

# THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS

EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS



## Department of Agricultural Resources

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### ***An Economic Snapshot of the Massachusetts Artisan Cheese Industry May 2012***

The artisan cheese industry in the U.S has recently seen resurgence, which is also true in Massachusetts. As recently as 20 years ago there were as few as 75 artisan cheese makers in the United States, now doubled and in the hundreds. In Massachusetts there are 25 artisan cheese producers making cheese in small batches, primarily by hand, and often using traditional production and aging techniques, up from 18 in 2007. The cheese industry is an important value added product for many of the state's dairy farmers.

#### **Strong growth**

In 2011 the total production of the 25 Massachusetts artisanal cheese producers was some 650,160 pounds. Total production increased 63,685 pounds or 10.8% from 2007, when the production was at 586,475 pounds. Total sales increased 10.5% to \$ 5.66 in 2011, from \$ 5.12 million in 2007. The farmstead cheese industry included 80 jobs in 2011: 46 full-time and 34 part-time, over double compared to 38 in 2007.

Massachusetts cheese producers preserve open space. They farmed 2,014 acres of land, with 721 acres exclusively for grazing. About half of the cheese makers use cow's milk, and the other half goat's milk. The most common breed of cow is the Holstein, and the most common breeds of goat include the La Mancha and Alpine.

#### **Shift in sales venues**

There has been a significant shift in how farmstead cheese is sold in Massachusetts. Direct sales now represent about 43% of total sales, compared to 17% in 2007. The shift to more direct sales supports farm viability with a larger share of the margins returned to the producer. Increased participation at farmers markets has been important for direct sales, as well as to increase visibility of the products for purchase in retail stores.

#### **What's ahead**

The Massachusetts artisan cheese industry has defied economic trends with continued growth. There has been a more interest in the artisan cheese movement among producers and consumers alike. With the increase in the

visibility at farmers markets, the artisan cheese producers have gained access to a much larger audience, which is predicted to continue growing.

Year	Number of Cheese Producers	Production (Pounds)	Sales in Millions	Retail % Vs Wholesale %	Total Acres Preserved	Acres for Grazing	Employees
2011	25	650,160	\$5.66	43 % to 57 %	2,014	721	80 (46 Full Time 34 Part Time)
2007	18	586,475	\$5.12	17 % to 83 %	1,831	777	38 (20 Full Time 18 part Time)

Year		Wine and Cheese Trail: Farmstead cheese businesses	
2012		Of the 25 farmstead cheese makers in Massachusetts, 18 are open to the public. The others focus on wholesale business to retailers.	
2009		11 open to visitors	

This survey was conducted by the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources, Division of Agricultural Markets