

The Agritourism Premium: Building a Brand for Maine Cheese



Source: Real Maine, Maine Cheese Guild

By

Caroline Paras
University of Southern Maine
PPM 708: Doctoral Economics
Dr. Carolyn Arcand
April 28, 2025

Introduction

My third career was born on a weekend trip to Bologna, Italy in 2018, where I had the opportunity to learn how the distinct products of Denominazione d'Origine Protetta (DOP) Parma are made, including balsamic vinegar, prosciutto, and parmesan cheese. We met farmers, visited factories, listened to the stories of the landscape, and enjoyed a bountiful lunch topped with Lambrusco, a sparkling red wine. In the afternoon, we stopped at a market where my fellow travelers tumbled out of the minivan to stock their suitcases with wedges of parm. My heart was ready to pay any price. But my head said, would these products survive the hot Italian sun? Can I bring cheese through U.S. Customs? Pragmatism aside, the experience got me thinking about the circumstances under which I would be driven to make such a consumer purchase. Years later, all it takes is one glass of Lambrusco to bring back memories of the Italian countryside and the role of emotions in the purchase of local food.

My experience in Bologna was a form of agritourism, “an agricultural diversification activity that results from the synergistic intersection of tourism and agriculture. Agritourism offers authentic experiences related to agricultural production that showcase the tangible and intangible resources of the region or locality” (Global Agritourism Network, 2025). Through agritourism, consumers have the opportunity to learn how food grown and harvested while producers have the opportunity to sell products directly to consumers at a premium. This paper will summarize the literature on the economic dimensions of agritourism from the demand side - consumers, in the context of an industry sector - cheese, a staple of the American diet. This review will bring together two discrete sectors – willingness to pay for cheese and cheese tourism, ending with policy recommendations to build the Maine cheese industry from a market, cost-benefit, behavioral economics, and polis perspective.

Economic dimensions of agritourism

Agritourism is an entrepreneurial dimension of agriculture. The most common form of agritourism is direct sales at farm stands, U-Pick, farmers markets, and CSAs, followed by education, entertainment, outdoor recreation, and lodging (Chase, et al, 2021). While direct sales constitute just 0.4% of U.S. agricultural revenue, 85% of farms that engage in direct sales are small establishments with <\$50,000 in sales located in counties that are part of, or adjacent to, Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSA) (Martinez et al., 2007). Agglomeration effects result in an urban wage premium that enables households living in MSAs to pay a premium for local food (Bolter & Robey, 2020; Guptill et al., 2018; Stanton et al., 2012; Papageorgiou, 2022; Zhou et al., 2011).

On the supply side, agritourism is a form of economic diversification. Through agritourism, producers seek to increase sales revenue, generate supplemental income, attract new customers, and provide employment for family and friends (Chase et al., 2021; Paras et al., 2022; Schilling et al., 2014; Tew & Barbieri, 2012). The supply side of agritourism is firmly rooted in a market-based approach where there is a real opportunity cost faced by

producers: time spent welcoming visitors sacrifices time spent to increase production, particularly in relation to the economies of scale necessary to compete in a global market. By diversifying markets from B2B to B2C, farmers can charge a premium for local food while escaping the middleman by eliminating the typical wholesale margin of 30%. On the demand side, agritourism offers visitors an authentic experience that helps them learn how food is grown, branding distinctive local food products as well as the identity of places (Andéhn & L'Espoir Decosta, 2021; Che, 2006; Nazariadli et al., 2018; Palmi & Lezzi, 2020).

Economic dimensions of agritourism

Economic dimensions of agritourism	
Producers	Diversification strategy Farm profitability
Consumers	Consumer education Direct sales
Industry Level	Willingness to pay Marketing and branding Gross Domestic Product
Region level	Destination attraction Sustainable tourism Rural economic development

According to classic microeconomic theory, consumers make rational choices to buy goods and services in order to maximize their utility, or the benefit they receive, in alignment with their resources and preferences (Bade & Parkin, 2021). Utility is often measured by Willingness-to-Pay (WTP), a pricing strategy that represents the acceptable range of values a consumer is willing to pay for a particular product or service (Ariely, et al, 2003). According to the market approach of “pure competition,” savvy customers shop around for the best deals, forcing sellers to offer goods at the lowest price (Stone, 2012). The market approach is firmly aligned with the industrial model of agriculture, which seeks to produce globally traded commodities for the cheapest price through large-scale monocultures, chemical inputs, and mechanization (Neff, 2014; Pollan, 2006).

By contrast, local food attracts consumers who operate by the “laws of passion” (Stone, 2012). In 2007, Oxford University Press (2007) recognized “locavore” as its Word of the Year, defining it as “a person whose diet consists only or principally of locally grown or produced food.” Reich et al. (2018) developed a scale to measure the degree to which consumers are locavores, covering the concepts of *lionization* - consumer beliefs in the superior quality and nutrition of local food; *opposition* - consumer attitudes toward corporations and industrial models of agriculture; and *communalization* - consumer values that support local businesses and communities. Driven by consumer behavior most economists would consider irrational, local food is firmly linked to the polis-approach, with consumers valuing freshness and taste over price; expressing altruistic concern for locally owned businesses and rural communities; and making an emotional connection to people, places and products over individual self-interest (Stone, 2012). A meta-analysis analysis of 35

studies with 23,354 subjects in nine countries discovered that consumers are willing to pay 29% more for locally branded products, including dairy, meat, fish, grains, fruit, vegetables, eggs, nuts, specialty foods, and beer (Printezis et al., 2019).

Few studies have examined the role of agritourism in generating a premium for local food. While visitors may purchase products in real time, the latent value of agritourism lies in consumer education, which shapes values, attitudes, and norms that influence future expenditures on local food. Most studies include only visitors who have participated in agritourism and not consumers who haven't, missing the gold standard of a randomized controlled trial. Kim et al. (2018) addressed this gap by surveying 1,111 consumers in South Korea who did and did not participate in agritourism. Using panel data with an agritourism supplement, the study found that consumers who had participated in agritourism spent significantly more of their household food budget for grains, vegetables, fruit, meat, and fish. The study did not, however, describe the types of agritourism experiences in which subjects participated nor whether food purchases were predominantly local in origin.

Brune et al. (2021) also tackled the impact of agritourism by exploring how it affects consumer attitudes, norms, and behavioral controls according to the Theory of Planned Behavior. Through pre- and post-visit surveys of 328 households visiting six North Carolina farms, researchers found statistically significant differences in attitudes toward local food, such as *local food tastes good* and *local food is fresher*; attitudes toward buying local food, such as *support local economies*, *preserve agricultural landscapes*, and *support local farmers*; and the household's likelihood to increase their budget by 5%-20% to purchase local food. Brune, et al. recommended that "future studies should include follow-up surveys to gauge the participants' actual local food consumption behaviors over time" while "controlling for the impact of past farm visits or levels of locavorism" (p. 1328).

Local food not only costs more to produce but embodies values that are rewarded with a premium – lower carbon footprint, small business ownership, stewardship of natural ecosystems. Willingness to pay a premium depends on how much value the consumer places on a particular brand (Keller, 1993). Whether triggered by emotional, cognitive, conative, or social factors, the value that consumers place on a brand can positively influence purchase intent, willingness to pay, and consumer loyalty (Aaker, 1991; Ding & Tseng, 2015; Naem, 2020; Oliver, 1997; Punj & Hillyer, 2004; Sweeney & Soutar, 2001).

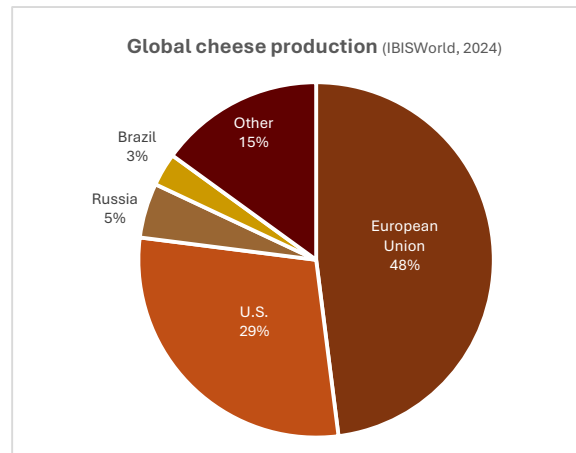
While often characterized by repeat purchase behavior, consumer loyalty's strongest pillar is affect, or emotional attachment (Oliver, 1999). Representing a deep psychological alignment of the brand with the consumer's own values (Keller, 2001), emotional attachment is comprised of affection (love, peace, friendliness), passion (delight, captivation), and connection (attachment, bonding) (Thomson et al., 2005). Activities like wine tourism engage consumers in the co-creation of experiences that are positively correlated with such consumer loyalty behaviors as word-of-mouth intention, revisit intention, and purchase intention (Zhang & Lee, 2022). To achieve these positive outcomes, producers must work together to organize and market their assets. In fact, agritourism can

function as an industry cluster, a geographic concentration of suppliers, producers, and service providers in a related industry that improves productivity and performance across the value chain (Porter, 1998; Ruiz-Labrador et al, 2023; Wulandari et al, 2024).

For purposes of this research, cheese will serve as a proxy for local food products. With a price premium up to four times that of a national brand, Maine cheese demands a great deal of education to win over consumers, such as the sensory and participatory experiences provided by agritourism. Established in 2003, the Maine Cheese Guild organizes such agritourism opportunities in the form of an annual Maine Cheese Festival and Open Creamery Day. A staple of the American diet, cheese is a good source of protein and calcium with neutral to moderate benefits in relation to 47 health outcomes, including all-cause mortality, cardiovascular disease, stroke, breast cancer, type 2 diabetes, and dementia (Zhang, et al., 2023). Thus, cheese is a value-added product with nutritional benefits poised to demand a premium based on intrinsic and extrinsic attributes.

The macroeconomic landscape

Cheese generates \$32 billion in U.S. demand. Households spend \$240 per year on cheese, an increase of 33% since 2019 (Mintel, 2024). On the supply side, U.S. production is double that of consumer demand. The U.S. industry consists of 439 businesses with 62,527 jobs that generate \$62.9 billion in sales (IBISWorld, 2025). The U.S. is also home to 200 artisanal makers producing less than 100,000 pounds per year (American Cheese Society, 2023). The U.S. accounts for 29% of global production, second behind the European Union (EU). Top 10 countries include Russia, Brazil, Canada, the United Kingdom, Mexico, Argentina, and Australia (USDA FAS, 2024). The global cheese trade is comprised of 4,274 businesses with \$157.5 billion in sales. Highly decentralized, no single firm commands more than 4% of the global market (IBISWorld, 2024).

