!”



*The lavender shop created by Lukáš Drlík in his farm*



## CZ03 – RODINNÁ FARMA PLACANDŮ

### IDENTIFICATION OF THE CASE STUDY

Case number: **CZ-03**

Name of company: **Rodinná farma Placandů**

Title of the case study:

**Meat processing plant as the final step in the production**

### MAIN DATA OF THE COMPANY

#### Country

- Czech Republic

#### Company

- Family company

#### Farming Activity

- Cultivation
- Animal breeding
- Product's transformation on farm

#### Direct selling way

- Direct selling in farm

## **SELF – INTRODUCTION OF THE FARMER**

In this story, we would like to introduce you to Mr. Jakub Placanda, 38 years old private farmer. On Jakub's family farm works three people (Jakub, his father Vladimír, and his wife Lenka). The farm is specializing in breeding cows (Meat Simmental) and pigs. They produce also breeding bulls and sell beef and pork meat.

In 2019 Farm won 1st place in the competition "Farm of the year", in the year 2020 they received a golden medal in the program "Diverse landscape" and in 2021 Jakub's farm was second in the category "older cows" in the National exhibition Brno.

The farm cultivates 225 hectares, does not have any employees, and sells all the meat directly to the consumers.

## **CHANGES / INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS ADOPTED**

The most important project in past years was the building of their own meat processing plant.

## **WHY AND HOW YOU DECIDED TO INTRODUCE STRATEGY CHANGES / INNOVATIONS**

Selling the live animals to the resellers wasn't profitable and it was demotivating for the farm's owner. Through the realization of a meat processing plant, he managed to finalize the manufacturing process of their products. "We are proud of our meat, which prices we try to keep low even for our customers," adds Jakub Placanda.

## **WHAT OBSTACLES DID YOU MEET**

Jakub Placanda has been thinking for a long time about the obstacles he faced (such as delays in communication with authorities). Of course, not everything went totally smoothly and it took time and effort. In the end, however, everything went as it should and the desired result was achieved. Therefore, he does not indicate any obstacle here, as everything was necessary within the process.



## EVALUATION OF THE RESULTS

As it was mentioned above, Jakub Placanda evaluates the project positively. The realization of a meat processing plant completely fulfilled his expectations.

## WHAT WOULD YOU DO DIFFERENT AND WHAT ARE THE PERSPECTIVES IN YOUR MIND

“We would appreciate a more helpful attitude from the authorities without any delays. In the future, it would be good, if the attitude of officials would change. Currently, they see us mainly as “dirty farmers”, who interfere in the food processing business, which according to them the farmers shouldn’t do.”

In the case of financing, Jakub Placanda finds a problem with investments in the buildings, which are depreciating for 30 years.

## FINAL SENTENCES

The realization of a meat processing plant is seen generally positively from the view of a farmer who gets the appropriate prize for his effort. Also, Mr. Placanda sees the positives of meat processing, because through communication with the consumers he can promote private farming in his neighborhood. Regarding the size of the farm, they can provide beef and pork meat to approximately 300 families.

## Suggestions for other farmers

“With the meat processing plant we are satisfied, we wouldn’t change anything. In the future, we would like to realize also the slaughter of the animals on our farm.” Concludes the whole story of the farm the owner Jakub Placanda.



## CZ04 – SEDLÁK Z HANÉ

### IDENTIFICATION OF THE CASE STUDY

Case number: **CZ-04**

Name of company: **Sedlák z Hané**

Title of the case study:

**Pure soybean oil and the need to overcome one's own fears**

### MAIN DATA OF THE COMPANY

#### **Country**

- Czech Republic

#### **Company**

- Family company

#### **Farming Activity**

- Cultivation

#### **Direct selling way**

- Direct selling in farm
- Direct selling in farmer markets



## SELF – INTRODUCTION OF THE FARMER

The Koutek family has been farming in Topolany near Olomouc, Czech Republic for several generations. The only exception is when they were forced to stop farming in the communist era. In 1989, as soon as it was possible, farming activity was resumed and livestock returned to the farm. The farm now includes about 80 hectares of land, and more than half of it is a private property of the family farm. The farm is dedicated to the cultivation of field crops typical of the Haná region, specializing in the production, processing, and sale of oilseeds and oils, especially from soya (GMO free). Direct sales are made on the farm or at farmers' markets in the surrounding area. They also supply their products marginally to small shops as a supplementary sale. The proportion of income from direct sales is currently around 5 %.

## CHANGES / INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS ADOPTED

Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, Mr. Koutek, alias "The Peasant from Haná" (trademark), was pushed to start adding value to his harvested crops. To not rely only on selling harvested crops to other processors, but also started to focus on direct sales, which he conceived at the moment as complementary. Although direct sale from the farm is not the main activity and income, Mr. Koutek is very pleased that this form of sales serves greatly as PR for his farm and for overall promotion.

## WHY AND HOW YOU DECIDED TO INTRODUCE STRATEGY CHANGES / INNOVATIONS

Previously, the farm really focused purely on the production of the crops as a basic raw material and its subsequent sale to other processors. The main motivation for a change was, of course, to add overall value to the farm's production and use direct sales as the PR for the farm and its products. Another motivational factor was also to present products of the highest quality and to show customers that oils can be produced without chemical treatments and other artificial additives.

The results in this area have been achieved to some extent. In particular, consumers appreciate the possibility of buying regional food, production with clear provenance and a sustainable farming system that ensures its quality and environmental friendliness.

## WHAT OBSTACLES DID YOU MEET

Surprisingly, the main obstacle was not the administration, but the internal decision to start. Specifically, overcoming the psychological "block" when the owner was oriented towards selling basic raw materials, which was natural and also easy for him until then. Finding the motivation within himself to change this, to jump into an area that he had not been interested in until then, and to embark on more complex actions such as the shop itself.

## EVALUATION OF THE RESULTS

The evaluation of Mr. Koutek, alias "The Peasant from Haná", to enter an unfamiliar environment and focus on direct sales from the farm is definitely positive. Thanks to this decision, he was able to reach customers in the region who were looking for a local and quality product. And overall, his brand has become very well known.

## WHAT WOULD YOU DO DIFFERENT AND WHAT ARE THE PERSPECTIVES IN YOUR MIND

The only thing Mr. Koutek would change if he had the opportunity is that he would definitely start the direct sale from the farm earlier. All he would have had to do was not be afraid to step out of his comfort zone and the benefits he would have gained by doing so would be much greater nowadays.

## FINAL SENTENCES

It is generally very difficult for farmers to evaluate their decisions. After overcoming the initial fear and introducing direct sales of processed products, the desired effect came. Awareness of the company was raised in the area, and by cooperating with other fellow farmers and being able to sell the products directly on their farms or in their shops, "Sedlák z Hané" expanded his horizons and established good relations with people in the surrounding area.

## Suggestions for other farmers

The main and only advice is not to be afraid to start such actions and innovations. "Jump in and overcome your inner fear and just get started!"

