



**AMERICAN CHEESE SOCIETY ANNOUNCES 2020 CONFERENCE & COMPETITION CANCELLATION  
DUE TO COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Monday, May 4, 2020

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DENVER, CO – The American Cheese Society (ACS) Board of Directors announced today that *Blazing the Trail for Cheese*, the 37<sup>th</sup> Annual ACS Conference & Competition, scheduled to take place in Portland, Oregon July 22-25 has been cancelled. After careful deliberation, the association cites the devastating impacts of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19), safety, and prioritization of member business needs.

“ACS’ priority is the health and safety of the greater cheese community, including our members, sponsors, volunteers, and staff,” said Marianne Smukowski, ACS president. “As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to unfold, it is clear that in the face of these heartbreaking times, that we must make tough choices and prioritize the well-being of our attendees and their families.”

2020 marks the first time since 1983 that ACS has not held an annual educational gathering or conference. The first event originally saw 150 attendees and has since grown to become the industry’s premier educational experience, with over 1,300 attendees in 2019.

“We recognize the magnitude of this decision for our membership and the association,” said Karen Lundquist, ACS executive director. “The Annual Conference & Competition brings together so many passionate professionals each year to celebrate the very community we all love so much. Coming together not only unifies and strengthens our ties each year but provides opportunities and business networking so vital to individual and collective successes.”

ACS staff is prepared to provide service to conference registrants, sponsors, and certification applicants regarding cancellation procedures, with information regarding refunds and additional policies and FAQs available at [www.cheesesociety.org](http://www.cheesesociety.org). Details on future virtual networking and educational resources in partnership with industry leaders are expected to launch starting in the month of May.

“Although this is a great disappointment and we will miss seeing so many of our beloved friends,

colleagues, and business connections, we are dedicated to prioritizing that our collective industry's future thrives and survives this unprecedented historical moment," Lundquist remarked.

Plans will continue for ACS to resume normal conference and competition operations in 2021. In the meantime, ACS continues its commitment to remaining the industry leader in promoting and supporting American artisan cheeses, with an enhanced information hub on pandemic related business resources. The association is allied with industry organizations, cheese guilds, and media influencers in a collective effort as it looks to a new future of collective solidarity.

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**About the American Cheese Society (ACS)**

ACS is the leading organization supporting the understanding, appreciation, and promotion of artisan, farmstead, and specialty cheeses produced in the Americas. At 2,300 members strong, ACS provides advocacy, education, business development, and networking opportunities for cheesemakers, retailers, enthusiasts, and extended industry. ACS strives to continually raise the quality and availability of cheese in the Americas. Since its founding in 1983, ACS proudly hosts the foremost annual educational conference and world-renowned cheese judging and competition in North America.