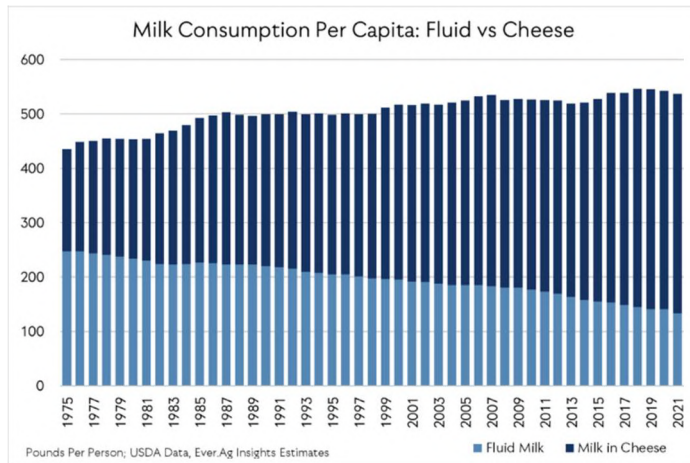


The key driver of the cheese industry is the price of milk, its primary input (IBISWorld, 2025). In 2020, prices plummeted when COVID-19 shut down schools and colleges, causing farmers to dump milk, which has a limited shelf-life of 12-14 days (Yaffe-Bellany & Corkery, 2020). Two years later, tightened supply chains caused prices to peak. See chart at right (USDA NASS, 2025).

Prices Received for Milk by Month – United States



USDA – NASS
02/28/2025



Another key industry driver is per capita dairy consumption (IBISWorld, 2025). Since 2000, per capita milk consumption has declined 34%, from 196 pounds per person to 133 (Statista, 2025). While declining demand might seem to depress prices, overall dairy consumption has been rising steadily since tracking began in 1975. Over the last decade, per capita cheese consumption is up 13%. See chart at left (International Dairy Foods Association, 2022).

Four firms control 36% of the U.S. market, nearly constituting an oligopoly. Headquartered in Chicago, Kraft Heinz is the market leader, with a 25.1% market share, followed by Sargento in Wisconsin, at 5.8%, Saputo, a Canadian company, at 2.8%, and Bel SA, a French company, at 2.3% (IBISWorld, 2025; Lakhani et al., 2021). Increasing consolidation of the market means that the U.S. cheese industry is characterized by high barriers to entry dependent on the following factors:

- Economies of scale:** Large operations have access to specialized equipment that is automated, allowing them to produce large volumes at lower cost (IBISWorld, 2025). In real dollars, startup costs for artisanal producers ranges from \$365,000-\$853,000 (Bouma et al., 2014).
- Regulation:** The dairy industry, including its value-added products, is highly regulated by the State and Federal government, with standards for food safety, milk grading, pasteurization, and labeling (IBISWorld, 2025).
- Milk quality:** Cheese is highly dependent on the price of milk. Large processors can negotiate to purchase cheaper Grade B milk in bulk. Artisanal producers choose to differentiate themselves with higher quality Grade A milk from sheep and goats that costs more, particularly in small batches (IBISWorld, 2025; Wang et al., 2024).
- Waste:** Large processors sell whey, a waste product of cheese making, to producers of protein supplements and other value-added products (IBISWorld, 2025).
- Distribution:** Given the limited shelf life and the cold chain required for dairy products, distribution is key. Integrated firms that produce milk, butter, and cheese can establish a regional or national footprint compared to artisanal producers limited to local or statewide markets (IBISWorld, 2025).

The microeconomic landscape

The growth of cheese is driven by rising disposable income, increased consumption by Gen Z and Millennials, mounting exploration of artisanal cheese, and a desire for healthy protein-rich snacks that can be eaten “on the go” (IBISWorld, 2025). While younger consumers are more likely to consume cheese everyday as an affordable treat, older consumers reserve cheese for special occasions (Mintel, 2024). Topping demand is cheddar and mozzarella, which were eaten by 78% of consumers in the last three months, followed by Parmesan (68%), Swiss (57%), Provolone (51%), feta (40%), Blue cheese (36%), Gouda (33%), Brie (25%), and goat (23%) (Mintel, 2024). Key innovations include the development of cheese blends and reduced fat cheese, plant-based alternatives from cashew, soy and almond milk, and artisanal cheese from sheep and goats with herbs, fruits, nuts, and spices (IBISWorld, 2025).

The average price of cheese in the U.S. is \$4-\$5 per pound (Statista, 2024). With rising disposable income, consumers are willing to pay more for artisanal products with unique profiles, higher quality ingredients, and sustainable production practices (IBISWorld, 2025). Cheese from artisanal producers that craft less than 100,000 pounds per year ranges in price from \$10-\$40 per pound (Artisanal Premium Cheese, 2025). Factors that account for this differential include the quality of milk, species of animal, grazing methods, hand versus machine processing, and the manner of aging (Thorpe, 2018). The world’s most expensive cheese was a Cabrales from Spain sold at auction for \$6,682 per pound (Krough, 2023).

Due to the price differential between artisanal and industrial cheese, its elasticity varies. Demand for specialty and imported cheeses, like Munster, is elastic while demand for processed cheese, like mozzarella, is inelastic. Given the wide variety of choices available, consumers readily substitute one type of cheese for another (Bade & Parkin, 2021; Bakhtavoryan & Capps, 2024). The USDA has pegged the elasticity of cheese at -0.70 (Okrent & Alston, 2012), which means that for every 1% increase in the price, the quantity of cheese demanded decreases by 0.7%. Thus, the demand for cheese overall is considered inelastic.

Literature review on Willingness to Pay

European Union. With 48% of sales, the EU is the world’s largest producer of cheese (USDA FAS, 2024). Indeed, the top styles made in the U.S. have their origins in Europe, where distinct regions have produced the same cheese for centuries. In 1992, The EU adopted the Protected Destination of Origin (PDO or DOP) system to protect the quality, brand, and reputation of regional products. PDO certification dictates the geographic region where the cheese is made, the source of milk, the process by which the cheese is made, and how long the cheese is aged (European Commission, n.d.). Over the last four decades, 280 cheeses in 22 countries have registered for quality labels. Italy leads PDO certification with 53, including Asiago, Fontina, Gorgonzola, Mozzarella, Parmigiano,

Pecorino, Provolone, and Taleggio, followed by France with 46, including Brie, Camembert, Comté, Roquefort, and Munster (European Commission eAmbrosia, n.d.; Tarapoulouzi et al., 2024).

PDO products command a premium 21% higher than those using an unregulated place name (Deselnicu et al., 2013). A closer look at cheese reveals further differences. A meta-analysis of 22,388 consumers in 13 countries revealed that Europeans are willing to pay 70% more quality dairy, and U.S. consumers, -68% (Ngoulma, 2015). A study of 1,232 consumers in Greece, Italy, and the Netherlands demonstrated a higher willingness to pay for PDO cheese from their own country (van Ittersum et al., 2007). A study of 757 subjects in Italy demonstrated that consumers are willing to pay 30% more for Canestrato di Moliterno with a Protected Geographical Indication (PGI) label (Pilone et al., 2015). For consumers, certification is the nudge that communicates a higher standard of quality (Toma, et al, 2023; Verlegh & Steenkamp, 1999).

Willingness to pay more for PDO labels also depends on the sophistication of the consumer. A study of 4,627 subjects in France demonstrated a negative willingness to pay for certified Camembert, which was highly dependent on age and income (Bonnet & Simioni, 2001). A study of 400 Italians demonstrated that savvy consumers were willing to pay 40% more for Asiago DOP, but practical consumers with less knowledge, only 10% more (Vecchio & Annunziata, 2011).

The value placed on PDO certification increases with distance from its place of manufacture. For example, Garavaglia & Marozz (2014) conducted a study with 200 Italian subjects, finding that consumers in Milan were willing to pay 1.64€ more for Fontina DOP than those in Valle d'Aosta, its region of origin. In fact, consumers in the region of origin preferred to pay more for the Mountain label, which is associated with the tradition, authenticity and quality of high alpine pastures, rather than the DOP label. A study of 511 subjects found that Italian consumers were willing to pay 3.95€ more for DOP and 3.40€ for Mountain labels over a generic brand, but the premium is even higher when combined with a local label (Staffolani et al., 2023).

Other studies have demonstrated consumers are willing to pay for more for labels that guarantee environmental stewardship, which is not an inherent aspect of DOP certification. For example, a survey of 942 Italian consumers found that they are willing to pay 4€-6€ per kg more for each increase in ecosystem attributes, such as forage or animal health (Cavalletti et al., 2023). Organic labels also draw a premium - 15% in Spain (Bernabeu et al., 2008) and 120% in Italy (Napolitano et al., 2010). Thus, consumers are willing to pay more cheese based on intrinsic and extrinsic attributes that communicate quality and/or sustainability.

At a macroeconomic level, the EU quality scheme produces both positive and negative externalities:

1. **Fair competition:** Globally, no single cheese producer commands more than 4% of market share. For example, the Parmigiano Reggiano DOP is comprised of 650 producers. DOP certification ensures that no firm outside the region can market themselves as a DOP product, which results in a quality guarantee for consumers.
2. **Health and safety:** With strict standards regulating all stages of production from sourcing to aging, the DOP quality scheme protects the health and safety of consumers, providing transparency and traceability.
3. **Positive externalities:** The EU provides farmers with compensation for multi-functional agriculture, such as regenerative practices. When identified by label, e.g., Mountain, these practices are rewarded with a price premium.

Through regulation and certification, the government has established a system of fair rules that protects property rights (Bade & Parkin, 2021) – the unique traditions, methods, systems, and landscapes associated with distinct agricultural products. These rights, however, cannot be transferred to businesses outside the region of origin. In terms of fair results, PDO certification raises prices for consumers; however, it does not prevent similar products from inside the region from using the name without certification. For example, Tenuta Chirico in Ascea, Italy produces buffalo mozzarella in the Campania region, home of Mozzarella di Bufala Campana DOP. While the cheese was once DOP certified, the business no longer complies with the regulatory burden because “*our customers know us*” (Personal site visit, June 4, 2024). For producers in other countries, PDO certification limits opportunities for innovation in the cheese industry (Rodrigo et al., 2015). Another drawback of the PDO system is that it pushes artisanal producers toward pasteurization, particularly those producing at scale that seek to export. Raw milk, for example, imbues cheese with the complexity associated with free range animals, use of traditional wooden equipment, and natural ripening techniques (Licitra et al., 2019). But pasteurization fundamentally changes the sensory properties of cheese mastered over centuries.

