

# The Future of Cheese

## REPORT 2020



**Covid Impact**  
UK cheesemakers  
adapt and evolve

**Industry Icons**  
Exclusive intel from  
cheese sector experts

**International View**  
Spotlight on Europe  
and US markets

# THE FUTURE OF CHEESE

*Speciality Food* spoke exclusively with cheese makers and mongers, distributors and industry bodies to find out the impact of 2020 thus far – and what the future holds

## COMMENTATORS



**PETER ALVIS**  
ROYAL ASSOCIATION OF  
BRITISH DAIRY FARMERS (RDBF)



**DR. JUDITH BRYANS**  
DAIRY UK

**F**or an industry already negatively impacted by a number of factors ranging from Brexit to the rise of plant-based products, spring/summer 2020 will no doubt go down in history as one of the most challenging periods faced by dairy professionals around the world, but silver linings are emerging. Catherine Mead, chair of the Specialist Cheesemakers Association, sees a bright future for some of the opportunities forged in the fires of Covid-19. Online sales and box schemes have reached their potential during these troubled times, while connection of consumers through online tastings and talks have been smartly optimised by makers and mongers. Independent retailers – farm shops, delis, food halls and specialists – have pushed their way to the foreground of the retail landscape as experts and the likes of Jamie Oliver reinforce the ‘buy local, buy speciality’ message. Purchasing products from local suppliers is more popular than ever before, and the message that British food – as well as being produced to great standards – offers both diversity and choice is being shouted louder than ever. Catherine

raises a glass to the artisan cheese sector, who through the Specialist Cheesemakers Association demonstrated their “collegiate and cohesive nature and worked superbly well together”.

### A turbulent ride

While the Covid-19 pandemic has cut deeply into the dairy industry, it's not the only power at play affecting farmers in 2020. The year has been a “turbulent ride for dairy farmers,” says Peter Alvis, chairman of the Royal Association of British Dairy Farmers (RDBF). “The pandemic has massively affected their livelihoods, cashflow and incomes, and added to that have been the weather woes from a dry spring and labour shortage issues which continue to be a concern with the introduction of a point-based immigration system from next year, as well as the impact a no-deal Brexit will have on export trade. There also continues to be a gradual decline in milk producer numbers in the UK due to a myriad of factors,

including unpredictable milk prices; Bovine TB, increasing input prices and labour shortages.”

Labour issues are a key concern for the RDBF. “Where there have been labour shortages because of Covid-19,” Peter explains, “even though a high percentage of the population has been furloughed/out of work there still has not been the willingness to work on farms. Dairy farms require highly skilled workers to uphold the high animal

welfare and health standards we adhere to in the UK.”

The introduction of the points-based immigration system from next year will give priority to those with the ‘highest skills and greatest talents’, with dairy workers not falling into these categories. “This failure to recognize dairy workers will leave the UK dairy industry with a severe labour shortage with some of the largest dairy producers in the UK relying on skilled foreign labour,” responds Peter.

### What's next?

“There will also be a move towards more resilience in the sector and improving farming productivity to make farmers more efficient,” suggests Peter, “as well as concentrating on costs, planning, and tapping into other opportunities, such as diversification.”

“In such extraordinary times, it's hard to say for sure how things will unfold,” says Dr Judith Bryans, chief executive of Dairy UK, “Challenges still remain for the dairy sector; we're yet to fully appreciate the extent of the economic fallout from the crisis on the UK economy, we're also fast approaching the end of the implementation period with the EU and are yet to understand the full impact and opportunities this will bring, educating both the public and policy makers on the sustainability of our products and working towards Net Zero

“We would like to see a balanced [Brexit] deal that maintains access both ways for markets to ensure continued trade and does not impose tariffs at a level that requires either party to seek either markets or supply away from the current supply chain”

PETER ALVIS, CHAIRMAN OF THE RDBF

**THE NUMBER OF REGISTERED DAIRY PRODUCERS IN THE UK FELL FROM 35,741 IN 1995 TO 12,209 IN 2019, A 66% REDUCTION. A SURVEY BY AHDB IN APRIL THIS YEAR SUGGESTS THERE ARE ABOUT 8,380 DAIRY PRODUCERS IN GREAT BRITAIN**