# CZ05 – PETR ŠOBÁŇ'S FAMILY FARM



## IDENTIFICATION OF THE CASE STUDY

Case number: **CZ-05**

Name of company: **Petr Šobáň's family farm**

Title of the case study:

**Direct sale and processing of milk**

## MAIN DATA OF THE COMPANY

### **Country**

- Czech Republic

### **Company**

- Family company

### **Farming Activity**

- Animal breeding
- Product's transformation on farm

### **Direct selling way**

- Direct selling in farmer markets



## SELF – INTRODUCTION OF THE FARMER

Petr Šobáň is a young farmer (27 years old) from Czech Republic, he studied agriculture at the Mendel University and he also attends CEJA meetings as a representative for SmaCR (association of Czech young farmers).

About his farm, he is taking care of the family farm with his parents. They have two employees: one is milking and the other one is in the dairy making the products processing the milk. On the farm is working with Petr his brother, his parents and also his grandparents and other siblings are helping.

They have got about 55 dairy cows; with heifers and bulls, they have a total of 115 cattle. For now, majority of the milk is going to the big dairy and part of it is being processing and direct selling. They process cheese (fresh cheese and cheese for the barbecue), yogurt, cottage cream and fresh milk; also beef. They are also selling fresh milk in their village, but still minority; Petr hopes that it will increase but nowadays they are full capacity of the dairy. Regarding to rates, 25% of the milk is direct selling (if he doesn't take into account the agriculture income).

## CHANGES / INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS ADOPTED

The innovative solutions they adopted were not exactly aimed at processing or selling, but as a kind of advertising for them and increasing the number of customers. This is their way to present their farm and their products to people, and to increase customers.

In this sense, they started to hold open days at the farm. For example, in July they plan to hold a "Day at the farm" again during the day and in the evening they cooperate with their neighbors, who is going to have traditional music.

In addition to this, during these weeks, when the school year ends, they are doing excursions for schools and kindergartens (it is very popular now).

Some of the strategies he uses to call people to the activities are social media, the website and also the stalls in the shops (his shop next to the fresh milk machine and the surrounding shops in other nearby villages).



## WHY AND HOW YOU DECIDED TO INTRODUCE STRATEGY CHANGES / INNOVATIONS

He was the one who started these ideas, and the rest was a cooperation between the family members. He was inspired by other farms doing similar things, and also by schools, and then he turned it into the option that his farm could carry out.

Petr did not like the process of selling milk wholesale, so he had to look for such strategies to start processing and selling his products directly.

He likes on farming for several main reasons: first, because with direct sales he makes more money (e.g. by eliminating transport); but also because on-farm processing adds more value to the milk and also connects people to its origins. Petr believes that original things should be more important.

## WHAT OBSTACLES DID YOU MEET

Generally speaking, Petr has not encountered any major obstacles in his innovation process on his farm.

On financial difficulties, for them it is manageable, they have no problems for now (beyond possible public support). More than financial obstacles, he talks more about time, which he has to dedicate to all the direct sales and the kind of advertising he does.

He also mentions that, as far as technical issues are concerned, they are mostly related to paperwork and bureaucracy than anything else.

## EVALUATION OF THE RESULTS

Petr's overall evaluation of his farm's results is positive. In terms of valorization of the products, he has managed to give them those home-grown touches, bringing the farm closer to the customers and making them appreciate and buy directly from him and his family.

Moreover, as he said at the beginning of the interview, both his brother and his parents and other members of his family work and help in the development of the farm, so family involvement is at a maximum.

In addition, his dairy is at full capacity, so much so that he is thinking of expanding it soon.

Finally, the satisfaction he feels with his work is huge, not only because of the benefits he gets from it, but also because he enjoys what he does.



## WHAT WOULD YOU DO DIFFERENT AND WHAT ARE THE PERSPECTIVES IN YOUR MIND

He is quite satisfied with the decisions made in the past, he would like to take the farm a bit further and make the dairy bigger, because today it is already at full capacity.

Of course, looking back one can always see that many things could have been done better, but at present he is quite satisfied with the results.

In the medium-term future he has several plans: firstly, he would like to build a bigger dairy; he would also like to have a kind of self-purchase (a shop close to the farm or own house) so that people can go directly to buy the products; thirdly, he would like to increase the direct sale of meat, which is not so sophisticated, as they have to do everything by hand (and it is too much); finally, he would like to create a website.

## FINAL SENTENCES

Petr gives a positive assessment of the development of his farm in recent years. He is quite satisfied with the changes made. He likes that the farm is getting better: "it is getting nicer, because you have to make it nice for people to visit", says Petr himself.

## Suggestions for other farmers

There has to be a fire in him to do something different and to want to do it.

Look at the market around yours to see if there is a gap, and if you like it just take the opportunity in that gap. Then put passion and work at it.

You have to be teachable, because if you decide to do something, you will have to study a little bit the management and the processes you want to do. Just do it.



# SPAIN





## ES01 – BRAMAN

### IDENTIFICATION OF THE CASE STUDY

Case number: **ES-01**

Name of company: **Braman**

Title of the case study: **Discover a black Iberian breed traditional livestock**

### MAIN DATA OF THE COMPANY

#### Country

- Spain

#### Company

- Family company

#### Farming Activity

- Animal breeding
- Product's transformation on farm

#### Direct selling way

- Direct selling in farm
- Direct selling in farmer markets
- Online selling

## SELF – INTRODUCTION OF THE FARMER

The owner, Fernando Manteca, is 74 years old, but the company is run by him and his wife. There are two employees, one full-time for butchering and delivery, and one part-time to take care of the cattle.

Fernando has worked all his life on the farm, which he inherited from his parents, although it was much more modest at the time.

The farm has 300 animals of the Avileña or black Iberian breed, typical of the area, and approximately 200 hectares. Slaughter is carried out in an external slaughterhouse, although the cutting is done on the farm in a cutting room. The direct sales business has been carried out since 2000. All production is sold directly to the consumer.

All the animals that make up the Braman herd have been suckled by their mothers, and feed on these green pastures for between five and seven months. The feed that Fernando provides for his animals is purchased from local organic farmers, who scrupulously comply with the European Union's organic production regulations. This ensures that they are free of herbicides, synthetic chemical fertilisers or substances that cause damage to the habitat and the health of his own animals. The young calves, when separated from their mothers, are fed with fodder, organic feed and pasture for between five and nine months. And always in an environment of freedom, running around with their siblings, which results in juicy, tender meat.

More info: [www.carnebraman.com](http://www.carnebraman.com) and <https://youtu.be/Aw6XdzQ2Kho>

## CHANGES / INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS ADOPTED

The main investment that has been made is the cutting room to fully control the quality of its products, Braman has its cutting room. This clearly differentiates Braman from other farms. The process is controlled by the Castilla y León Organic Agriculture Council. There, they also sell their meats directly.

They have also bought a refrigerated truck, which allows them to deliver meat directly to consumers. All the meat is vacuum packed, to be able to sell over long distances, although more so in Madrid (their village in Segovia is about 100 km from the capital), where they have already established delivery routes.