United States. With 29% of sales, the U.S. is the world’s second leading producer of cheese (USDA FAS, 2024). Wisconsin leads the nation, with 1,290 cheese producers grossing \$26 billion that contribute 6.5% to the state’s GDP (Call, 2024). In fact, Wisconsin is the only state with a dedicated brand, Proudly Wisconsin Cheese™. Established in 1891, the Wisconsin Cheese Makers Association boasts a staff of 9 with an annual budget of \$3.2 million (ProPublica, 2024). Other top states include California, Idaho, New Mexico, New York, Minnesota, South Dakota, Pennsylvania, Iowa, Ohio, and Vermont (Statista, 2024). While seven have a dedicated trade group, none can rival Wisconsin’s in size (Paras, 2025).

Compared to Europe, fewer studies on willingness to pay for cheese have been conducted in the U.S. A study of 334 subjects found that consumers are willing to pay more for cheddar branded with a Utah’s Own label (Barnes et al., 2014). A study of 749 subjects (Bir et al., 2020) demonstrated that consumers are willing to pay more for cheddar marked with ecolabels, including no antibiotics (\$1.50-\$2.50 more), pasture-raised (\$1.96-\$2.82 more),

and dehorned (\$0.86-\$1.53 more). A study of 296 U.S. subjects found that consumers are willing to pay \$1.74 more for cheese labeled “farmer-owned” (Grashuis, 2022).

Beyond Wisconsin, most states market cheese with a different type of nudge. During the 1980’s, eight states launched local food promotion programs, including the *Vermont Seal of Quality* (198), *Jersey Fresh* (1983), and *Pride of New York* (1985). By the early 2000’s, every state had joined the fracas thanks to the Emergency Agricultural Assistance Act of 2001, which provided them with \$160 million in block grants to promote specialty crops (Patterson, 2006). In addition, states market manufactured products like cheese through “Made in [state]” programs and cheese attractions through “Visit [state]” programs, maintaining portals where consumers can search for unique products and experiences.

The primary purpose of brands is to add value that helps consumers differentiate products in the marketplace. These nudges provide them with a shortcut that communicates a product’s experience attributes (taste, freshness, safety) and/or credence dimensions (local, lower carbon footprint, small farms). In practice, state brands are unregulated. USA Today (Anglen, 2020) conducted an investigation of every state program, finding that:

- 36% have no minimum requirement on the percentage of local ingredients.
- 40% require only that a company be headquartered within the state.
- 72% have no formal review process to assess compliance.
- 80% have no record of enforcement actions for non-compliance.

In 2010 Vermont discontinued its program because it could not muster the resources to manage or monitor it (Gram, 2010). New York, on the other hand, doubled down and split its *Pride of New York* program into two new brands: *New York Grown & Certified*, which is applied to local produce that also meets strict safety and environmental sustainability standards, while *Taste New York* is applied to food and beverage grown, produced, and/or processed in the state (Spector & Schuhmacher, 2018).

One compelling reason to maintain a state brand is quality. To evaluate food quality, consumers overwhelmingly rely on freshness, taste, and appearance (Petrescu, et al, 2019). Yet state food brands are not a guarantee of quality, only proximity from the point of production to the point of sale. Furthermore, what local means to one consumer ultimately depends on where they live (Onken, et al, 2011). When it comes to cheese, U.S. producers make European style cheeses, not those based on inherent regional traditions, heritage, or practices that would make it possible to distinguish one state’s cheese as better or different than another’s. Aside from the fact that parmesan cheese can only be made in the Emilia Romagna region, DOP quality standards govern what the cow eats (forage), milking process, ingredients (milk, salt, and calf rennet), and aging of the wheel (12-24 months). Only if standards are met does the cheese merit the province’s certification mark (parmigianoreggiano.com, 2024). Thus, the DOP stamp of Parma means something fundamentally different than Real Maine cheese, which can be applied to any type of cheese and to products processed or sold within the state with milk from any source.

Inventory of studies on willingness to pay for cheese

Author	Product	Methods	Geography	Subjects	Product attributes	WTP outcomes (if any)
Barnes et al. (2014)	Cheddar	Intercept survey, sensory test, conjoint analysis	Utah	334	Sensory appeal, state and local brand	Local and state brands boost WTP, especially for lesser-known brands
Bernabeu et al. (2008)	N/A	Conjoint analysis	Spain	420	Organic	WTP > 15%
Bir et al. (2020)	Cheddar	Discrete choice	U.S.	749	No antibiotics Pasture-raised Dehorned	\$1.50-\$2.50 premium \$1.96-\$2.82 premium \$0.86-\$1.53 premium
Bonnet & Simioni (2001)	Camembert	Scanner data	France	4,627	DOP	Negative WTP for DOP attribute but dependent on age and income
Cavalletti et al. (2023)	Mountain	Discrete choice	Italy	942	Ecosystem services, forage, heritage, animal health, price	WTP 4€-6€ per kg more for each increase in ecosystem attributes
Garavaglia & Marcoz (2014)	Fontina	Conjoint analysis	Italy	200	DOP, aging, origin, price	Milan consumers are WTP 1.64€/300 g more for DOP than consumers in region of origin
Grashuis (2022)	Cheese	Discrete choice	U.S.	296	Farmer-owned label	Mean WTP = \$1.74
Napolitano et al. (2010)	Pecorino	Vickrey auction	Italy	150	Organic	WTP 2.30€/100 gram premium
Ngoulma (2015)	Dairy	Meta-analysis	13 countries	22,388		\$1 increase in price decreases WTP by 4.64% EU WTP >70% US WTP < -68%
Papoutsi et al. (2022)	Feta	Contingent valuation	Greece	403	Animal welfare label Fair labor label	27% premium 36% premium
Pilone et al. (2015)	Canestrato di Moliterno	Discrete choice	Italy	757	PGI Shelf-life extension Eco-label Price	30% premium 2.6% premium 17.5% premium -6.5% premium
Staffolani et al. (2023)	Mountain	Discrete choice	Italy	511	Origin, health, price	WTP for DOP (+3.95€) and Mountain (+3.40€) > generic but both are > with local label
van Ittersum et al. (2007)	Feta, parmesan, edam	Structural Equation Modeling	Greece, Italy, Netherlands	1,232	DOP Perceived quality	Positive WTP for DOP
Vecchio & Annunziata (2011)	Asiago	Intercept survey, cluster analysis	Italy	400	DOP, PGI	Savvy consumers WTP 40% more v 10% for practical consumers

Compiled by Paras, C. (2025)

Literature review on cheese tourism

At the nexus of destination branding and consumer-based brand equity lies Country-of-Origin (COO) research. The subject of over 1,000 studies since the 1960's, COO can positively influence the purchasing decision based on consumer perceptions about a particular country, including its economic, political, and technological features. Acting as a nudge, COO effects are particularly strong as a single cue rather than when multiple variables, such as price, are considered (Bilkey & Nes, 1982; Oduro et al., 2024; Verlegh & Steenkamp, 1999). Perceptions are shaped by macro level imagery - the sum of descriptive, inferential, and informal beliefs about a country (Martin & Eroglu, 1993) as well as micro level imagery around particular products and product categories (Nagashima, 1970, 1977; Heslop & Papadopoulos, 1993). Collectively, COO transforms into an aggregate brand value. Through the halo effect, positive feelings about brands from a particular country can be transferred from one product category to another, particularly when consumers are not very familiar with either the country or its products (Han, 1989; Lampert & Jaffe, 1998; Pappu et al., 2007). COO effects are particularly strong for perceived quality (Peterson & Jolibert, 1995). Imagery is not static but rather a dynamic force that can change over time according to innovation, marketing, and other variables (Nagashima, 1970, 1977).

"The Vermont cheese brand plays off the Vermont brand in general. People buy Cabot and they think of cows and pasture and then they want to move to Vermont. We try to be holistic in everything we do, so when we do something tourist-related, it benefits the larger industry of agriculture." Vermont Cheese Council member

Source: Paras (2021) unpublished interview

"People really want experiences. They don't just want a piece of tat to bring home so it's nice to be able to give them a physical product. We want people to have a really super positive experience the first time they encounter our cheese so when they see it on a shelf in a market they remember how good we made them feel. We don't want it to feel like you're in Anywheresville, U.S.A. We want it to feel like you could see animals, you could see fields, you could see pine trees. You have that camp feeling that people associate with Maine." Maine cheese producer

Source: Paras (2025) unpublished interview

Sourced from milk, cheese is a value-added product derived from a working rural landscape that reflects regional identity, heritage, traditions, and practices. "A taste of cheese means a taste of a territory," writes Fusté-Forné (2020, p. 178), who has authored 15 studies on the potential for cheese tourism in his native Spain along with Argentina, Finland, Italy, Netherlands, New Zealand, and Scotland. "The origin of milk, the pastures, the land, the cheesemakers and the traditional recipes transmit the ways a cheese is produced and consumed," leading to narratives that "become the focus through which slow consumption, slow life or

slow tourism are communicated and experienced" (Fusté-Forné 2020, p. 177 & p. 608).

Like a bottle of wine, cheese can be purchased as a souvenir that evokes the memories of visiting these landscapes, serving as a representation of both the destination and its popular imagery (Fusté-Forné, 2022).