A SURVEY BY RABDF IN **2016** FOUND OVER **HALF** OF RESPONDENTS **EMPLOYED** STAFF FROM **OUTSIDE** OF THE UK IN THE LAST **FIVE** YEARS – A **24%** INCREASE ON **2014**. ALMOST TWO-THIRDS SAID THIS WAS DUE TO **INSUFFICIENT** UK STAFF BEING AVAILABLE

commitments, and we also have work to do promoting the health and nutrition of our products given Government's clear intention to take action on obesity."

### An immense goodwill towards dairy

During the past few turbulent months, consumers have become more loyal to dairy products. "So far consumer data has shown us that during the Covid-19 crisis many have switched back to the more traditional foods they know and trust," Judith continues. "We've seen this for dairy products like milk and cheese, which has

been helpful in offsetting the loss of out-of-home consumption. What this tells us is that despite some of the disruptors and negativity, consumers continue to have an immense fund of goodwill towards dairy, and as an industry it's this we need to nurture and galvanise.

"Looking to the future we can and should be positive and confident and tell the right story about dairy which addresses consumers perceptions on nutrition, sustainability and animal welfare, whilst providing the innovative products that maintain and refresh consumers."

## THE GRASS ROOTS IMPACT

Connectivity, mutual-appreciation and innovation are welcome results of a challenging period for cheesemakers

**A**fter a positive 2019 and bumper Christmas for many in the cheese industry, the impact of Covid is still very much felt by the sector. A great number of cheesemakers have adapted their business in entirely unexpected ways, while some have taken the opportunity to jump ahead on initiatives previously languishing in their To Do pile. Some paused or entirely stopped production, hanging up their dairy hats for the foreseeable future. The strengths of the artisan cheese industry have come to the foreground during these testing times, their flexibility and adaptability, as well as proximity to the philosophies that more consumers than ever found desirable, proving

to be their saving grace through these choppy waters.

Catherine Mead, chair of the Specialist Cheesemakers Association agrees that by considering the value of provenance – not least "the ability to track all their raw ingredients" - continuing with the new adoption of online platforms, and recognising and maximizing the agility of smaller businesses, cheesemakers can steady their footing in the marketplace.

"The great thing about a small business like ours is that everyone is flexible," agrees Hugh Padfield of Bath Soft Cheese. "We all have to muck in to help each other out normally. That means that when the business really has to adapt to a changing world the team is happy to be flexible."

### COMMENTATORS



**CATHERINE MEAD**  
SPECIALIST CHEESEMAKERS ASSOCIATION



**HUGH PADFIELD**  
BATH SOFT CHEESE



**RORY STONE**  
HIGHLAND FINE CHEESE



**MARY QUICKE**  
QUICKE'S



**JULIE CHEYNEY**  
ST JUDE



**ROSE GRIMOND**  
NETTLEBED CREAMERY



**CAROLINE BELL**  
SHEPHERDS PURSE

“The biggest success we’ve seen this year is the industry pulling together as a whole to try to overcome the huge issues we’ve so far faced and continuing to get food onto shelves. We’ve really taken the initiative wherever we reasonably could and I think that’s a great reflection on us as a sector”

DR JUDITH BRYANS, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OF DAIRY UK

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### Dramatic impact

This flexible approach has meant that a number of cheesemakers were able to keep on carrying on, despite Covid having dramatic impact. "Parts of the business grew as a result of changes to the market, while others came to an abrupt halt – foodservice customers had to close and so their orders ceased, retailers rationalised their ranges and deli counters closed, impacting our traditional cut cheese sales. Our popular Visitor Centre, which attracts over 350,000 tourists a year, had to close overnight," says Sandra Bell of Wensleydale Creamery.