Another important investment has been the recruitment of personnel, as due to age it was difficult to maintain the same workload. Due to personal circumstances, although they have had more direct family support, this possibility is no longer open.



## WHY AND HOW YOU DECIDED TO INTRODUCE STRATEGY CHANGES / INNOVATIONS

His awareness of health and the environment led him to start organic production more than 30 years ago. The beginnings were not easy, as he suffered the boycott of fellow farmers who did not like this innovation in their sector: he could not send his calves to the slaughterhouse in Segovia, which is 10 km away, as they refused to open an organic line; He had to go to the slaughterhouse in Sepúlveda, which is more than 70 km away. Little by little he managed to make his meat known mainly in Madrid through the consumer groups, as the large supermarkets were imposing unacceptable conditions. To be able to sell his meat directly, he had to invest in the cutting room and in a refrigerated truck, not to depend on large supermarkets, who offer very tight margins that force you to grow quickly to be profitable.

As for the new hire, as they cannot count on family support and due to their age, they needed support to be able to carry out the heavier tasks.

## WHAT OBSTACLES DID YOU MEET

He has encountered all kinds of obstacles. Rejection from farmers who rejected organic because they assumed that their meat was just as good as ours.

Rejection from many butchers with whom I had worked before, because of the price involved in working in organic farming.

Financial difficulties because the investments were always very expensive. We have to take into account that the cutting plant is small and that our livestock is even smaller.

When working with consumer groups and consumers directly, you are faced with more fluctuations in demand. It is also difficult to organize deliveries, as there is no centralised distribution point.

We have tried at some point to organize ourselves with other direct sales producers to have a logistical distribution center, but it has been impossible.



## EVALUATION OF THE RESULTS

The company is profitable. They have grown gradually from the family farm to the consumer, so they have had an easier time than others who must start from scratch. First, they started by growing, until they reached a point where they saw that their opportunity was to differentiate themselves in quality and then, seeing that sales to supermarkets were running out of margins, they opted for direct sales, fortunately. They opened many paths and have a niche and a name that is recognized throughout Spain.

## WHAT WOULD YOU DO DIFFERENT AND WHAT ARE THE PERSPECTIVES IN YOUR MIND

It is very difficult not to have done things the same way. Of course, the fact that most of the farmers have disappeared is a good sign that things have been done well, even if there have been mistakes.

Today there is only one other livestock farm left in his village, run by some brothers, but of course it is much bigger.

If he were younger and had more strength, perhaps he would take more pasture and put more cows in, always with the same philosophy of respect for nature.

Of course, offering a product directly to the consumer, of high quality and respectful of the environment is the only way to survive in such a ruthless market.

## FINAL SENTENCES

Things have gone relatively well, and they are satisfied. They have seen a lot of farms disappear in their area and the remaining ones have had to grow a lot to support costs and prices. They have held their own with a not so large herd and are selling all their production to consumers. They could grow more but they would have to be younger to be able to do it. They have been lucky to find employees who know how to handle the cattle on the one hand, and the cutting room on the other. The depopulation of the area is important. Without them, it would have been impossible to continue the activity.



## Suggestions for other farmers

It is a very hard job that requires a lot of time and effort, and you cannot do it all at once. You must go little by little. It requires very high investments, but it is the only way to bring prices down. They grew along the chain, seeing that this was the only way to survive in a market that was imposing increasingly worse conditions on the producer and that was betting on products with greater impacts.



*Meat processed and packaged in Fernando Manteca's farm*



## ES02 – EL OLIVAR DE BANKIVA

### IDENTIFICATION OF THE CASE STUDY

Case number: **ES-02**

Name of company: **El olivar de Bankiva**

Title of the case study: **If Spain were an egg... Madrid would be the yolk: sustainable egg selling at El olivar de Bankiva**

### MAIN DATA OF THE COMPANY

#### Country

- Spain

#### Company

- Individual company

#### Farming Activity

- Animal breeding
- Product's transformation on farm

#### Direct selling way

- Direct selling in farm
- Direct selling in farmer markets
- Online selling



## SELF – INTRODUCTION OF THE FARMER

Beatriz Quero. She has been keeping laying hens for two years, despite having no previous experience. She has no employees, although some occasional help from friends. She is certified organic.

She has 17 hectares, in which she has two separate sheds, 3500 and 5500 m<sup>2</sup> with 705 hens.

The main source of income is the direct sale of eggs to some herbalist shops, consumer groups and consumers, but 70% of her income come from direct sales to consumers

## CHANGES / INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS ADOPTED

For her, everything has been innovative since she set up three years ago. Although the project was planned to be four times bigger, the farm has grown gradually. The farm started with just one shed, but this year she has added a second one. This growth was not enough for a salary. To start with, she has had to buy machinery to sort the eggs, which she packs herself. As she does not have access to electricity, the whole installation runs on solar energy from self-consumption panels. The water has to be brought in by lorry to fill large containers. The whole installation works ecologically and extensively, as she is in charge of moving the animals herself.

## WHY AND HOW YOU DECIDED TO INTRODUCE STRATEGY CHANGES / INNOVATIONS

The creation of the farm came as a personal project, as his previous life had nothing to do with agriculture. All the strategies he has opted for have been purely logical. Although the project with which it was installed was different, it has had to improvise for different reasons. Perhaps the case of supplies was the clearest, bringing electricity or water was too clear, so from the beginning he knew that he had to install panels, at least for the electricity. She was clear that she wanted her farm to be respectful of the animals and the quality of the product, so she opted for organic farming, but she is disappointed by what has been allowed so far in organic farming, with practices somewhat on the limit, although she recognizes that the standards have been tightened up.

## WHAT OBSTACLES DID YOU MEET

She had all kinds of problems in setting up, At the beginning of the project because he did not receive adequate advice. A supposedly specialized company made a bad installation project. The project had to be redone, but it still has some errors in the planning since then.

The subsidies were not adapted to the needs of small farms. They are based on administrative deadlines and not on the needs of the farm. The requirements are often unrealistic, as they are designed for conventional farms, not for small farms.

With the administration, being the first organic farm, it is very demanding and requires a lot of paperwork, especially for livestock and organic farming: reports, self-controls, etc., which require appropriate advice. Although he recognizes that in the end they have been flexible in some cases, organic certification does not look at sustainability in the best way. The problem is that the production standards are not strict enough in certain aspects of volume, density and distance, which he understands to be the essence of extensive livestock farming, although they have been tightened up somewhat. For this reason, a lot of organic production has taken place at low prices, to the detriment of more committed producers. She has also had problems with bird attacks, so he had to install a netting.

Finally he has problems with the slaughtering of animals, as the slaughterhouses do not come to pick them up because it is a very small farm with only a few animals.

## EVALUATION OF THE RESULTS

The model she seeks to have is a farm that respects animals and the environment. She is managing to be profitable with her extensive farming. But it is necessary for certification systems to take more account of which systems are really the most respectful of the environment and animals. She hopes to grow organically little by little. She is happy with demand (she has sold out of her production), although she acknowledges problems in summer precisely because of holidays in consumer groups. She would like a more involved and committed consumer.