Organizational capacity for the Top 10 cheese producing U.S. states

Organizational	WI	CA	ID	NM	NY	MN	SD	PA	IA	OH	VT
Cheese Guild	√	√	X	√	√	√	X	√	X	√	√
Website	√	√	X	√	√	X	X	√	X	√	√
Year founded	1891	2007	X	2024	1864	X	X	2015	X	2014	1997
Staff capacity	9	1	X	X	Cornell	X	X	X	X	X	1
Membership	650	24	X	X	30	X	X	28	X	X	40
Membership dues	\$505,356	\$9,410	X	X	\$84,063	X	X	X	X	X	\$10,920
Budget	\$3,166,949	\$68,256	X	X	\$111,264	X	X	X	X	X	\$327,653
Economic impact	Cheese	Dairy	Dairy	Dairy	Dairy	Dairy	Dairy	Dairy	Dairy	Dairy	Dairy
U.S. Rank	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Jobs	120,700	180,000	33,000	20,000	183,000	N/A	14,000	47,000	22,000	136,300	13,400
Dairy farms	5,661	1,100	353	130	3,500	2,456	174	5,000	1,403	1,400	600
Cheese producers	1,290	50	20	N/A	86	78	7	150	17	30	50
Sales	\$26 billion	\$19.9 billion	\$10.7 billion	\$2.2 billion	\$2.3 billion	\$1.9 billion	\$7.2 billion	\$11.8 billion	\$5.6 billion	\$30.6 billion	\$2.6 billion
Total impact	\$52.8 billion	\$65 billion	X	\$4.2 billion	X	X	\$650 million	X	X	\$35.1 billion	\$4.2 billion
GDP contribution	6.5%	<1%	5.7%	1.8%	<1%	<1%	12.6%	1.5%	2.9%	4.3%	7.4%
Tourism											
Dedicated brand	√	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Festival	√	√	X	X	X	√	X	X	X	√	√
Landing page	√	√	√	X	X	X	X	X	X	√	√
Itineraries	√	√	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	√
Farm & factory tours	√	√	X	X	√	X	X	√	√	X	√
Cheese trail	X	√	X	X	√	X	X	√	√	√	√

Compiled by Paras, C. (2025) from individual state government and association websites, ProPublica.org (IRS 990 lookup), and the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis (GDP)

What types of tourists engage in cheese tourism? Vilojoen et al. (2016) developed a typology based on the motivations of 519 visitors who attended the South African Cheese Festival.

- **Social epicureans** primarily valued *escape and socialization*, such as relaxing, spending time with family and friends, and escaping from their daily routines.
- **Selective epicureans** valued *escape and socialization* along with *product offering and uniqueness* as their primary motivation, including the opportunity to taste a variety of unique high quality products.
- **Serious epicureans** valued all five motivations, including *escape and socialization* and *product offering and uniqueness* along with *culinary exposure*, such as increasing cheese knowledge and participating in cheese pairings, *sensory experience*, such as the opportunity to diversify their palate, and *festival attributes*, such as the event's prestige, exchange of ideas, and opportunity to meet celebrity chefs.

Of the top cheese producing states, Wisconsin is the clear front runner. The state boasts 1,290 cheesemakers generating \$26 billion in sales (Call, 2024). In other states, statistics are buried within the dairy industry and not reported separately. While other states rely on their local food promotion programs, the Golden State brands cheese under the Real California Milk brand, a mammoth industry that supplies 21% of U.S. milk (Real California Milk, 2025) Of the top 11 states, six offer cheese trails that encourage visitors to go from farm to farm, e.g., like a wine region, to sample products of the terroir. Vermont hosts a Cheese Week that offers vacation packages to attract visitors not only to tour the cheese trail but participate in special events, such as bootcamps, classes and workshops, and cheese pairings and dinners. Five states offer cheese festivals, such as the Mac and Cheese festival in Pennsylvania and the Grilled Cheese Festival in California (Paras, 2025).

“It brings people to communities that they might not otherwise visit. We send a lot of our cheese down to Portland, so we're able to participate in tourism in their community that way. But if you get somebody to come to our farm, they're also going to go to Sheepscot General. They're going to the Amish cafe where they can get a donut. They're going to the gas station to fill up their gas tank. There's a lot more economic benefits for the whole town that otherwise we wouldn't see if we were just sending our cheese away.” Maine cheese producer

Source: Paras (2025) unpublished interview

Cheese tourism not only boosts direct sales for cheesemakers but results in positive externalities. At the region level, agritourism facilitates economic spillovers in the form of rural jobs, businesses, and sales. In Tennessee, for example, the multiplier effect for agritourism was estimated at 1.81 times the direct impact (Dhungana & Khanal, 2023; Schilling et al., 2016). In addition, farms themselves offer positive externalities that support natural ecosystems. In real estate appraisal, the highest and best use of land is

development that is legal, physically feasible, financially feasible, and maximally productive (Appraisal Institute, 2020). In other words, the highest and best use of land is development rather than open space. While many states tax farms as open space rather than at their highest and best use, market economies like the United States reward farmers only with sales from the market value of their agriculture goods. However, farms provide communities with more than food: they also provide ecosystem services such as habitat preservation, biodiversity, carbon sequestration, flood control, and nutrient cycling (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2001). These positive externalities have been encapsulated in the term “multifunctional agriculture.”

Through the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), the European Union subsidizes farms for multifunctional agriculture, including practices that support the EU's Green Deal targets. These activities include agritourism as well as innovative farming practices, such as agroforestry, which integrates forestry into farming systems to improve air, soil, and water quality; organic farming, which eliminates fertilizer, pesticides, and GMOs to prioritize healthy soil; and regenerative agriculture, which restores the biodiversity of ecosystems by investing in soil health (SEMA, n.d.). Agritourism represents an opportunity for producers to showcase these stewardship efforts (Ammirato, et al., 2020; Khanal, et al., 2019; Paras et al., 2022; Wozniacka, 2021). Producers who welcome the public invite scrutiny from educated consumers who have not only watched investigative documentaries like *Death on a Factory Farm* but are eager to post on TikTok and Instagram.

Through the CAP budget, the EU will pay farms \$387 billion from 2023-2027 (European Commission, n.d.), which represents \$390 per household per year. Moon & Griffith (2011) conducted a contingent valuation study of 1,070 U.S. consumers to estimate their WTP for multifunctional agriculture. Depending on their values toward government intervention, U.S. consumers were willing to pay from \$179 to \$1,089, with a mean of \$515 per taxpayer. When adjusted for inflation as well as per household versus per taxpayer, U.S. consumers are willing to pay \$1,716 per household for multifunctional agriculture, which represents 36.6% of the agricultural market value of U.S. food and four times the EU budget (Moon & Griffith, 2011; Census of Agriculture, 2022). Thus, U.S. consumers may be willing to pay farms for the ecosystem services that cheese tourism is designed to showcase, such as environmental stewardship, scenic landscapes, and rural character.

Spotlight: The Maine cheese industry

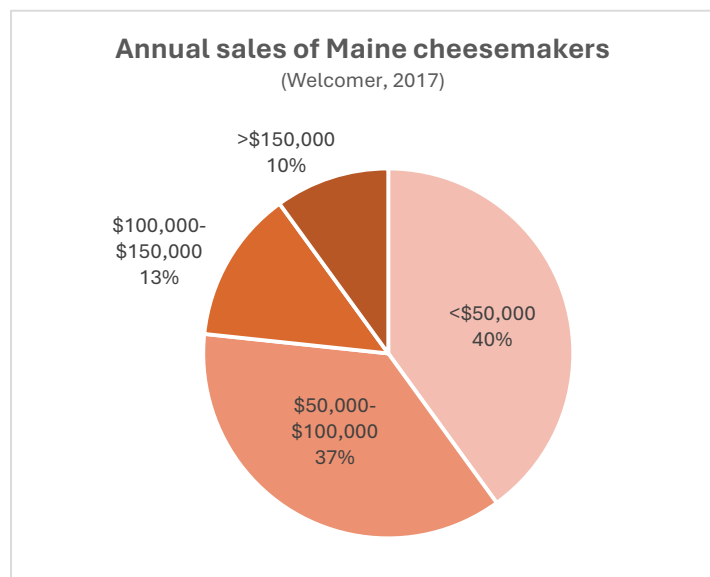
In 1871, local farmers established the Sandy River Cheese Company in Strong, the first cheese factory in Maine. By 1872, the factory churned out 40,000 pounds of cheese per year, about one sixth of Maine’s current production level (Maine Memory Network, 2012). Dairy production soared, peaking in the 1890’s with 60 factories making butter and cheese. In 2000, the Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association hosted a Value-Added Dairy Workshop that helped launch Maine’s modern cheese industry (Edible Maine, 2022). Established in 2003, the Maine Cheese Guild has a mission to develop “a collective voice to promote Maine cheese and cheesemakers, educate cheese makers and consumers,

coordinate resources and share the joy and art of regional cheeses” (Maine Cheese Guild, n.d.). In its early years, the guild recruited experts from the United States, Canada, United Kingdom, and France to build a critical mass of cheesemakers in the state (Edible Maine, 2022). They were wildly successful. From 2004 to 2018, the number of cheesemakers soared from 16 to 74 (Maine DACF, 2015; Skelton, 2018).

This growth has been bolstered by state regulation. Milk used in cheese sold exclusively in the state requires only heat-treatment and not pasteurization (7 Maine Revised Statutes § 2902-B). This regulation lowers the entry barrier to market by \$500,000-\$1 million as entrepreneurs can get by with a double boiler and a thermometer from their home kitchens (Skelton, 2018). While this lesser standard limits exports, it also levels the playing field: businesses can make the investment to pasteurization equipment as they decide whether to scale and grow. The supply side of Maine’s artisanal cheese industry was characterized by Welcomer et al. (2017), resulting in the following typology:

1. **Emerging:** Comprising 13% of the industry, emerging producers with one year of experience are focused on licensing, establishing a cost structure, systematizing production protocols, and market experimentation.
2. **Optimizing:** Comprising 53% of the industry, optimizing producers with an average of eight years of experience are refining their product lines, adjusting their product-market mix, and expanding infrastructure to optimize revenue that meets their income goals.
3. **Maturing:** Comprising 33% of the industry, maturing producers boast an average of 22 years of experience. Sought out for their expertise, these producers have established their own brand, expanded into horizontal integration of related products, and considered succession and exit strategies.

Overall, Maine ranks just 41st in the nation in cheese production (IBISWorld, 2025). The industry is comprised of 7 businesses with payroll employment that generate 36 jobs and \$25 million in sales. In addition, dozens of cheesemakers do it all without employees as part “artist, scientist, agriculturalist, alchemist, and entrepreneur” (Welcomer, 2017). On average, the individual Maine cheesemaker produces 8,210 pounds per year with sales of less than \$150,000. Virtually all are artisanal, with the average



Maine cheese retailing for \$27 per pound. At this price point, demand for Maine cheese would be considered elastic. At the far end of the growth spectrum is Pineland Farms, which produces one million pounds of cheese per year, including cheddar, feta, Jack, and Swiss (Harfmann, 2024). At a price point of \$15-\$16 per pound, Pineland could be considered an artisanal producer even though it produces at commodity volumes. On the demand side, Maine households purchase \$174 million in cheese, with 86% met by international and domestic imports (Maine DECD, 2023). Thus, there is considerable room in the market to replace imports with local cheese, which could be stimulated by cheese tourism.