Rory Stone of Highland Fine Cheese experienced similarly sizeable challenges. "Our business trades on 70% food service, bits of cheese no less than half a kilo for deli counters and cheese boards, but with no one serving food we were facing catastrophe, redundancy, insolvency," he explains. However, the business's ecosystem stepped in: "luckily most of our customers were both innovative and entrepreneurial. Wholesalers who were left with a vastly reduced customer base but lots of vans, stock and drivers started doing home deliveries, and 'click and collect' along with some mail order work. Our farmers made every effort to help too, they dried off cows, went to multi suckling, left calves on and bought in orphaned lambs, anything to use up the spare milk because we had nowhere to put it."

“Our popular Visitor Centre, which attracts over 350,000 tourists a year, had to close overnight”

SANDRA BELL, WENSLEYDALE CREAMERY

In the West Country, Quicke's experienced "an immediate stop to the 40% of sales that go into food service," explains Mary Quicke. The business also saw a drop in deli counter sales, but a welcome increase in pre-pack sales and a "huge" increase in online – a 10-15% boost.

"My sales fell off the cliff," says Julie Cheyney, maker of St Jude. Her lone staff member, Blake, "was furloughed immediately and was away for six weeks. In the first three precarious weeks I stopped making cheese but instead spent time selling what I had in the ripening rooms." In time, tentatively, Julie began producing in small quantities, all the while "feeling more than anxious."

While some cheesemakers paused production – perhaps indefinitely – some stepped far out of their comfort zone in the name of business survival. "We've done things I never thought we'd do!" says Rose Grimond of Nettlebed Creamery. "I used to have a golden rule that we wouldn't sell milk or do deliveries, and during the coronavirus lockdown we have set up a milk float delivery service providing whole, unhomogenised milk to local villages. As well as the milk float delivery service we also have The Cheese Hatch where we sell cheese from the building, like most French artisan cheese businesses. This has become hugely popular since lockdown and we have extended our range to include bottled milk and kefir."

Amongst this reangling of business was a need to radically rethink production processes. "We had to keep going as we had livestock and cheese that needed daily care but the business has changed dramatically," says Hugh Padfield of Bath Soft Cheese. "We changed the way we worked to make it less likely we'd catch the disease. We completed a risk assessment on all parts of the business. We split into different teams

working on different days, created posters with key advice, provided PPE and set up wash stations by each entrance."

### A new chapter for cheesemakers

The efforts of the artisan cheese sector are worth celebrating – and have shone the spotlight on the "interconnectivity" of the industry, says Caroline Bell of Shepherds Purse. "It's obvious in a way, and we all know our ecosystem, but this has illuminated how important it is to deeply understand where we each fit in the chain, and how we impact on each other." Shepherds Purse supported its struggling sheep milk farmers by accelerating the launch of its new-format Fettle cheese, which has been received well by retailers and customers alike. "If anything," she says,

"[Covid-19] has accelerated plans and made us even more determined and committed."

Wensleydale Creamery took on the challenge of supplying the local community with local food and drink from a number of producers – including its own cheese – through a new mail order business, offering valuable doorstep delivery. Julie Cheyney of St Jude "cannot stress enough [her] admiration and appreciation for those cheesemongers and shops who reinvented themselves into online sellers". While investments such as e-commerce systems were not viable for her business, "I was relieved and delighted when they started asking me for more cheese. This was a positive moment, uplifting and feeling like we were in step, working to support each other," she says.



Hugh Padfield of Bath Soft Cheese also admires the ingenuity of the industry professionals around him: "Everyone's job has changed significantly, they have all risen to the challenge and made it happen," he says. Perhaps a result of this collective stepping-up, "incredibly, sales across the business have actually exceeded the same period last year."