She had hoped to find more cooperation with producers, as she has been very lonely. Although she belongs to a farmers' organization, the fact that she is the only farm with this type of livestock in the whole region, and moreover in organic farming, has made it difficult for her to find synergies.



## WHAT WOULD YOU DO DIFFERENT AND WHAT ARE THE PERSPECTIVES IN YOUR MIND

Above all, he would have contracted another project for the installation. The consultancy firm commissioned to carry out the project showed that they did not have sufficient knowledge of poultry farming. Many parts of the project had to be redone, often by improvisation. It was very difficult to find the right technical advice.

Also, the extension would have been done at a different time. The deadlines set by the administration for permits obliged him to do the work at a time that did not fit in with the production cycle and that has caused him harm. If he had done it again, he would have fought harder with the administration to get them to bring forward the signing of his file.

As for the slaughtering of the animals, the sanitary criteria for investing in slaughterhouses on small farms have been relaxed, so he is studying the possibility of making one with a small turkeys farm and also sharing transport costs.

## FINAL SENTENCES

It has been a very hard fight. A lot of paperwork is needed, with many administrations involved: livestock, organic, health. They are not clear about the requirements and although it is true that some administrations have been flexible, it is not easy and you need good advice.

She has been lucky to finally have a vet with experience in the chicken sector, which has allowed her to stay in the business. He has provided very important technical advice, but also contacts with suppliers and customers.

## Suggestions for other farmers

Having the right advice. She has been lucky to have an experienced veterinarian in the hen sector who has helped her with contacts. It is also necessary for small farms to make agreements and synergies with other farms and to keep in mind that it is not only production, but also marketing can take a long time.



## ES03 – ECODEBIO

### IDENTIFICATION OF THE CASE STUDY

Case number: **ES-03**

Name of company: **Ecodebio**

Title of the case study: **Ecodebio. Meet Natalia and Juan, young and committed farmers**

### MAIN DATA OF THE COMPANY

#### Country

- Spain

#### Company

- Family company

#### Farming Activity

- Cultivation

#### Direct selling way

- Direct selling in farm
- Direct selling in farmer markets
- Online selling

## **SELF – INTRODUCTION OF THE FARMER**

Juan and Natalia are two young producers behind the name eco de bio. They grow vegetables on a small two-hectare garden near Madrid. They have two hectares of organic land protected by the official seal of approval. The land is rented and is owned by the town council of Rivas, under a municipal initiative of cession of land to small organic producers.

They make direct sales of fruit and vegetables to consumer groups, home sales and some small shops. However, if they have a large stock, part of it is sold to an organic distributor in the central market of Madrid (Mercamadrid). They are trying to avoid intermediaries because they believe that this makes organic produce very expensive and increases food waste.

They only produce seasonal vegetables, do not have greenhouses and do not process their produce, although they have even sold part of their tomato harvest to a jam producer. They also sell some fruit on demand in their baskets, thanks to agreements with another organic fruit producer.

## **CHANGES / INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS ADOPTED**

They are always trying to introduce innovations, with new varieties of products. Every year they sow/cultivate different varieties, alternating terraces with different crops to reduce the risk of pests and diseases. Although the most recent innovation is the installation of a venturi system for fertilisation. Although they continue to work with organic fertilisation to prepare the soil, once the crop has been installed, they are committed to this technique because it is very convenient and effective. This consists of supplying nutrients to the plants through the water used for irrigation. The fertilisers are injected in liquid form together with the water to create a nutrient solution, which, thanks to the irrigation system, is dissolved next to the roots of the plants, facilitating their absorption. The Venturi suction or sucks the fertilisers in an optimal way so that it mixes with the water inside the pipe.

## **WHY AND HOW YOU DECIDED TO INTRODUCE STRATEGY CHANGES / INNOVATIONS**



The fertigation system was seen as essential because once the crop is installed, if you detect a need at a given moment it is very difficult to provide it in a solid form. They also take advantage of it to inject worm hummus once a week, for example. In other words, it allows you, in a very effective way, to make small contributions to the crop throughout the cycle in very precise quantities, which go directly to the crop without having to use machinery.

The different varieties see this as a way of reducing risk and offering the consumer a different supply, as well as spacing out production with longer seasons.

## WHAT OBSTACLES DID YOU MEET

In general, counselling, not information, is needed. But it is very difficult to access advice that guides you through different processes and is not just a communicator of information.

For example, grants are very difficult. The requirements are very high, but it is very difficult to find someone to solve your doubts, neither the administration nor the agricultural organizations have the capacity to solve very specific doubts that are very important for producers. The agricultural organizations complete a general dossier, but in the case of a very specific issue neither they nor the administrations can help, because the person you present the dossier to is not the same person who later reviews it, and then errors arise that are difficult to correct.

Another thing is technical advice on innovative techniques or marketing, which nobody knows anything about. Here you have to learn by trial and error, talking to many people who work in this field. The agricultural organizations were of great help here, as the forums that are created around them are very useful for sharing ideas and doubts.

They had a lot of difficulties, especially with marketing, because even for technical questions about cultivation you can consult the internet or the technical staff hired by the municipality, but to develop your own marketing techniques, which depends so much on your type of farm, there is very little practical help.

Sometimes you do get advice, but you have to ask a lot of questions, and of course not always from the same person or organization, which makes the cost more expensive.

The courses that are useful and free, are always very long and the timetable is incompatible with the activity. They are ideal for people who want to start, but not for those who are already working.

They have encountered a lot of unfair competition from wholesalers and shops. At farmers' markets they have found stalls of the shops they supply. Farmers' markets should only be farmers' markets. Also agro-ecological markets should not allow conventional products.



## EVALUATION OF THE RESULTS

They believe in this type of agriculture and when they had the opportunity they decided to take the plunge. They have been very lucky with their colleagues, because they have managed to create a very active group, all dedicated to the vegetable garden, in which they help each other.

When they made the investment they were very clear about it, they had studied all the options and they have seen how they work.

They are happy with the results, they see that the business is growing and that people are calling them from many places, but they have periods and spells, at the end of the day they have to deal with climatic disasters and rabbit attacks. They don't have much free time, because when they are not in the orchard they are selling or delivering.

Little by little they start to learn how the market works. When the demand from the consumer groups is low, they take advantage of the time to attend more markets.

## WHAT WOULD YOU DO DIFFERENT AND WHAT ARE THE PERSPECTIVES IN YOUR MIND

They would not do anything different, all the investments were well thought out. They would have applied for certain aids that they thought were incompatible, but after some time they realized that they were not. The rest, errors with certain varieties or with treatments, they see as part of the learning process, errors that were necessary to avoid other, more serious ones.

As for the future, they are trying to come to an agreement with other producers to supply different cooperative supermarkets. These have a demand for produce that they cannot satisfy, so they are trying to reach an agreement with other producers to make a joint plan to be able to supply these supermarkets (which deal ethically with the producers) with organic produce.

