

Questions to Ask a Dairy Processor

1. Why did you begin dairy processing?
2. At what scale of processing did you start?
3. Did you expect to be at the scale that you are?
4. Are you still making the same line up of products that you started with? If not, please explain the evolution?
5. How did you decide what to make?
6. What is your yield for that product (if similar to what you plan to make)
7. How did you learn to make that product?
8. If you went to workshops/hired a consultant, please tell me more about your experiences...
9. Do you think you were prepared to start when you did?
10. Are you meeting your processing/financial goals?
11. Do you (or family member) have an off-farm job?
12. What are the roles of the family/team members on this farm/processing business?
13. Do you use heritage breeds?
14. What are your challenges as a processor with the milk? (can be quality, quantity or yield questions)
15. What are the best things about using milk from that breed?
16. Do you think having milk from Heritage breeds adds value to your product?
17. What do you do with your whey?
18. How do you age/store product?
19. How big are your batches?
20. How often do you process?
21. What are your ingredient costs per pound?
22. How much time does it take to make your cheese (break it out into pasteurize, clean up, cheese process time, etc.)?
23. What kind of vat/pasteurizer, etc do you use?
24. What percentage of your sales are wholesale? Are you happy with that mix?
25. What percentage of your sales are direct to consumer? How do you feel about that?
26. If they do farmers markets, have them give honest thoughts about various ones, especially if you plan to attend them as well.
27. Do you use a distributor?
28. Can you give advice on using any of the distributors in the area?
29. Are you happy with it? If not, what would you change/do?
30. Are you satisfied with where you are?
31. What would you change?
32. Do you have any advice for someone starting out?