Maine's low entry barrier to market has the potential to facilitate cheese tourism similar in spirit to the state's craft beer industry. In 2011, Maine passed a law that decoupled beer tastings from beer tours. The separation of these functions enabled licensed entrepreneurs to offer beer on draft in a tasting room from virtually any facility –farmhouse or warehouse – and charge customers for this service (Burns, 2016; Thistle, 2017). As a result, the number of breweries proliferated from 25 a decade ago to 165 in 2022. It also contributed to the establishment of the Maine Beer Trail, where visitors go from place to place to sample flights of beer. This model has since been replicated by other food sectors, such as the Maine Oyster Trail and the Maine Wine Trail. “Cheese is so of the place where it’s made,” said Debra Hahn of Hahn’s End in Phippsburg. “The grass comes from the soil, the cows eat the grass, the grass flavors their milk” (Wright, 2017). The difference in terroir that contributes to the sensory profile of cheese creates a reason for consumers to go from farm to farm to sample artisanal varieties. Fuzzy Udder in Whitefield, for example, has installed a self-serve refrigerator open 24/7 for sales along with a picture window that allows visitors not only to watch the cheesemaking process but to interact with the cheesemaker.

The Maine Cheese Guild organizes two events that promote agritourism. The Maine Cheese Festival is an annual one-day event in September that brings 20 cheese makers together to sample, educate, and sell to consumers along with food trucks offering signature menu items made with Maine cheese; beer and wine producers that offer pairings; and artists that make charcuterie boards and other products. Of the event’s 1,500 attendees, more than half, 58% are first-time attendees. On average, visitors gave the event a rating of 4.6. Comments about the festival were inserted into a word cloud generator to determine the most frequent terms used to describe the event. Most of these words, like *great, good, love, nice, wonderful, amazing, and beautiful*, are positive.

“This was the COOLEST festival I've been to in a while. Our friends went last year and raved about how amazing it was. We decided to go with them this year and we were amazed by everything. The vendors were fantastic, food trucks were yummy, and the location was perfect. My boyfriend and I spent over \$200 on cheese, and I'm looking forward to spending more next year.”

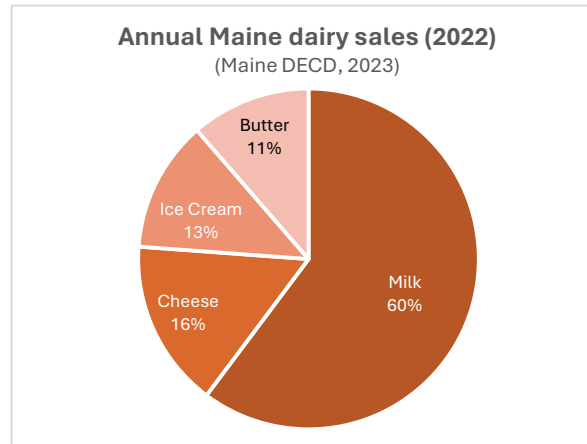
Maine Cheese Festival attendee
Source: Maine Cheese Guild unpublished research

- VisitMaine.com, the state’s tourism portal, which lists 8 cheesemakers open to the public
- Local Goods Gathered, a gift box that aggregates local cheese, crackers, and condiments for home delivery
- DairyMaine.com, a portal that lists goat farms open for agritourism

Policy Recommendations

1) **Market-based recommendation:** *Join forces with the Maine Dairy Promotion Board to create a new Maine Dairy Alliance.*

The Maine dairy industry generates \$291 million in annual sales. Fluid milk production is the largest sector, 60%, followed by cheese (16%), ice cream (13%), and butter (11%). The industry is comprised of 18 businesses with 473 payroll jobs. Over 80% of the state’s demand for dairy, however, is met by domestic and international imports rather than local (Maine DECD, 2023).



Many trade groups are funded by a tax on producers, which is then used to fund marketing activities that stimulate consumer demand. Rooted in state and/or Federal law, the tax represents a form of market intervention (Bade & Parkin, 2022). While “sin taxes” on cigarettes and alcohol are paid by consumers to discourage consumption, levies on businesses are paid by sellers and intended to encourage cooperation: trade groups develop annual programs to promote the industry’s products. For example, the Wild Blueberry Commission of Maine is funded by a tax of 1.5 cents per pound levied on sellers, processors, and shippers, which raises over \$1.5 million per year for research and promotion activities, including agritourism (Wild Blueberry Commission, 2023). Similarly, education and promotion activities for the Maine Lobster Marketing Collaborative are funded by taxes levied on harvesters, wholesale dealers, and processors, which raises over \$2.7 million per year (Maine Legislature, n.d.).

Promotion for the Maine dairy industry is funded by the USDA-authorized bovine dairy checkoff assessment, which is 15 cents on every hundredweight of milk produced, with 8 cents to the Maine Dairy Promotion Board, 2 cents to the Maine Dairy & Nutrition Council, and 5 cents to the National Dairy Promotion and Research Board. In 2023, this tax raised \$566,801 (Drink Maine Milk, 2023). **Creating a new dairy alliance could raise a significant sum more than is possible from the Maine Cheese Guild alone.** For example, membership in the Maine Cheese Guild is just \$50 per year, the same for all businesses no matter their sales volume. There are several **political challenges to the development of a tax levy,** however: 1) the USDA-authorized tax is assessed strictly on cow milk, not that from small

animals like sheep or goats; and 2) processors, i.e., ice cream, that do not pay the tax directly to the Maine Dairy Board pay it indirectly through the wholesale price of milk.

2) Cost-benefit recommendation: *Commission a report on the economic impact of the Maine dairy industry.*

The International Dairy Industry Association (IDIA) uses the IMPLAN model to estimate the direct, indirect, and total economic impact of the nation's dairy industry along with impacts in each of the 50 states. According IDIA, Maine's dairy industry generates 5,117 jobs, \$234 million in wages, and \$1 billion in direct economic impact. When multiplier effects are added, the Maine dairy industry generates \$3 billion in total economic impact, including 14,600 jobs, \$835 million in wages, and \$155 million in taxes, which represents 3% of the state's GDP (IDIA, n.d.). On the other hand, the Maine Department of Labor reports that the Maine dairy industry is comprised of 493 jobs with \$30 million in wages (Maine DOL, 2025). Thus, the IDIA estimates seem implausible. A closer inspection of the study's methodology, however, reveals that the entire dairy wholesale and retail chain have been incorporated into the IDIA estimates, whether or not they distribute local dairy. Perhaps this is why Maine's dairy task force recommends the development of the state's own study. "An economic impact study of Maine's dairy sector is long overdue and would provide a clear picture of the sector's full economic value" (Maine DACF, 2025).

To augment these efforts, the industry might consider valuing the ecosystem services provided by the Maine dairy industry, including habitat preservation, biodiversity, carbon sequestration, flood control, nutrient cycling, scenic landscapes, and recreation. These values would be based on the 700,000 in acreage under the stewardship of Maine dairy farms (Maine DACF, 2025). Such ecosystem services have already been valued in other state plans. For example, *Maine Won't Wait*, the state's climate action plan has valued the ecosystem services of coastal dunes, which protect buildings, infrastructure, and wildlife habitat from storm flooding and storm surges, at \$72 million per year (Maine Climate Council, 2020).

This recommendation would be the first step in a cost-benefit analysis that could establish the foundation for additional funds to support Maine's dairy industry. Since 2020, Maine has lost one third of its dairy farms due to the rising costs of doing business. As a result, the state convened a dairy task force that recommended significant investments in the industry, including fully funding the Tier program, which stabilizes dairy prices; grants, loans, incentives, and tax credits to expand dairy processing capacity; and the establishment of a Maine Dairy Hub to provide technical assistance to farmers and processors (Maine DACF, 2025). All of these investments, or costs, require justification in the form of quantifying the benefits of the Maine dairy industry.

3) Behavioral economics recommendation: *Create a unified brand for Maine cheese.*

On average, Maine cheese costs 4-5 times that of a national brand (Statista, 2024; Welcomer, 2017). In order to build this price premium, producers must communicate the inherent value of terroir, which embodies the sensory properties, moral values, and ethical practices of farmers. “Artisans argue that the commercial value of their cheese is derived from underlying assets that cheese sales also protect independent family farms, unconfined dairy animals, and working landscapes” (Paxson, 2010, p. 445). When it comes to deciding what kind of cheese to produce, Paxson argues that U.S. producers should employ reverse engineering: determine what type of cheese production is particularly suited to a piece of land given its climate, landscape, and topography. Then they should use Old World methods to create something new that is “quintessentially American” (p. 449).

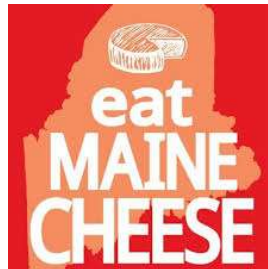
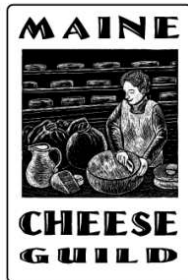
To create this value, however, it must be communicated to consumers. One method is the creation of the “cheese story” that explains its origins, including the people, animals, farm, and methods of craftsmanship (DiStefano & Trubek, 2015). Cheese stories are traditionally shared directly by producers through agritourism activities both on and off the farm as well as through their social media, websites, and packaging labels. These stories are also impactful when shared face-to-face with consumers by cheese mongers at specialty cheese shops. Another method is the development of handwritten signage at the point of sale that contains descriptions about the product’s sensory attributes, place-based attributes, authentic words and phrases, and evidence of a relationship between the cheese monger and the cheese maker (DiStefano & Trubek, 2015). These cheese stories can be heightened by the social context in which they are delivered, including a cheese festival, farmers market, cheese counter, or farm-to-table restaurant (Lahne & Trubek, 2014). Brands, whether shared through storytelling, labels, or social media, serve as nudges designed to subtly influence human behavior without manipulation or coercion (Thaler & Sunstein, 2021). *In the cheese industry, nudging occurs through positive messaging around the values of ecosystems and craftsmanship.*

Where Maine falls short is in presenting a unified brand for Maine cheese based on a strategic marketing plan. For example, the Maine Cheese Guild has mismatched logos for the organization, another for the Cheese Festival, and yet another for general promotion that were created in different eras. At one time, the guild had both a Maine Cheese Trail and a Midcoast Maine Cheese Trail but both efforts have been abandoned due to lack of funding for coordination and collateral materials. This lack of cohesion and coordination is partly a function of resources, including the lack of staff and volunteer capacity that could be addressed through

“It's really a passion project of certain people. All those different cheese trails are one individual person who had a little bit of time and gumption, and said, 'I'm going to take it upon myself,' and knew somebody who could do graphic design and produced it themselves. The guild said, 'God bless, we're happy for anyone to do as much as they can.' If we could have a little bit more of an overarching vision and dedicated employees. We're just now getting an executive director. Slowly but surely, we're trying to become a little bit more cohesive.” Maine cheese producer

Source: Paras (2025) unpublished interview

the first policy recommendation. Following development of a unified brand, the Maine Cheese Guild might consider a training program for the value chain, such as cheese mongers, food and beverage managers, and producers, in the art of creating and delivering “cheese stories” that capitalize on terroir, including the Maine mystique associated with its rocky coast, salty air, fog and mist, and coastal habitats.