They also want to apply for investment aid to be able to change the whole irrigation system, to avoid losses and improve efficiency, and they want to fence off the plot, to avoid intruders, but above all to avoid a plague that at some point has caused them a lot of damage: rabbits.

In Rivas the municipality is planning to supply that the school canteens with local agro-ecological products; they are waiting for the town council to specify the formulas.



## FINAL SENTENCES

Organic farming is increasingly in demand, but to access it at more affordable prices it is necessary to find alternative sales systems, such as direct sales. These sales systems make it possible to recover the contact between the consumer and the producer, to get to know local varieties and seasonal calendars better, so that the products are at their optimum harvesting time, without having to spend a lot of time in the kitchen. Information on each product can come directly from the producer. They are trying to improve this communication even more. Their farm is open to visitors, because what they want is total transparency. That is why they also believe in certification seals, with soil analyses that they can present to all those who request them. In fact, although they do not ask for them, they usually carry out their own analyses to find out about fertilisation needs.

They understand that there are producers who, although they are not organic, may not need the official seal and can have a certification shared with their own consumers, but they understand that it is safer if it is backed by an official body. But they also believe that in terms of support and markets, producers who are committed to official certification programmes are the ones who should be given priority.

They are satisfied with the reception they are receiving and for having committed themselves to this project in which they are learning something new every day.

## Suggestions for other farmers

The most important thing to know is that there are no written rules, what works elsewhere does not necessarily work for you and vice versa.

You have to prepare a lot to make any kind of decision, look at alternatives, consequences, pros and cons, but ultimately no one can assure you 100% that they will work.

The best thing to do is to try, always calculating the risks, doing small tests, looking at other farms or examples of how they have done it, but do not rule it out.

In the case of agricultural projects, it is very important to know about similar cases in the area, as soils and climates have a great influence.

Finally, it is important that they neglect the phase that comes after agriculture. It is necessary to know how to sell a product, to be very clear about the costs of production and distribution, the possible losses and the financial, climatic or health risks that exist, in order to be able to value the product and assign a price.



*Juan and Natalia at one of the farmers' markets where they sell their products*



## ES04 – LUZ DE MIEL

### IDENTIFICATION OF THE CASE STUDY

Case number: **ES-04**

Name of company: **Luz de miel**

Title of the case study: **Shiny and organic honey**

### MAIN DATA OF THE COMPANY

#### Country

- Spain

#### Company

- Individual company

#### Farming Activity

- Animal breeding
- Product's transformation on farm

#### Direct selling way

- Direct selling in farm



## SELF – INTRODUCTION OF THE FARMER

José Luis Delgado started as a young farmer in 2003. He has managed 300 hives, although he is in the process of converting to organic farming. This conversion has reduced his production capacity for various reasons (management and pests). He now has 150 hives.

He also manages 9 ha of olive groves and 7 ha of organic cereal and some organic vegetables (very modest in the latter case). The main activity, from which he gets the most income, is beekeeping.

He manages the farm himself, although he has family support (wife and two children) for occasional tasks such as olive harvesting.

He sells very little honey and vegetables directly, since he sells the cereal and olives, for example, to the oil mill. He does sell some oil or chickpeas, but it is not very representative.

## CHANGES / INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS ADOPTED

Innovations introduced in the farm have been mainly to obtain the sanitary registration to be able to make direct sales in the production of honey and the conversion to organic farming.

## WHY AND HOW YOU DECIDED TO INTRODUCE STRATEGY CHANGES / INNOVATIONS

Since it began, it has introduced several innovations. First, to obtain the sanitary registration to be able to make direct sales in the production of honey. He had to carry out works in order to set up the premises and obtain the registration. He was able to apply for a grant to be able to afford the work. Direct sales have been fundamental to survive in the market, since selling in bulk only generates losses. The big industries have greatly lowered prices, taking advantage of imports of Chinese honey, of very low quality, which is mixed with native honeys. The labeling rules have favored this type of practice, and although they have tightened their control somewhat, they continue to be practiced in different ways, which is a fraud to the consumer.

Another innovation has been the conversion to organic. This conversion has been motivated by personal conviction, since the use of chemicals to treat certain problems such as varroa was becoming unsustainable, not only for the environment, but even for him.



## WHAT OBSTACLES DID YOU MEET

Fortunately, there have been no obstacles to direct sales. It belongs to a Protected Designation of Origin "honey from the Alcarria" which enjoys a very good reputation. In fact, until now he has been selling his entire production at his farm, without the need to go to markets or on the Internet.

However, the conversion to organic made in 2013 has been an upheaval. The elimination of chemicals has meant a significant loss in hives, which he now believes he has been able to stabilize at 150 hives. This has meant a drop in the census by half, since the management practices are more complex. Now, for example, he has to cage the queen to combat varroa, which seems to have become resistant to several chemical products. These practices are more costly, especially in terms of time. The big problem of all this is that he has had to increase prices, which means that he is having to go out to the market to sell, especially consumer groups in Madrid and that he will soon open an online store, now that he has been able to stabilize production.

Although the production is organic, the packaging is not yet certified organic. This has made it even more difficult to sell, as it cannot label it as organic, and has had to focus on consumer groups, with people with whom it had a close relationship.

## EVALUATION OF THE RESULTS



Direct sales have been the only option I had to survive in a market where bulk sales are highly penalized. Fortunately, he is in a privileged area, where honey is a highly valued product. He does not have to transhumance, which means that he has a lower production, but also higher prices. The change to organic is a long-term commitment that he has made out of personal conviction, but in the long run it will bring greater benefits. These will come in the first place by the production itself. Beekeeping is a small sector, with little research and a lot of very comfortable beekeepers. To fight against varroa, one of the great problems of beekeeping, a lot of chemicals have been used that little by little have created resistances, which makes these treatments more and more ineffective. Changes in management such as queen caging, almost obligatory in organic farming nowadays, are now much more effective, although they mean a loss of production, since they require longer stops, as well as a lot of expertise and much more time.

He believes it is possible to find a niche market for this high value-added honey, but at almost double the price. Only small farms can offer these products, but of course, it requires more effort in marketing. It is necessary to explain to the consumer face to face which are the characteristics that differentiate it, besides the organoleptic characteristics and the quantity produced can vary enormously from one year to the next, mainly due to the climate.

## **WHAT WOULD YOU DO DIFFERENT AND WHAT ARE THE PERSPECTIVES IN YOUR MIND**

I could not have done anything different. If he had not done what he has done, he would have left the farm. He believes that continuing down the path of conventional beekeeping would have gone against his principles. Selling honeys with large amounts of chemical residues in direct sales markets, being aware of what you are selling, he does not think it would be honest with him, nor with the consumer. Furthermore, the use of these chemicals would have been detrimental to his health, to his family and to his natural environment.

On the other hand, if he had not started direct sales, it would have meant the disappearance of his farm. It would have meant depending on these industries that do not value production.

