



NEWS RELEASE
For Immediate Release

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New Study Highlights Changes in U.S. Artisan and Specialty Cheese

DENVER, Colo. – June 14, 2023 – A new survey of America’s artisan and specialty cheese industry reveals trends and some significant shifts in this key dairy sector. Commissioned by the American Cheese Society (ACS) and conducted by Dr. Lucy McGowan from Mills Legacy, a business and research consulting firm, the **2022 State of the U.S. Artisan/Specialty Cheese Industry Report** illuminates numerous changes in production, marketing and sales, food-safety practices, and profitability—some likely pandemic- related.

This biennial market analysis, based on a survey of more than 200 artisan and specialty cheesemakers in the U.S., addresses a major segment of the specialty food industry. Cheese is the second largest category of the \$175 billion U.S. specialty food sales market, according to the Specialty Food Association.

“Cheesemakers care deeply about the products they create, and they continue to support the growth of the American artisan cheese industry through their creativity and passion,” says Tara Holmes, ACS Executive Director. “Their work is not without its challenges, however, and this research highlights the importance of their work in creating delicious products while maintaining the utmost safety standards and profitability.”

Key findings of the 2022 survey include:

Production:

- Farmstead cheese production (produced on the farm with milk from the cheesemaker’s own herd or flock) is declining. In 2021, 56% of respondents made cheese with their own milk, down from 66% in 2015.
- Artisan and specialty cheesemakers are making fewer types of cheese, after a steady increase from 2014 to 2019.
- Production of cheese from unpasteurized milk is declining. In 2018, 67% of respondents made at least some cheese with unpasteurized milk; in the recent survey, the number dropped to 48%.

Marketing and Sales:

- Cheesemaker websites are now a major sales channel. In 2021, 65% of respondents sold their cheese from their own site compared to 32% in 2015.

Food Safety:

- 90% of respondents now have a food-safety plan in place, up from 59% in 2016.

Profitability:

- Cheesemakers using cow, goat and sheep milk were significantly more profitable than those using cow’s milk alone. However, cheesemakers making mixed-milk cheeses were less profitable.
- From 2017 to 2021, profit margins decreased on cheese from all milk types.

The research yielded three reports:

Report of Key Findings: includes data on demographics, production, marketing, food safety, industry participation, and attitudes and perceptions.

Benchmarking Report: includes data on geography, production methods, production volume, milk types, marketing and distribution practices, and profitability.

Food Safety Report: includes findings on aging practices, food safety planning, milk testing, regulatory knowledge, inspections, and audits.

Digital copies are available for download on [the ACS website](#) at the following rates:

- **ACS members:** \$125 for all 3 reports
- **Non-members:** \$750 for all 3 reports

Media may request a complimentary Report of Key Findings by contacting ACS at 720-328-2788 or info@cheesesociety.org.

About American Cheese Society

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. ACS is a 501(c)6 nonprofit association headquartered in Denver, CO. To learn more about ACS, please visit www.cheesesociety.org or contact 720-328-2788.

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