4) Polis recommendation: *Help municipalities to adopt farm-friendly programs, plans, policies, and ordinances.*

Ask any Maine citizen what they like about their town and “rural character” will surely rival the top of the list (Brookings Institute, 2006; Governor’s Council on Maine’s Quality of Place, 2007; Market Decisions, 1989). Part of the problem is that Maine allows single family homes by right virtually anywhere in the state. With homes follows the demand for consumer goods and services, such as retail. “With sprawl threatening the integrity of its towns and landscapes, the state likewise lacks the regulatory, planning, and other structures it needs to ensure it doesn’t wreck what it cherishes” (Brookings Institution, 2006, p. 96). This creates encroachment on working waterfronts, farms, and forests that are established for production. While Maine has a right-to-farm law that protects producers from nuisance complaints (7 MRSA §151), municipalities can play an active role in developing farm-friendly programs, plans, policies, and ordinances (Maine Farmland Trust, 2024):

- Conduct a GIS inventory of prime agricultural soils, farmland, and farms
- Conduct a survey of local farmers to understand their land use needs
- Conduct a Cost of Community Services Study to quantify the fiscal impact of farmland compared to residential and commercial development
- Estimate the economic impact of agriculture
- Promote local farms, farm stands, events, and products, e.g., buy local
- Establish an agricultural commission to develop farm-friendly policies and ordinances
- Connect farms with schools to provide students with access to local food
- Establish a local farmers market, including location, rules, and recruitment
- Encourage farmers to reduce their property taxes by enrolling in the state’s open space and tree growth program

- Incorporate agriculture throughout the community’s comprehensive plan to establish the legal foundation for ordinance changes
- Adopt local ordinances for multiple uses that support farms’ financial viability, including storage, energy generation, greenhouse production, housing, processing, retail sales, and agritourism
- Adopt an agricultural overlay district or zone that permits agricultural uses by right without a permit or planning board review
- Fund farmland protection projects with impact fees, development transfer rights, and in-lieu fees
- Lease town land to farmers to increase affordability of farmland
- Permanently protect farmland through conservation easements

These policies, which rely on local persuasion and coordination, embody the polis approach to economics. “Public policy is about communities trying to achieve something as communities...Unlike the market, which starts with individuals and assumes no goals and intentions other than those held by individuals, a model of the polis must assume collective will and collective effort” (Stone, 2012, p. 20). From a “buy local” to a farm-to-school program, creation of a “farm-friendly” municipality demands the development of a shared common interest in the benefits of agriculture for the community, the environment, and the economy.

Conclusion

This paper has summarized the economic dimensions of agritourism within the context of the global cheese industry. At a price of \$4-\$5 per pound, demand for cheese is considered inelastic, whereas, at \$10-\$40 per pound, demand for artisanal cheese is elastic. With dozens of varieties, consumers can readily substitute one product for another. Through labels emphasizing place of origin, ecosystem, quality, and other attributes, consumers are willing to pay more for an artisanal product. The communication of terroir can create additional value for artisanal cheese through cheese tourism, including agritourism, cheese festivals, brand promotion, and other storytelling strategies. These strategies ultimately require marketing funds that stimulate consumer demand along with polis-oriented strategies for “farm-friendly communities” that support the long-term economic viability of dairy farms and value-added producers.

References

Aaker, D. A. (1991). *Managing brand equity: Capitalizing on the value of a brand name*. The Free Press.

American Cheese Society (2023). New study highlights changes in U.S. artisan and specialty cheese. <https://www.cheesesociety.org/about-us/media-room/new-study-highlights-changes-in-u-s-artisan-and-specialty-cheese>

Ammirato, S., Felicetti, A.M., Raso, C., Pansera, B.A., & Violi, A. (2020). Agritourism and sustainability: What we can learn from a systematic literature review. *Sustainability*, 12(22), 9575. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su12229575>

Andéhn, M., & L'Espoir Decosta, J. N. P. (2021). Authenticity and product geography in the making of the agritourism destination. *Journal of Travel Research*, 60(6), 1282-1300. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0047287520940796>

Appraisal Institute (2020). *The Appraisal of Real Estate*, 15th Edition.

Ariely, D., Loewenstein, G., & Prelec, D. (2003). Coherent arbitrariness: Stable demand curves without stable preferences. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 118(1), 73-106.

Artisanal Premium Cheese (2025). <https://www.artisanalcheese.com/collections/all-cheeses>

Bade, R. & Parkin, M. (2021). *Foundations of economics* (9th ed.). Pearson Education.

Bakhtavoryan, R., & Capps, O. (2024). A demand systems analysis for cheese varieties using a balanced panel of US designated market areas over the period 2018 to 2020. *Journal of Agricultural and Resource Economics*, 49(2), 203-220. <https://doi.org/10.22004/ag.econ.338990>

Barnes, R. N., Bosworth, R. C., Bailey, D., & Curtis, K. R. (2014). Connecting sensory quality characteristics and local designations to willingness to pay for cheese at the retail level. *The International Food and Agribusiness Management Review*, 17(3), 115-138. <https://doi.org/10.22004/ag.econ.183453>

Bernabeu, R., Olmeda, M., Diaz, M., & Olivasq, R. (2008). Determination of the surcharge that consumers are willing to pay for an organic cheese In Spain. *IDEAS Working Paper Series from RePEc*.

Berno, T., & Fusté-Forné, F. (2020). Imaginaries of cheese: Revisiting narratives of local produce in the contemporary world. *Annals of Leisure Research*, 23(5), 608-626. <https://doi.org/10.1080/11745398.2019.1603113>

Bilkey, W. J., & Nes, E. (1982). Country-of-Origin effects on product evaluations. *Journal of International Business Studies*, 13(1), 89-99. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/154256>

Bir, C., Widmar, N. O., Thompson, N. M., Townsend, J., & Wolf, C. A. (2020). US respondents' willingness to pay for Cheddar cheese from dairy cattle with different pasture access, antibiotic use, and dehorning practices. *Journal of Dairy Science*, 103(4), 3234-3249. <https://doi.org/10.3168/jds.2019-17031>

Bonnet, C., & Simioni, M. (2001). Assessing consumer response to Protected Designation of Origin labelling: A mixed multinomial logit approach. *European Review of Agricultural Economics*, 28(4), 433–449. <https://doi.org/10.1093/erae/28.4.433>

Bouma, A., Durham, C. A., & Meunier-Goddik, L. (2014). Start-up and operating costs for artisan cheese companies. *Journal of Dairy Science*, 97(6), 3964–3972. <https://doi.org/10.3168/jds.2013-7705>

Bolter, K., & Robey, J. (2020). Agglomeration economies: A literature review. The Fund for our Economic Future. <https://research.upjohn.org/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1256&context=reports>

Brookings Institution (2006). Charting Maine's future: An action plan for promoting sustainable prosperity and quality places. <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/charting-maines-future-an-action-plan-for-promoting-sustainable-prosperity-and-quality-places/>

Brune, S., Knollenberg, W., Stevenson, K. T., Barbieri, C., & Schroeder-Moreno, M. (2021). The influence of agritourism experiences on consumer behavior toward local food. *Journal of Travel Research*, 60(6), 1318–1332. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0047287520938869>

Burns, C. (2016). Craft beer boom challenges Maine's antiquated alcohol laws. Bangor Daily News. <https://wgme.com/news/local/craft-beer-boom-challenges-maines-antiquated-alcohol-laws>

Call, M. (2024). Wisconsin's agricultural industry tops \$116.3 billion in increase from previous years; dairy sector represents 6.5% of state's economic activity. University of Wisconsin-Madison. <https://fyi.extension.wisc.edu/news/2024/11/18/wisconsins-agricultural-industry-tops-116-3-billion-in-increase-from-previous-years-dairy-sector-represents-6-5-of-states-economic-activity/>

Cavalletti, B., Corsi, M., & Lagomarsino, E. (2023). A payment scheme for the ecosystem services of mountain grasslands embedded in dairy products. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 389, 136026-. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2023.136026>

Maine Department of Labor, Center for Workforce Research and Information (2025). *Quarterly and annual employment and wages*. <https://www.maine.gov/labor/cwri/dashboards/quarterly-and-annual-employment-and-wages>

Chase, L., Stewart, M., Schilling, B., Smith, B., & Walk, M. (2018). Agritourism: Toward a conceptual framework for industry analysis. *Journal of Agriculture, Food Systems, and Community Development*, 8(1), 1–7. <https://doi.org/10.5304/jafscd.2018.081.016>

Che, D. (2006). Select Michigan: Local food production, food safety, culinary heritage, and branding in Michigan agritourism. *Tourism Review International*, 9(4), 349-363.
<https://doi.org/10.3727/154427206776330616>

Deselnicu, O. C., Costanigro, M., Souza-Monteiro, D. M., & McFadden, D. T. (2013). A meta-analysis of Geographical Indication food valuation studies: What drives the premium for origin-based labels? *Journal of Agricultural and Resource Economics*, 38(2), 204–219.
<https://doi.org/10.22004/ag.econ.158285>

Dhungana, P., & Khanal, A. R. (2023). Spending on farms ripples into the region: Agritourism impacts. *Frontiers in Environmental Economics*, 2.
<https://doi.org/10.3389/frevc.2023.1219245>

Ding, C.G., & Tseng, T.H. (2015). On the relationships among brand experience, hedonic emotions, and brand equity. *European Journal of Marketing*, 49(7/8), 994-1015.