## **FINAL SENTENCES**



Since he returned to the village, picking up a little land from his family, he has managed to maintain and evolve from his beginnings in beekeeping. He started with many hives and selling in bulk and little by little he has been specializing in direct sales to the consumer, due to the inertia of the market. The increasing dependence on chemical products made him abandon conventional activity to go to organic, in which he still has investments to make to make the complete conversion. Its limited resources make this transformation gradual (it still has to do the packaging). But he is very clear that it is the way he has chosen to produce, sell and live in the rural environment. He could live in another way, for example selling honey that is not his when he lacks it, but he prefers to be honest and try to explain to the consumer, not only that his honey is different, but also to teach him to understand that the countryside is not a factory, that it has that variability and that acting in another way will mean the disappearance of the rural world.

### Suggestions for other farmers

Each one has to take into account what their motivations are, based on this each one must follow their own path. He has chosen to have an environmentally friendly farm with a high quality product, which has led him to have a modest farm, in which to survive he considers that the most important thing is to reach the consumer, you have to talk clearly with him, face to face, explain what your product is, how you do it, what makes you different, teach him to appreciate it and to distinguish it, and also to understand what your costs are, because you cannot sell it below your costs.

Getting out of the chain, producing and selling on your own is much more complex, but also more beautiful if you do something you believe in. It can also be more frustrating, because if you try to do it well and be honest, it makes you more angry about certain practices, such as selling honey as your own when it is from other producers or when there is consumer fraud with imported honeys.



## ES05 – LA FAYA

### IDENTIFICATION OF THE CASE STUDY

Case number: **ES-05**

Name of company: **La Faya**

Title of the case study:

**Spanish Churra sheep breed family farm**

### MAIN DATA OF THE COMPANY

#### Country

- Spain

#### Company

- Family company

#### Farming Activity

- Cultivation
- Animal breeding
- Product's transformation on farm

#### Direct selling way

- Direct selling in farm
- Direct selling in farmer markets
- Online selling

## SELF – INTRODUCTION OF THE FARMER

Angeles Santos owns, together with her family, a farm that closes the whole productive cycle, as they have pastures and grow cereals, in addition to transforming part of their production. They have about 180 ha of pasture and 130 ha of arable land, of which only half is cultivated (the other half is left fallow). Half of the cultivated area is dedicated to rye, and the other half mainly to oats mixed with leguminous plants. This production is dedicated to the production of fodder, although it is not enough to feed all the livestock and they have to buy more.

They have approximately 1,200 Churra breed sheep, cattle that they inherited from their parents and that they have been improving according to the characteristics that best suit them.

They make cheese in their own facilities, which is their main source of income. They also sell wool, although this activity generates losses, but they have no choice. They also sell lambs for meat together with a partner, but this activity is carried out more by their partner.

Seven people work on the farm, although five are family members and only two are external workers.

All the production carries the organic seal except for the meat, which does not have a market worth paying for the certification. The cheese production is sold through direct sales, mainly in the farm's own store, although it also sells to stores and online upon request. Lamb is sold through the Autochthonous Breed Association.

## CHANGES / INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS ADOPTED

They have introduced several innovations, for example they have improved the local breed to improve management, achieving a smaller size, for example, ideal for an extensive farm like theirs, where lambs frequently have to be moved between farms and sheds.

They also introduced cheese making on a livestock farm they inherited from their parents, as a way of adding value to their production. But this innovation is continuous as the cheese making process requires continuous investments, such as the purchase of machinery to improve the processes.

Another innovation they have introduced is the installation of collars with GPS devices that allow them to locate the cattle and not have to spend all day with them. This greatly facilitates the task of managing the flock of sheep. Due to its cost, they have 3 gps per flock.

## **WHY AND HOW YOU DECIDED TO INTRODUCE STRATEGY CHANGES / INNOVATIONS**

Innovations have always had several reasons, on the one hand commercial, since moving forward in the chain, making your own product, especially if it is of high quality such as organic cheese, allows you not to depend on intermediaries, having contact with the customer, who knows your farm will make him value and appreciate the product more. On the other hand, for productive reasons, the improvement of the breed has improved the production yield. Finally, optimizing management, the improvement of the breed has facilitated the management of cattle, as well as the installation of GPS collars, which allows greater control of the herd and allows some freedom when working, which in turn allows optimizing time by reducing the necessary workload. It must be taken into account that the depopulation of rural areas is atrocious, and it is becoming increasingly difficult to find skilled labor for certain specialized tasks, so reducing the workload is very important.

## **WHAT OBSTACLES DID YOU MEET**

The greatest difficulties have always had to do with the size of the investments required. To make many of the installations, especially those involving on-farm transformation, the requirements to be met by the legislation have been very high. It is true that some flexibility has always been allowed, even more so since the introduction of certain exceptions for small farms, but these have always depended on the person in the administration who carried out the controls and monitoring. Often the viability of the investment depends on the flexibility of this person, and the requirements can change according to discretion. After making the investment in the cheese factory, they had thought with their partner to invest in a cutting room for the meat, but it is stopped because of the cost.

Another difficulty in the implementation of the investments has been the geolocation, the lack of coverage in many of the farms. Another one that is getting closer and closer is the presence of the wolf. They may not be with the animals thanks to this technology, but of course it can also favor the attacks if the animals are alone.

## **EVALUATION OF THE RESULTS**



Right now her parents, her two brothers and herself, as well as two workers, are working on the farm. Little by little they are consolidating their activity, buying machinery such as a new slicer and a slicer for cheese. Being in an area with a high risk of depopulation has allowed them to have more help from the administration (over 20%) for many investments, but it has also made it difficult for clients to access and find qualified labor.

The fact that most of the production is direct and local sales is a source of pride for them, because for them sustainability is very important. They would like to continue growing, not so much in size, since this type of high-quality production cannot grow indefinitely without losing part of that sustainability and contact with the land, in addition to the difficulties of finding labor. But they would like to generate more value with lamb meat, install a cutting room and be able to sell the meat directly.

### **WHAT WOULD YOU DO DIFFERENT AND WHAT ARE THE PERSPECTIVES IN YOUR MIND**

The mistakes they have made are part of learning, so they believe they would not do anything differently. However, they recognize that when they started the activity, in order to benefit from a subsidy, they had to make significant disbursements that have taken a long time to amortize, so it would have been more advisable to wait until the activity was more competitive.

### **FINAL SENTENCES**

Personally, he is very pleased to be able to continue working in a sector that she likes, living in the land where he was born and producing very high-quality food that is highly valued by consumers, who come to buy it at his store.

### **Suggestions for other farmers**



For someone who is just starting out, it is best to use an organic production method. These farms allow you to start with more modest farms with smaller sizes and move more easily to direct sales to the consumer, better paid and that would allow you to continue working with a farm of this size. You have to be very careful with subsidies, since they are designed to help you pay for very large investments, which at the beginning of your activity may not be necessary, so your debt ratio and your risk may be very large. His parents have always valued training, which is a very important life stage. It is necessary to have good training, to go outside and see things from different perspectives that will allow us to put together a much richer project.