“Relationships are already close in the cheesemaking world. But the crisis has meant that we've talked a lot more to many more of our suppliers and customers in a much more incisive yet also, dare I say it, emotional way. It's brought even more humanity and transparency to business conversations, and relationships have deepened and strengthened as a result”

CAROLINE BELL, SHEPHERDS PURSE

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# ENTERING THE 'NEW ERA' OF SPECIALITY RETAIL

Establishments must look to reformed selling methods while simultaneously promoting the quality, connection and experience that they stand for

## COMMENTATORS



CLARE JACKSON  
SLATE CHEESE



PATRICIA MICHELSON  
LA FROMAGERIE

**A**s cheesemakers and dairy farmers have faced unprecedented challenges in the wake of Covid-19, so too have retailers large and small. With some cheesemakers ceasing production, at least temporarily, there was a

pause on some cheeses coming into stores, and it was also necessary for retailers to invest in improving – or establishing – e-commerce capabilities. Some establishments with multiple arms to the business felt the effects in a myriad of ways. For example, Patricia Michelson of La Fromagerie heads up an eating-in element to the retail sites as well as a wholesale business: “a large slice of the whole business, without customers to take the stock held.”

Footfall was suddenly a serious consideration, and in an area usually buzzing with potential customers – Bloomsbury, London – Patricia found that it was smartest to close

the shop down entirely in the absence of local office workers and other shops nearby. Meanwhile, in Suffolk, Clare Jackson of Slate Cheese found the start of lockdown “an exhausting and worrying whirlwind of change as we reacted to and processed the daily unfolding of this unprecedented situation.” For a small business located in a tourist-heavy town suddenly experiencing much-reduced footfall, the impact was heavy but the business’s focus was on the safety of its team and customers through “new risks and guidance to be addressed, and new procedures to be developed and implemented.” Amongst the difficult weeks and months, the suddenly-

smaller team remained passionate about its cause to support small-scale producers and celebrate great quality cheese, but the scars will be felt for a long time. “Whilst we feel positive and energetic in the short term, the severity of this crisis must never be forgotten in terms of the health of loved ones and the health of small businesses such as Slate on the British high street,” says Clare.

## Remodelling businesses

At La Fromagerie Patricia had “thought on her feet” as soon as word of the epidemic reached her and so the business was relatively prepared for the eventualities. “Since the end of January we had been setting aside funding for the worse case scenario to make sure we could cope, and also planning how to carry on the business,” she says. Luckily

## SELLING THE STORY



“We know that local produce, provenance and personal connection are some of the reasons our customers come to us, in fact they are part of our brand,” says James Rutter of Paxton & Whitfield. “We work closely with our suppliers and so know the provenance of the products we sell. Not only does it reassure customers but it is also good for customer service as the team can talk with engagement about the product that they are selling. We are always striving to be ‘best in class’ and this is one area that is extremely important to us.”

“Across our sites and sales channels, we are concentrating on developing deeper relationships with customers old and new, understanding their needs, and ensuring that they have a positive experiences whilst shopping with us. It is through this work that we will retain their business. It sounds really simple, but to get it right is a lifetime’s work!”

“As a business dedicated to farmhouse cheese we will always support and champion our artisan cheesemakers. They were hit hard, but they are bouncing back, and some have worked well in exploring the avenues such as online and farm-gate sales. You can make opportunities out of a crisis and I am always open to discussing these things and being part of initiatives to progressing ideas. If anything at all has come out of these last few months it is that we all work together and find ways to get through.

Collective thinking that is mutually beneficial for all”

PATRICIA MICHELSON, LA FROMAGERIE



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this planning came off the back of a “very strong” Christmas, and landlords were open to discussions in March – before lockdown was announced in the UK on the 23rd. There was time to consider how the business wanted to be perceived when not offering its usual physical shopping experience. The business's sites were transformed into ‘food hubs’ offering a wider range of fresh produce, and the chef created new take-home dishes while the bakery and bread selection was slimmed

“Whilst we feel positive and energetic in the short term, the severity of this crisis must never be forgotten in terms of the health of loved ones and the health of small businesses such as Slate on the British high street”

CLARE JACKSON,  
SLATE CHEESE

down. La Fromagerie's online experience was boosted by online cheeseboard suggestions plus wine and drink pairings, and new customers have been attracted to shop with the business through refreshed social media content. Online sales have “doubled week on week”, which was no doubt a relief when faced with stressful discussions around rent and Government loans; Patricia explains: “It was like starting the business all over again but in a new format. We are now looking at ourselves in a whole new light.”