DiStefano, R., & Trubek, A. (2015). Cheesemongers, Vermont artisan cheese, and value of telling stories. *Cuizine*, 6(1). <https://doi.org/10.7202/1032256ar>

Edible Maine (2022). Say cheese: The Maine Cheese Guild’s journey past, present and future. Sponsored content. <https://www.ediblemaine.com/stories/say-cheese/>
European Commission (n.d.). The common agricultural policy: 2023-27.
<https://agriculture.ec.europa.eu/common-agricultural-policy/cap-overview/cap-2023-27>

European Commission (n.d.). Geographical indications and quality schemes explained.
https://agriculture.ec.europa.eu/farming/geographical-indications-and-quality-schemes/geographical-indications-and-quality-schemes-explained_en

European Commission eAmbrosia (n.d.). Union register of geographical indications.
<https://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/eambrosia/geographical-indications-register/>

Fusté-Forné, F., Modica, F., & Sgroi, F. (2022). Cheese as a food souvenir in Sicily. *Journal of Marine and Island Cultures*, 11(2), 193-211. <https://jmic.online/issues/v11n2/13/>

Fusté-Forné, F. (2020). Savouring place: Cheese as a food tourism destination landmark. *Journal of Place Management and Development*, 13(2), 177–194.
<https://doi.org/10.1108/JPM-D-07-2019-0065>

Garavaglia, C., & Marcoz, E. M. (2014). Willingness to pay for P.D.O. certification: An empirical investigation. *International Journal on Food System Dynamics*, 5(1), 11–22.
<https://doi.org/10.22004/ag.econ.198767>

Global Agritourism Network, 2025. Proposed definition of agritourism [unpublished draft].

Governor's Council on Maine's Quality of Place (2007). *People, place, and prosperity: 1st report of the Governor's Council on Maine's Quality of Place*.
https://www.nrcm.org/documents/quality_of_place.pdf

Gram, D. (2010). Vt. suspends its seal of quality over misuse. *Boston Globe*.
http://archive.boston.com/news/local/vermont/articles/2010/04/01/vt_suspends_its_seal_of_quality_over_misuse/

Grashuis, J. (2023). Preferences for the farmer-owned label: Evidence from cheese consumers in the United States. *Journal of Agricultural & Food Industrial Organization*, 21(2), 109-116. <https://doi.org/10.1515/jafio-2022-0010>

Guptill, A., Larsen, D. A., Welsh, R., & Kelly, E. (2018). Do affluent urban consumers drive direct food sales in the Northeast United States? A three-part analysis. *Journal of Agriculture, Food Systems, and Community Development*, 8(2), 73–86.
<https://doi.org/10.5304/jafscd.2018.082.005>

Han, C.M. (1989). Country image: Halo or summary construct? *Journal of Marketing Research*, 26, 222-229. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3172608>

Harfmann, B. (2024). Pride in processing: Pineland Farms Dairy expands product portfolio.
<https://digitaledition.dairyfoods.com/january-2024/inside-the-plant-pineland/>

Heslop, L.A., & Papadopoulos, N. (1993). But who knows where or when: Reflections on the images of countries and their products. In N. Papadopoulos and L.A. Heslop (eds.) *Product and country Images: Impact and role in international marketing*, The Haworth Press.

IBISWorld (2025). Cheese production in the US. <https://www.ibisworld.com/united-states/industry/cheese-production/4274/>

IBISWorld (2024). Global cheese manufacturing.
<https://www.ibisworld.com/global/industry/global-cheese-manufacturing/368/>

International Dairy Foods Association (n.d.). Maine statistics.
<https://www.idfa.org/dairydelivers>

Keller, K. L. (2001). *Building customer-based brand equity: A blueprint for creating strong brands*. Marketing Science Institute, Report No. 01-107.
https://www.msi.org/?post_type=resources&p=2552

Keller, K. L. (1993). Conceptualizing, measuring, and managing customer-based brand equity. *Journal of Marketing*, 57(1), 1–22. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1252054>

Khanal, A. R., Mishra, A. K., & Omobitan, O. (2019). Examining organic, agritourism, and agri-environmental diversification decisions of American farms: Are these decisions interlinked? *Review of Agricultural, Food and Environmental Studies*, 100(1-4), 27.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s41130-019-00092-w>

Kim, S., Lee, S. K., Lee, D., Jeong, J., & Moon, J. (2019). The effect of agritourism experience on consumers' future food purchase patterns. *Tourism Management*, 70, 144–152.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2018.08.003>

Krogh, J. (2023). New record for world's most expensive cheese. *Culture*.
<https://culturecheesemag.com/blog/new-record-for-worlds-most-expensive-cheese/>

Lakhani, N., Uteuova, A., & Chang, A. (2021). Revealed: The true extent of America's food monopolies, and who pays the price. *The Guardian*.
<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/ng-interactive/2021/jul/14/food-monopoly-meals-profits-data-investigation>

Lahne, J., & Trubek, A. B. (2014). "A little information excites us." Consumer sensory experience of Vermont artisan cheese as active practice. *Appetite*, 78, 129–138.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.appet.2014.03.022>

Lampert, S. I., & Jaffe, E. D. (1998). A dynamic approach to Country-of-Origin effect. *European Journal of Marketing*, 32(1/2), 61–78.
<https://doi.org/10.1108/03090569810197471>

Licitra, G., Caccamo, M., & Lortar, S. (2019). Chapter 9—Artisanal products made with raw milk. In L. A. Nero & A. F. De Carvalho (Eds.), *Raw milk: Balance between hazards and benefits*. Academic Press.

Maine Climate Council (2020). *Maine won't wait: A four-year plan for climate action*.
https://www.maine.gov/future/sites/maine.gov.future/files/inline-files/MaineWontWait_December2020.pdf

Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry (Maine DACF) (2025). *Final report of the task force to support commercial dairy farms in the state*.
<https://www.maine.gov/dacf/ag/dairytaskforce/docs/dairy-task-force-report-final.pdf>

Maine Department of Economic and Community Development (Maine DECD) (2023). *Maine's food sector: Industry profile*.
<https://www.maine.gov/decd/sites/maine.gov.decd/files/inline-files/Final%20Report%20-%20Master%20Food%20Sector%20-%20DECD.pdf>

Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry (Maine DACF) (2015). Maine agricultural officials report record interest in obtaining licenses to sell dairy products. <https://www.maine.gov/dacf/about/news/news.shtml?id=639130>

Maine Farmland Trust (2024). *Cultivating Maine's agricultural future: A policy and planning guide for towns*. https://drive.google.com/file/d/1QjDQoCR0nXeDsQHTh1c_of9dFOT4NFPr/view

Maine Legislature (n.d.). Maine Lobster Marketing Collaborative. <https://legislature.maine.gov/doc/5497>

Maine Legislature Revised Statutes. Sale of unpasteurized milk and milk products. 7 MRSA §2902-B. <https://legislature.maine.gov/statutes/7/title7sec2902-B.html>

Maine Legislature Revised Statutes. Maine Agriculture Protection Act. 6 MRSA §151. <https://legislature.maine.gov/statutes/7/title7ch6.pdf>

Maine Memory Network (2012). The cheese factory. <https://strong.mainememory.net/page/3342/display.html>

Market Decisions (1989). *The people of Maine: A study in values*. https://digitalmaine.com/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1007&context=commission_on_maine_future

Martin, I.M., & Eroglu, S. (1993). Measuring a multi-dimensional construct: Country image. *Journal of Business Research*, 28(3), 191-210. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0148-2963\(93\)90047-S](https://doi.org/10.1016/0148-2963(93)90047-S)

Martinez, S., Hand, M.S., Da Pra, M., Pollack, S., Ralston, K., Smith, T., Vogel, S., Suttles, S., Lohr, L., Low, S.A. & Newman, C. (2010). *Local food systems: Concepts, impacts, and issues*. U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service. ERR-97. https://ers.usda.gov/sites/default/files/_laserfiche/publications/110957/ERR-97.pdf?v=66748

Mills, J. (2024). U.S. Cheese Market Report. Mintel. <https://store.mintel.com/us/report/cheese-us-2024/>

Moon, W., & Griffith, J. W. (2011). Assessing holistic economic value for multifunctional agriculture in the US. *Food Policy*, 36(4), 455–465. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.foodpol.2011.05.003>

Naeem, M. (2020). Uncovering the role of social motivational factors as a tool for enhancing brand-related content. *Qualitative Market Research*, 23(2), 287-307. <https://doi.org/10.1108/QMR-10-2019-0121>

Nagashima, A. (1970). A comparison of Japanese and US attitudes toward foreign products. *Journal of Marketing*, 34(1), 68-74. <https://doi.org/10.1177/002224297003400115>

Nagashima, A. (1977). A comparative "made in" product image survey among Japanese businessmen. *Journal of Marketing*, 41(2), 95-100. <https://doi.org/10.1177/002224297704100311>

Napolitano, F., Braghieri, A., Piasentier, E., Favotto, S., Naspetti, S., & Zanolli, R. (2010). Cheese liking and consumer willingness to pay as affected by information about organic production. *The Journal of Dairy Research*, 77(3), 280–286. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022029910000130>

Nazariadli, S., Morais, D. B., Barbieri, C., & Smith, J. W. (2018). Does perception of authenticity attract visitors to agricultural settings? *Tourism Recreation Research*, 43(1), 91-104, DOI: 10.1080/02508281.2017.1380144

Neff, R. (2014). *Introduction to the US food system: public health, environment, and equity* (First edition.). Wiley.

Ngoulma, J. (2016). Consumers' willingness to pay for dairy products: What the studies say? A meta-analysis. https://www.sfer.asso.fr/source/coll-lait2016/lml2016_b1_ngoulma.pdf

Oduro, S., De Nisco, A., & Petruzzellis, L. (2024). Country-of-Origin image and consumer brand evaluation: A meta-analytic review. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 33(1), 108-124. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JPBM-01-2023-4328>

Okrent, A., & Alston, J. M. (2012). The demand for disaggregated food-away-from-home and food-at-home products in the United States. U.S. Department of Agriculture. <https://www.ers.usda.gov/publications/pub-details?pubid=45006>

Oliver, R.L. (1999) Whence consumer loyalty. *Journal of Marketing*, 63, 33-34.

Oliver, R.L. (1997). *Satisfaction: A behavioral perspective on the consumer*. The McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc.

Onken, K. A., Bernard, J. C., & Pesek, J. D. (2011). Comparing willingness to pay for organic, natural, locally grown, and state marketing program promoted foods in the Mid-Atlantic region. *Agricultural and Resource Economics Review*, 40(1), 33–47. DOI:10.1017/S1068280500004500

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2001). *Multifunctionality: Towards an analytical framework*.

Oxford University Press (2007). Oxford word of the year 2007: Locavore.

<https://blog.oup.com/2007/11/locavore/>

Papageorgiou, T. (2022). Occupational matching and cities. *American Economic Journal*, 14(3), 82–132. <https://www.aeaweb.org/articles?id=10.1257/mac.20180122>

Pappu, R., Quester, P. G., & Cooksey, R. W. (2007). Country image and consumer-based brand equity: Relationships and implications for international marketing. *Journal of International Business Studies*, 38(5), 726–745.