## ES06 – ISMAEL’S FARM

### IDENTIFICATION OF THE CASE STUDY

Case number: **ES-06**

Name of company: **Ismael’s Farm**

Title of the case study:

**Direct online sales of oranges**

### MAIN DATA OF THE COMPANY

#### **Country**

- **Spain**

#### **Company**

- **Family company**

#### **Farming Activity**

- **Cultivation**

#### **Direct selling way**

- **Direct selling in farm**
- **Online selling**

## SELF – INTRODUCTION OF THE FARMER

Ismael Navarro is a young farmer from Valencia, 39 years old. He has been a professional farmer since 2015. He studied IT and started his farming career after a generational change in his family, although he has always had an interest in the sector.

The farm is made up of several plots of citrus fruits of approximately six hectares. They have oranges and mandarins of different varieties, and are now starting to plant avocado.

From 2017 onwards he started with direct sales, firstly due to economic needs, with the aim of achieving greater profitability, as citrus fruits in Spain are going through a serious economic situation. He took an example from other growers, verifying that direct sales were an opportunity and he began to implement it on his farm until today, where it accounts for more than 75% of turnover. Their direct sales are focused on the online format.

As for the rest of the workers, his parents are retired, although he has one person permanently employed throughout the year (an integrated pest management advisor, who is an agricultural engineer) and during the year he hires seasonal workers depending on the work to be done.

## CHANGES / INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS ADOPTED

At the agronomic level, it has reduced the use of synthetic herbicides by 50%, it has more machinery for mowing weeds, it has specific covers for biological pest control and, when space permits, it shreds pruning, among other things.

In addition, it collects and analyses multiple data for use in its decision-making, both on its farm and for sales: it has humidity sensors on its farm. They also use a nearby weather station to monitor rainfall. They even analyse economic data.

On a commercial level, it is a complete paradigm shift. Currently, supported by e-commerce solutions, it has improved its sales, boosted marketing campaigns and created an online page: [masquenaranjas.com](http://masquenaranjas.com). It also makes use of social networks, mainly Instagram and Facebook (where it has more engagement), but also Twitter.

It also carries out agro-tourism activities, in this case, visits to the orchard for small groups (families or 5-6 people), through the website of a public body in their autonomous community that promotes them. These are visits of approximately 3 hours where people are shown the farm and the process of the oranges is explained (as well as the varieties and the ripening times).

## WHY AND HOW YOU DECIDED TO INTRODUCE STRATEGY CHANGES / INNOVATIONS

Regarding agronomic changes, the main reason was his awareness of the, in his opinion, excessive use of chemical products, he has been implementing some changes. For example, in terms of pruning, he makes use of pruning even if it is more expensive, as he thinks it will be more beneficial in the long run for both his farm and the environment. In terms of chemical reduction, decisions have been made as they have gained a better understanding of the crops or the role of pest controls, as well as legislative impositions (such as the reduction of pesticides imposed by the European Union).

As far as commercial changes are concerned, the main factor was economic needs, as he saw that either the way of making sales had to be changed or, as has happened to many of his colleagues, viability was very much in doubt, and so, making calculations and studying the possible profitability, he took the decisions he did, especially with regard to direct sales.

Finally, regarding data analysis, Ismael has knowledge in this area from his studies, which he complemented with his agricultural activity. This data helps them to better understand crops, fertilizers, etc., as well as financial data.

## WHAT OBSTACLES DID YOU MEET

The most important obstacle, again, has been financial because, to return to the example of wood shredding, this process is more expensive than burning a pruning plot. The purchase of certain machinery has also played a role.

Bureaucracy has also been an obstacle, especially in the delay in granting permits, for example, he had to wait two years for a road he needed to use to be cleared.

In their area, they have more and more pest problems, making pest management more and more complicated to handle. In this respect, they use new solutions offered by suppliers.

As for direct sales, among the difficulties he points out the existence of competition, where you have to know the competition, see how it works, have knowledge of online marketing and know the market. He also has to dedicate time to customer service, where he has to spend time and money.



## EVALUATION OF THE RESULTS

As for the level of production, this has had to be reduced in order to be more profitable, as some plots were already old and are in the process of being renovated, while others have had to be sold.

On the work organization side, there have also been many changes, both in terms of the people to contact, the service companies, and the distribution of work according to the times.

Finally, in relation to sales, he values the changes made positively: if he had not made direct sales, he would have abandoned, leased or sold his farm today, because the numbers of six years ago were not viable.

## WHAT WOULD YOU DO DIFFERENT AND WHAT ARE THE PERSPECTIVES IN YOUR MIND

Ismael does regret some of the decisions he has made in the past, although he accepts that you have to make mistakes to realise certain things. In general, they have not been irreversible mistakes, but he has made mistakes, sometimes due to lack of knowledge, climatic misfortunes or simply making the wrong decision. He also thinks that he should have opted 5 years ago for varieties that are now good, but now it is too late and he is simply trying to adapt.

In the future he wants to continue being a farmer: a profession that he likes very much, even if he comes from another sector and despite the difficulties he has. He fights for his farm, for the sector at the level of agricultural trade union organizations, he also appears in the media in this sense. The lack of generational renewal hurts him and that is why he is also involved in this type of struggle.

In this sense, he plans to continue to evolve, to include new improvements, to invest in machinery to increase profitability and efficiency, to strengthen direct sales and even to make the leap to cover other countries (currently he only covers mainland Spain).

## FINAL SENTENCES

As far as direct online sales are concerned, he gives a positive assessment, as without the changes he would not have been able to continue his farm.

In general, since he has been managing the farm himself, he has made many changes, some with good results and others without, but in general the assessment of his work is positive. It is a profession he is passionate about, so he is going to fight to continue on the right path.