For James Rutter, operations director at Paxton & Whitfield, the multi-faceted nature of the business was significantly reduced almost overnight. “In March we pivoted from a retailer and wholesaler to predominantly an e-commerce focused business,” he explains. The business decided to close

its central London shop on Jermyn Street as well as its Bath and Stratford-upon-Avon sites “as it didn't make financial sense to remain trading in those locations with reduced footfall.” The local community surrounding Cale Street in Soho continued to be served, however, and similarly to other businesses Paxton & Whitfield saw impressive growth in its e-commerce channels.

Now that Paxton & Whitfield's retail sites are reopening, the business is reshaping the foundations of its operations to make it work for the ‘new normal.’ “We have re-configured the picking and packing lines, shops floors, offices and cheese rooms to find more space to serve customers and pack customers' orders safely,” James says. “We have re-opened our flagship Jermyn Street shop with a different layout. As a result, we are limiting numbers of customers allowed into the shops and the number of staff allowed behind the counter. Further easing in social distancing will mean that we would be able to open up more areas of the shop and invite more customers in if we felt it safe and necessary to do so.”

### New opportunities

While cheese professionals of every ilk have developed new skills as a result of ‘chipping in’ in areas of the business they might not have been familiar with pre-Covid, at Paxton & Whitfield this change of pace has offered an opportunity for team members and the business alike. For example Jasmine Reeves, shop manager at the Stratford site, who spent time at the maturing rooms and warehouse to cut cheese and prepare orders as a result of the shop being temporarily shuttered, and brought a customer-centric approach which proved invaluable to the business. “As a result, she has just accepted a new role as Paxton & Whitfield's quality manager and is now focused on improving the quality of our products from receipt through to dispatch,” says James. “There was little chance of this role existing pre-2020, not without the changes we have experienced within our business.”

# THE DISTRIBUTOR OUTLOOK

With many wholesalers pivoting their focus, today's outlook is very different to the one that was planned for

## COMMENTATORS



SUNIT MEHTA  
ROWCLIFFE



NIKKI PHILP  
HARVEY & BROCKLESS



STUART GRANT  
CURD & CURE



JASON HINDS  
NEALS YARD DAIRY

As a portion of the cheese industry which supplies retail and foodservice alike, distributors and wholesalers are integral to the smooth running of the sector. After a successful festive period for many, the Covid-19 pandemic hit hard and, similarly to across the industry, pivots were needed in order to ensure survival. “In 24 hours the landscape changed,” explains Sunit Mehta of Rowcliffe. The wholesaler “pulled out all the stops” to support its key independent

retailer customer base, and its agility allowed the team to adapt to the changes in the marketplace. It is taking each day as it comes: “every day is a challenge. We make sure we are match ready and do not allow ourselves to second guess anything; we cannot rest on our laurels for the foreseeable future.”

### Evolving business models

For businesses for whom independent retail is a relatively small portion of their business proposition,

“Every day is a challenge. We make sure we are match ready and do not allow ourselves to second guess anything; we cannot rest on our laurels for the foreseeable future”

SUNIT MEHTA, ROWCLIFFE



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the impact of Covid was even more keenly felt. "Our business changed overnight with 90% of our business coming to an abrupt stop," explains Nikki Philp, purchasing director at Harvey & Brockless. "Even though we cover a diverse list of customers from all sectors, every one of our customers has been adversely affected by the crisis and many remain closed." As well as reducing overheads and maximising incoming funds, like other businesses, Harvey & Brockless acted quickly to offer a brand new straight-to-consumer format through its Battersea warehouse which is open seven days a week, as well as an e-commerce option selling the business's most popular products. "We have gone from doing 2-3 orders a day pre-Covid, to approximately 200 a day during the lockdown," says Nikki. "We have also reduced delivery days and vehicles, and have implemented further efficiencies in terms of the manufacturing/production side of the business," she continues, "restricting production days to minimise the cost implications and maximise safety measures that need to be in place as a result of Covid."

