DIFFICULTIES to meet the national standards

Presentation and debate about a proposal on “flexibility” for the farmhouse and artisan cheese makers; International conference

Elena Karovska,
Madrid, 6th Nov 2015
In the center of Macedonia
Beautiful landscape
Rich nature
But, not that rich
Still, there is something
Alive and fluent
Moving its way
Finding its place
Staying connected to its place
Than, there is a cheese dairy
• 1 cheese maker
• 6 farm workers, not family members
• A cheese produced from the farm’s own sheep herd, a mixture from the native breed ovchepolka, with the winterberg breed
• 1500 sheep, raised in a wild state - out on pasture all year round, because there is no snow in the region
• 5 processing months (March-August)
• There are days when milk quantities can reach up to almost one ton, but usually they are less – around 500 liters of milk per day.
• Milk is used raw, very often not even heated before curdling, because the cheese is made after the morning and after the evening milking.
• Two traditional cheese types are being produced – White Brine Cheese – soft cheese and Bieno Cheese – hard cheese
• Do not use starters, nor any other additives
• The owner has made facilities that are very close to completing GHP and even HACCP principles, but still, the cheese dairy do not fulfill the preconditions.
Food premises

• are kept relatively clean and maintained in good conditions—the parts that are essential for the production process.
• in general the facility does not leave a good impression,
  - the walls are not covered with waterproof material,
  - tiled up just to the half of their height,
  - the second half is left plastered and just whitewashed,
  - The premise is dark, a curtain to keep the heat out and retain the milk quality
The layout, design, construction and size are to permit adequate maintenance and cleaning

- Three separate rooms,
  - The first one is for preparing the staff i.e. washing hands, changing clothes, storing disinfectants and cleaning tools etc., as also for receiving the milk.
  - The second one is for processing the milk into cheese,
  - The third - for fermenting the cheese putted in tin cans (for very short period of two weeks, than cans are replaced in another facility).

Two of the rooms have separate doors to the outside, and the three of them are connected from the inside.

- The toilet and bathroom for the staff is separated from the processing room and has a separate door from the outside.
External contamination

- In this dairy air-borne contamination can come only from the nature, generally soil dust and insects
- Also a faucet with drinkable water is placed right in front the facility
- The water is brought with a pump and its quality is regularly controlled from a public body - Center for public health, Bitola.
- Moulds on the ceiling - removed with whitewashing
- Temperatures are not measured, nor registered anywhere, except the temperature of the milk, before adding the rennet
Cleaning

• One washbasin and one faucet, provided with hot and cold water, considered as an adequate number because there is only one cheese producer.

• No mechanical ventilation, just a natural one meaning open window or door, but it can be concluded that it is not adequate, nor enough
Floors

- The facility drainage is constructed in a simple way.
- The floor in total is tilted to one corner in which there is no equipment. This represents an open drainage system but effective.
- Wastewater goes out, in the backside of the facility where the animals come to drink from it.
- Floor is washed up to 10 times per day.
- It is cleaned just with cold and rarely hot water.
- Floors are made from very tiny rocks with cement, grindstone afterwards which makes the surface flat, but not as flat as when smeared all over with some kind of gum, resin or similar substance. On the other hand it makes the floor resistant to the salt and it can’t be damaged from high pressure or heavy objects either. Also, the abovementioned material is non-toxic and non-absorbent.
Working habits

• Changing of the working clothes is deduced just to putting on a waterproof overlay. Changing all of the clothes is regarded as a needless step.

• Doors are easy to clean, made from PVC materials combined with glass.

• There are insect-proof screens, but fixed and not easy to take them out for the purpose of cleaning.

• Cleaning and the storage of the equipment and utensils is done in one room, because it is done mostly with hot and cold water, except the cheesecloths that are washed with detergent.
Ripening and storage

• 10 tin cans are produced per day and placed in the third room right away to the processing premise.
• Afterwards tin cans are replaced in a special storage room that includes mechanical ventilation/climate device.
• The magazine is almost entirely under the ground, and the owner covered the top of it with soil and planted some low trees above it, so he can preserve as much as he can from the natural coolness the object has.
Raw milk

- A veterinary doctor is conducting regular animal controls, and confirms through blood test that this sheep herd is free from brucellosis
- Analysis for total plate count at 30°C/Somatic cells count are not made. A preventive measure can be regarded maturing of the cheese for two months usually.
- No special premises, nor refrigeration equipment
- When a sheep is threatened with medicines it is separated for a while from the herd and when a sheep got mastitis it is sold on the market
General information concerning regulations behaviour

The owner considers that

• what they make is enough, because if not the cheese will turn bad and it will show by itself that it needs higher hygiene.
• improvements can be and should be made at anytime.
• the thing that should be improved and in the same time will make a difference in his cheese production is the hygiene habits of the milkers - investing more will not be effective if milkers’ habits remains the same.
• doesn’t make any analysis monthly, he think that just the veterinary checks are enough, but also because analyses are not obligatory for the facilities in high mountains or that are far away.
Laws - Macedonia

- Law for food safety
- Book of Rules (BoR) about the special requirement for hygiene and safety of milk and milk products
- BoR for the quality of raw milk and milk products’ additives
- BoR for the regulations of traditional cheese made of sheep and goat milk
- BoR for direct sales of primary products
Should this rare flower keeps on blooming?
Thank you for the attention!