## Suggestions for other farmers

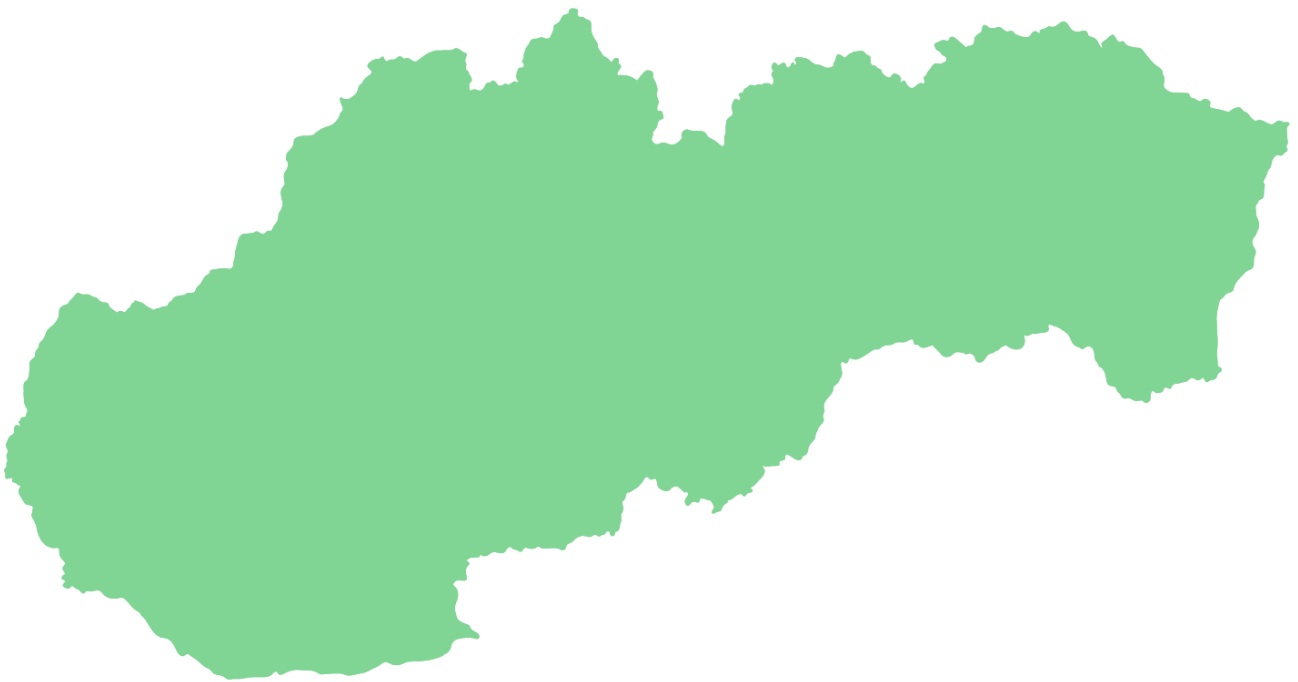
As farmers, as well as loving our land, we have to be concerned about knowing how to sell our products in order to give value to them and to our work.

We have to be very aware of the marketing channel: Financial knowledge is basic, as farmers are small entrepreneurs, and be aware of the needs of your audience and trends, but always with a fixed course.

You have to be aware of new technologies, there is a growing social awareness of direct sales, so it is an opportunity: I encourage people to try it and to value it as a possibility for their life.



# SLOVAKIA





## SK01 - MARIAN'S FARM

### IDENTIFICATION OF THE CASE STUDY

Case number: **SK-01**

Name of company: **Marian's farm**

Title of the case study:

**Marian's dairy farm: an example of Slovak family farming devoted to on-farm processing, selling and educational activities**

### MAIN DATA OF THE COMPANY

#### Country

- Slovakia

#### Company

- Family company

#### Farming Activity

- Animal breeding
- Product's transformation on farm

#### Direct selling way

- Direct selling in farm

## SELF – INTRODUCTION OF THE FARMER

Marian Glovatakis the owner of a farm located in a small mountain village in the north part of Slovakia, of around 100 hectares. Marian is a cattle farmer: he has 27 dairy cows, plus some calves.

Marian farms together with his wife Monica. They have one employee and occasionally his parents when Marian is away. He periodically has 1 or 2 seasonal workers.

Marian and his wife started farming 10 years ago. Marian's father used to work as a public servant and after liberation from Communism, when collective farming and cooperatives disappeared, he bought two cows and started as a part-time farmer. In 2011, Marian started farming.

Marian does on-farm transformation: he produces milk from the 20 dairy cows and with it, he produces traditional products, for example, a cheese calledorbache. He does not have certifications (he mentioned that his natural certification is "customer satisfaction"). He raises the cows on pasture and doesn't use silage in winter, to get higher-quality products.

He sells the milk and products 100% on the farm directly to the customers.

## CHANGES / INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS ADOPTED

At the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic, during lockdowns, there were not many occasions to buy on a farm, so Marian and his wife decided to introduce the use of social media. At the moment, they are still using social media for relevant occasions (such as the birth of a new calf). According to him, using social media is a very good method to start promoting products: it is cheap, and you can show the personal story of the farmer.

Moreover, they run educational activities on the farm. For example, he collaborates with teachers to bring young students to the farm. They also coach students from agricultural schools and teach them farming techniques.

Marian never considered opening a shop on the farm. In his opinion, it brings additional expenses and not enough value. In his view, the best way to sell products is to have good quality. If you have good quality, customers find you.



## WHY AND HOW YOU DECIDED TO INTRODUCE STRATEGY CHANGES / INNOVATIONS

Marian and his wife introduced the use of social media during the Covid-19 pandemic, as a method to promote products and reach customers, even during lockdowns. In their opinion, it is a very useful method for all farmers, especially those engaged with on-farm transformation and direct selling.

## WHAT OBSTACLES DID YOU MEET

In his farming activity, Marian faces many obstacles, such as difficult access to land and an administrative burden. He is part of the Young Farmer Organization of Slovakia to fight and take action against these problems. Also, he is currently experiencing challenges due to conflictual relationships with neighbors and with a corrupted agricultural funding agency. Every time there is a problem, he tries to solve it in the most logical way, without being overwhelmed by an emotional reaction.

## EVALUATION OF THE RESULTS

Marian admits that he is passing through a difficult moment. He feels sad and sometimes overwhelmed by many obstacles. Sometimes he thinks about stop farming. Once he even announced to his children that he would stop farming and shut down the farm and he saw them crying and convincing him to keep going. This gave him a good positive energy to continue farming. But it's very difficult anyway at the moment. This is due to conflicting relations with the neighbors and with a corrupted agricultural funding agency. But he has the family's support, which is the source of his motivation. In his view, that's the point of family farming.

## WHAT WOULD YOU DO DIFFERENT AND WHAT ARE THE PERSPECTIVES IN YOUR MIND



For the future, he hopes to continue farming. He sees two different scenarios: either going in the direction of automatization. He considers buying milking robots and digitalizing the communication with customers (through a scheduling mobile application).

In the alternative scenario, he would like to finish building some parts of the farm.

In the long-term, he would be happy to see his children taking over the farm. At the moment, he never pushes them but just show them how running a farm works.

## FINAL SENTENCES

Marian's farm is a beautiful example of a family farming activity. He is strongly passionate about his work, that he does with a vocation to valorize his territory and produce high-quality products. He raises cattle, produces milk and some transformed products like traditional cheese and he only sells directly on the farm.

Marian is very honest about the challenges of the farming profession, from the heavy administrative burden to the conflicting relations with neighbors and admits to sometimes think about stopping to farm.

Marian sees the challenges as opportunities. He introduces the use of social media during the Covid-19 pandemics, and he found this innovation useful to overcome the limits of a limited contact with customers. In his view, all farmers and especially that involved in direct selling, should consider the opportunities of using social media.

## Suggestions for other farmers

According to Marian, every farmer can be successful. If you are already a good farmer, producing high quality products, then for sure you are able to do on-farm transformation and selling. It's not difficult to transform products, but to produce good quality. Marketing on social media is a successful method for promoting your products. If you have good products, it is a useful tool to market them. But the first step is to produce high-quality products.