<https://doi.org/10.1057/palgrave.jibs.8400293>

Paras, C., Michaud, T., & Hoffman, M. (2022). Sustaining New England’s iconic tourism landscapes: An exploratory study to examine perceptions of value from farmers and fishermen. *Journal of Agriculture, Food Systems, and Community Development*, 12(1), 141-156. <https://doi.org/10.5304/jafscd.2022.121.014>

Parmigiano Reggiano (2024). Parmigiano Reggiano guidelines.

<https://www.parmigianoreggiano.com/static/51f254ab0d59c91a5b335bc1e84e77ea/58c0aed37c83845fb02de999908b7d88.pdf>

Patterson, P. M. (2006). State-grown promotion programs: Fresher, better? *Choices*, 21(1), 41-46.

Paxson, H. (2010). Locating value in artisan cheese: Reverse engineering terroir for new-world landscapes. *American Anthropologist*, 112(3), 444–457.

<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1548-1433.2010.01251.x>

Peterson, R. A., & Jolibert, A. J. P. (1995). A meta-analysis of Country-of-Origin effects. *Journal of International Business Studies*, 26(4), 883-900.

<https://www.jstor.org/stable/155303>

Petrescu, D. C., Vermeir, I., & Petrescu-Mag, R. M. (2019). Consumer understanding of food quality, healthiness, and environmental impact: A cross-national perspective. *International journal of environmental research and public health*, 17(1), 169.

<https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph17010169>

Pilone, V., De Lucia, C., Del Nobile, M. A., & Contò, F. (2015). Policy developments of consumer’s acceptance of traditional products innovation: The case of environmental sustainability and shelf life extension of a PGI Italian cheese. *Trends in Food Science & Technology*, 41(1), 83–94. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tifs.2014.09.005>

Pollan, M. (2006). *The omnivore's dilemma: A natural history of four meals*. Penguin.

Porter, M. E. (1998). Clusters and the new economics of competition. *Harvard Business Review*, 76(6), 77.

Printezis, I., Grebitus, C., & Hirsch, S. (2019). The price is right!? A meta-regression analysis on willingness to pay for local food. *PLoS One*, 14(5), e0215847. DOI: 10.1371/journal.pone.0215847

ProPublica (2024). IRS Form 990 2023: Wisconsin Cheese Makers Association, Inc. <https://projects.propublica.org/nonprofits/organizations/390712619>

Punj, G. N., & Hillyer, C. L. (2004). A cognitive model of customer-based brand equity for frequently purchased products: Conceptual framework and empirical results. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 14(1–2), 124-131. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327663jcp1401&2_14.

Real California Milk (2025). Real California Milk facts. <https://www.californiadairyroom.com/node/437>

Reich, B. J., Beck, J. T., & Price, J. (2018). Food as ideology: Measurement and validation of locavorism. *The Journal of Consumer Research*, 45(4), 849–868. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jcr/ucy027>

Rodrigo, I., Cristóvão, A., Tibério, M., Baptista, A., Maggione, L., & Pires, M. (2015). The Portuguese agrifood traditional products: Main constraints and challenges. *Revista de Economia e Sociologia Rural*, 53(1), 23-32. DOI: 10.1590/1234-56781806-94790053s01002

Ruiz-Labrador, E.-E., Sánchez-Martín, J.-M., & Gurría-Gascón, J.-L. (2023). The agritourism value chain: An application to the Dehesa areas of Extremadura. *Agriculture (Basel)*, 13(11), 2078-. <https://doi.org/10.3390/agriculture13112078>

Schilling, B., Sullivan, K., & Komar, S. (2016). Examining the economic benefits of agritourism: The case of New Jersey. *Journal of Agriculture, Food Systems, and Community Development*, 3(1), 199–214. <https://doi.org/10.5304/jafscd.2012.031.011>

Skelton, K. (2018). Maine's udder love affair with cheese. *Press Herald*. <https://www.pressherald.com/2018/11/26/maines-udder-love-affair-with-cheese/>

Spector, J., & Schuhmacher, T. (2018). Attention shoppers: What do those New York-made labels really mean? *Democrat and Chronicle*. <https://www.democratandchronicle.com/story/news/2018/03/13/new-york-state-branding-programs/356212002/>

Staffolani, G., Rahmani, D., Bentivoglio, D., Finco, A., & Gil, J. M. (2023). The mountain product label: Choice drivers and price premium. *Future Foods: A Dedicated Journal for Sustainability in Food Science*, 8, 100270-. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.fufo.2023.100270>

Stanton, J. L., Wiley, J. B., & Wirth, F. F. (2012). Who are the locavores? *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, 29(4), 248-261. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/07363761211237326>

Statista (2025). Per capita consumption of fluid milk products in the United States from 2000 to 2022 (in pounds). <https://www.statista.com/statistics/184240/us-per-capita-consumption-of-fluid-milk-products/>

Statista (2025). Retail price of American processed cheese in the United States from 1995 to 2024 (in U.S. dollars per pound). <https://www.statista.com/statistics/236861/retail-price-of-processed-cheese-in-the-united-states/>

Statista (2024). Leading U.S. states in total cheese production in 2023. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/195764/top-10-us-states-for-cheese-production-2008/>

Stone, D. A. (2012). *Policy paradox : The art of political decision making*. W.W. Norton.

Sustainable Entrepreneurship Based on Multifunctional Agriculture (n.d.). *SEMA case studies: Best practice examples of multifunctional agriculture in Europe*. ERASMUS+, European Commission. https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/project-result-content/226f313e-2f8b-4339-ab24-dc972b9dc4a2/SEMA_CS_compilation_EN.pdf

Sweeney, J. C., & Soutar, G. N. (2001). Consumer perceived value: The development of a multiple item scale. *Journal of Retailing*, 77(2), 203–220. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0022-4359\(01\)00041-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0022-4359(01)00041-0)

Tarapoulouzi, M., Agriopoulou, S., Artemi, A., Galati, A., Thrassou, A., Fiore, M., & Vrontis, D. (2024). Quality schemes and Geographical Indicators in the cheese agribusiness and the case of the Cypriot traditional cheese Halloumi. In *Agribusiness Innovation and Contextual Evolution, Volume I* (pp. 155–182). Springer International Publishing AG. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-45738-8_7

Thaler, R. H., & Sunstein, C. R. (2021). *Nudge: The final edition*. Penguin Books.

Tew, C., & Barbieri, C. (2012). The perceived benefits of agritourism: The provider's perspective. *Tourism Management* (1982), 33(1), 215–224. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2011.02.005>

Thistle, S. (2017). Maine's beer makers pursue law changes they say will help growth continue. *Portland Press Herald*. <https://www.pressherald.com/2017/03/13/maines-beer-makers-pursue-law-changes-they-say-will-help-growth-continue>

Thomson, M., MacInnis, D. J., & Whan Park, C. (2005). The ties that bind: Measuring the strength of consumers' emotional attachments to brands. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 15(1), 77–91. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327663jcp1501_10

Thorpe, L. (2018). The sneaky multipliers of cheesemaking. *Serious Eats*. <https://www.serious-eats.com/why-good-cheese-doesnt-come-cheap>

Toma, P., Manta, F., Morrone, D., & Campobasso, F. (2023). Familiar worldwide: How PDO products reflect quality in consumers' appraisal and behaviour. *The TQM Journal*, 35(2), 470-491.

USDA Foreign Agricultural Service.
<https://www.fas.usda.gov/data/production/commodity/0240000>

van Ittersum, K. (2007). The role of origin in consumer decision-making and choice. <https://edepot.wur.nl/82514>

Vecchio, R., & Annunziata, A. (2011). The role of PDO/PGI labelling in Italian consumers' food choices. *Agricultural Economics Review*, 12(2), 80-.

Verlegh, P., & Steenkamp, J.B. (1999). A review and meta-analysis of Country-of-Origin research. *Journal of Economic Psychology*, 20(5), 521-546.

Viljoen, A., Kruger, M., & Saayman, M. (2017). The 3-S typology of South African culinary festival visitors. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 29(6), 1560–1579. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJCHM-09-2015-0464>

Wang, Y., Hug, S., Irek, J., & Finger, R. (2024). Product differentiation, quality, and milk price stability: The case of the Swiss cheese market. *Applied Economic Perspectives and Policy*, 47(1), 416-435. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1002/aepp.13467>

Welcomer, S., MacRae, J., Davis, B., & Searles, J. (2017). Maine's artisan cheesemakers: The opportunities and challenges of being an artist, scientist, agriculturalist, alchemist, and entrepreneur. *Maine Policy Review*, 26(1). <https://doi.org/10.53558/SPSJ8482>

Wozniacka, G. (2021). The nation's first regenerative dairy works with nature to heal the soil—at scale. *Civil Eats*. <https://civileats.com/2021/09/07/the-nations-first-regenerative-dairy-works-with-nature-to-heal-the-soil-at-scale/>

Wright, V. M. (2017). 10 Maine cheeses you need to try: The state's cheesemakers are on a roll. *Downeast*. <https://downeast.com/features/a-slice-of-culture/>

Wulandari, S., Sutrisno, J., Yusuf, E. S., & Komalawati, K. (2024). Developing industry clusters based on 4As to support agritourism competitiveness. *IOP Conference Series. Earth and Environmental Science*, 1364(1), 12033-. <https://doi.org/10.1088/1755-1315/1364/1/012033>

Yaffe-Bellany, D., & Corkery, M. (2020). Dumped milk, smashed eggs, plowed vegetables: Food waste of the pandemic. *New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/11/business/coronavirus-destroying-food.html>

Zhang, M., Dong, X., Huang, Z., Li, X., Zhao, Y., Wang, Y., Zhu, H., Fang, A., & Giovannucci, E. L. (2023). Cheese consumption and multiple health outcomes: An umbrella review and updated meta-analysis of prospective studies. *Advances in Nutrition*, 14(5), 1170–1186. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.advnut.2023.06.007>

Zhang, Y., & Lee, H. (2022). Wine tourism experience effects on co-creation, perceived value and consumer behavior. *Ciência e Técnica Vitivinícola*, 37(2), 159–177. <https://doi.org/10.1051/ctv/20223702159>

Zhou, G., Hu, W., Batte, M. T., Woods, T. A., & Ernst, S. C. (2011). Household grocery shopping destination allocation: Have local stores caught on with the rise of local foods? *IDEAS Working Paper Series from RePEc*.