### Catering to new demand

Stuart Grant, managing director at Curd & Cure, has seen his business's services called upon in a new way over the past few months in order to cater to the increased demand for pre-packed, retail-ready products. As well as diversifying



the Curd & Cure range to include a greater range of products in this format, the business has been offering cutting services to the wide community of artisan dairies and cheesemakers, many of whom do not have facilities to cut in-house, in doing so "providing a link from producer to retailer at a time when it is essential that British cheese is reaching shelves throughout the country." This service has also allowed many makers who are new to retail to test the market – a valuable opportunity during this challenging time.

### What's next?

"Going forward, the biggest challenge is likely to be tracking and responding to buying habits as they change," says Curd & Cure's Stuart. "For the time being, retail-ready cheese is our top seller, but as more retailers re-open it will be interesting to see if this trend continues, or if consumers will prefer to go back to a deli-style setting, with a personal, face

**"90% OF A OUR BUSINESS CAME TO AN ABRUPT STOP"**

NIKKI PHILP, HARVEY & BROCKLESS

to face service where the requirement is for larger cuts of cheese."

"In terms of the market, we predict it will be the latter part of next year before we can start to see a positive turnaround," says Nikki at Harvey & Brockless. "It will take some time beyond that for all of our businesses to fully recover from the recessionary impact of the lockdown, and this is without

knowing when or if there will be a second wave and how big it will be." "The optimism that we had at the start of the year is no longer there," says Jason Hinds of Neals Yard Dairy. "We're looking at a situation that businesses haven't seen since the 1950s. There are many touchpoints between now and the invaluable Christmas period which are going to be difficult but important to overcome. Consumer confidence and spending power are reduced, and although lockdown has been eased at this moment in time we are approaching the end of the beginning rather than the beginning of the end. A second wave, and another lockdown, later in the year would be catastrophic." Of

“As well as reducing our carbon footprint, by supporting and nurturing a conscientious ‘home grown’ industry we ensure that whatever the circumstances, excellent quality speciality food is always readily available on our doorsteps”

NIKKI PHILP, HARVEY & BROCKLESS

course, other factors play into the future of the cheese industry: "on 31st December of this year we have Brexit," says Jason, "so no doubt things will get even harder." The crisis has taught valuable lessons, however. "We've learned not to put all of our eggs in one basket; to diversify our routes to market. As a result of having to create new ways to get products to consumers we're going into a potential lockdown on a steadier footing than we had going into the first."

“On the back of the campaign to support British cheesemakers, there has certainly been an uplift in the number of retailers and consumers looking to buy from smaller scale producers, which has seen us add further listings for British cheesemakers in our newly launched brochure”

STUART GRANT, CURD & CURE

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# THE VIEW OVERSEAS

While the UK industry found ways to rebalance, so too did international cheese and dairy markets

## COMMENTATORS



ANTOINE FARGE  
COW



ALEXANDER ANTON  
EUROMILK



AMANDA PARKER  
COWGIRL CREAMERY

Just as the past few months have reiterated the interconnectedness of British cheese and dairy market, it has made businesses which work with partners overseas and across borders rethink the way their relationships work – and the value they truly hold.

Strong relationships were key to the relatively smooth-running of La Fromagerie during the turbulent spring and summer of 2020. “We have been in business for 30 years and have very good, long standing relationships,” explains Patricia Michelson, founder of La Fromagerie. “As we get a lot of products and fresh produce from Europe, we had to contend with very limited transport from these countries, and in Italy especially certain areas and regions were not sending up to our depot in Milan. We had a two week hiatus where nothing was coming in and where we were finding solutions minute by minute. In February we made quick visits to transport hubs and some suppliers in Milan and Paris to sort out logistics. This was the big issue we needed to address, and also to make sure our suppliers and transport felt reassured they were going to be supported by us through

the pandemic. I believe by us going to see them at the very early stage was really appreciated and I have to say that we benefited from this.”

For some international cheesemakers, it's vital that retailer support and relationships are maintained during these challenging times. “We always try to support retailers, and in these uncertain times it is even more important,” says Helen Daysh of Le Gruyère AOP. Not least the experience and understanding of the end consumer. “We believe that enabling customers to taste our cheese is key, so we have invested in an outside branded portable gazebo and have 25g vacuum-packed pieces of Le Gruyère AOP to sample if this is appropriate. We welcome requests from retailers for future gazebo tasting dates and assistance with in-store tastings – as always, our samples and time would be free of charge to the retailers.”

