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Executive Summary

This report presents a summary of the findings from the production, marketing, demographic, and industry participation data generously provided by U.S. artisan, farmstead, and specialty cheesemakers via the 2016 and 2018 surveys.

Key findings include:

- Cheesemakers who use sheep milk were more likely to be located in the West and Northeast regions.
- Cheesemakers using unpasteurized milk with no heat treatment were more likely to be located in the Northeast than any other region, and they're more likely to use a higher percentage of this milk in their cheesemaking than producers in other regions.
- The majority of cheesemakers participating in government or government-sponsored programs in the previous three years were located in the Midwest and Northeast regions. Average production volume of these cheesemakers in 2017 was 63,000 pounds.
- Cheesemakers in the Northeast and West were more likely to be members of a state, regional, or local cheese guild or council than those located in the South and Midwest regions.
- Continuing the finding from the 2016 study, there was a negative relationship between average profit margin and the number of cheese products made. This means that average profit margin tends to decrease as cheesemakers add cheeses to their range of product offerings.
- A marked difference existed between distribution channels used by larger cheesemakers compared with those used by smaller cheesemakers.
- Average profit margins decreased as production volume increased.