## UK and European relations

For Parisian cheesemongers COW, the biggest Covid-led shift was the almost immediate change in their customer base. “As we are located in an affluent area of Paris, we found that a lot of consumers in the local area were moving out of the city to spend time in their houses in the country when the lockdown first took hold,” says Antoine Farge, co-owner. “There were also no tourists around as there usually would be, but we benefited from being one of the few retailers considered vital enough to be kept open as we were selling food – that meant that our customer base grew, therefore more people were buying and appreciating quality cheese.” Perhaps surprisingly, Antoine and his business partner Alexandre Renault found little difficulty in sourcing cheese from overseas territories including the UK, apart from where makers had temporarily ceased production.

The connections and

interdependence between the UK and European dairy and cheese markets have been highlighted by the crisis, says Alexander Anton, secretary general of Euromilk. “The UK and the European lactosphere is completely interlinked with fully integrated supply chain. Let's hope that this will help to find a good solution for the future EU-UK dairy framework in our Brexit plans.”

“The authorities at both EU and national level have been reactive to our requests, including ‘green lanes’ for fresh products when borders were closed and flexibility in packaging, and have freed up 30 million Euros to open the PSA scheme for cheeses,” explains Alexander Anton, secretary general of Euromilk. “This support has really helped, but it's far from the

4 billion dollars given to the US dairy industry from their Government.”

## The American experience

Despite this injection of funds, the US dairy industry is struggling to rebalance after the shock of the Covid-19 crisis. “Like many industries, the cheese industry is hurting and many small dairies and cheesemakers may not be able to weather this storm,” explains Amanda Parker, managing director of California's Cowgirl Creamery. “We're a scrappy bunch, so we're trying to find ways to support each other and act creatively, but we're depending on consumers to continue to buy American craft cheese and dairy now more than ever.” The growing industry is being more innovative than ever in its quest to educate the US cheese consumer: “There's a new grassroots organization called Victory Cheese who's trying to help the industry through awareness initiatives,

collaborations, and victory cheese boxes (like our Good Neighbours box).

The sudden change in shoppers' focus from bricks-and-mortar to online was also keenly felt in America. “Our shops were a major physical touchpoint for our business, so we had to quickly reimagine the Cowgirl experience in order to meet this change in shopping, says Amanda. “We worked hard to make sure people could still get their fill of cheese by setting up new platforms to fulfill local online orders for curbside pickup as well as a short-term home delivery service in the North Bay.” This swift pivot has long-lasting impact. “Looking to the future, we're assessing longer term changes to reflect the retail climate and shift in tourism – which will affect our retail locations – as well as shifting our own cheese formats to better serve our customers.”

“The Covid-19 crisis was for sure the most impactful momentum for the EU (and global) cheese industry since the 2014 Russian ban”

ALEXANDER ANTON, SECRETARY GENERAL OF EUROMILK

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Based in Stornoway, Stag Bakeries is a family run business with a heritage dating back to 1885.

Traditional recipes are still at the heart of each and every product we make and the result is an award-winning range trusted on quality and provenance.

Our specialities are biscuits for cheese and cheese straws, available in a variety of formats and flavours to suit all dining occasions.



For further information on our range, please get in touch:

Tel: 01851 702733 sales@stagbakeries.co.uk  
www.stagbakeries.co.uk



new



# TRUFFLE TROVE™

Enrobed in pure white wax, Truffle Trove™ is the luxurious combination of exquisite Black Summer Truffles sourced from the Italian region of Marche with expertly graded and carefully crafted Extra Mature Cheddar, produced in North Wales. The result is an unrivalled aroma which delivers a perfectly balanced flavour on the palate with undertones of wild mushroom, earthy hazelnut and notes of garlic.



The UK's 'Most Loved Speciality Cheese Brand'\*

*Made with pride, bursting with character*

\*As voted in Fine Food Digest survey