



## Kylemore Farmhouse Cheese

### Summary

Teresa Roche had a career as a nurse for 15 years living abroad and returned home with a desire to set up her own business on her family farm in Kylemore Abbey, Loughrea, Co. Galway. The Roche family started milking cows in the 1960s and have since continued to increase the herd, and now milk 100 Pedigree Holstein British Friesians. On her return, Teresa had the idea to try and add value to dairy enterprise by developing her own farmhouse cheese. She embarked on a number of business and cheese making courses in the UK and Switzerland before developing her own cheese manufacturing unit on the farm. This unit was built in 2017 and LEADER funding under the Rural Development Programme (RDP) 2014-2020, which is co-funded by the EU, was sought and successfully gained in 2018 to support the purchase of a number of items for the on-farm cheese manufacturing facility.

### Context

Teresa thought up the idea of developing her own farmhouse cheese on the home dairy farm to add value to the enterprise. To do so and gain an insight into cheese making, Teresa first volunteered with award winning local cheesemaker Marion Roeleveld of Killeen Farmhouse Cheese. On the back of this, Teresa travelled to the UK and Switzerland and did more cheese making training in the Alps. It was here she decided on making a mountain hard cheese as opposed to specialty hard cheeses, to be a more

**Project name:** Kylemore Farmhouse Cheese

**Date:** 29<sup>th</sup> January 2018 – 4<sup>th</sup> March 2019

**Local Action Group:** Galway Rural Development

**Implementing Partner:** Galway Rural Development

**Type of Beneficiary:** Small Medium Enterprise

### Priority & Focus Area:

**Theme 1:** Rural Economic Development, Enterprise Development and Job Creation  
**Sub theme:** Enterprise Development

**Project Beneficiary Name/Organisation:** Kylemore Farmhouse Cheese

**Address:** Kylemore Farmhouse Cheese, Kylemore Abbey, Loughrea, Co. Galway

### Further information:

**Website:** <http://kylemorefarmhousecheese.com/>

**Facebook:** <https://www.facebook.com/Kylemore-Farmhouse-Cheese-134296174072961/>



*Teresa with the dairy herd at Kylemore Farmhouse Cheese Source: Irish Independent*

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premium, luxury style of cheese similar to the Swiss Appenzeller cheese.

Teresa also simultaneously developed her business skills by completing the Musgraves Food Academy Programme and also the Start your Own Business Programme with the Galway Local Enterprise Office (LEO). It was the LEO in Galway that first gave Teresa a grant of €20,373 to renovate an old sheep shed on the farm and turn it into a cheese manufacturing facility.



*Kylemore Farmhouse Cheese - Source: NRN*

In just under a year the manufacturing unit was ready and fully certified to start producing cheese. Teresa applied for a LEADER grant for additional pieces of equipment to help with the manufacturing process and also to better her



*Teresa in her cheese maturing room - Source: NRN*

packaging in order to expand her customer base and make her product exportable.



*Kylemore Farmhouse Cheese Branding - Source: NRN*

The cheese is promoted as a fully traceable 'farm to fork' low carbon product due to the fact that it is produced on farm from the fully grass-fed herd of Pedigree Holstein British Friesians. Cheese is only produced when the cows are out on grass, so generally from April to

October. The cheese is handmade and can take as long as 6 months to mature before it can go to customers.

## Objectives

- To purchase a number of pieces of equipment for cheese manufacturing. This equipment included a Ph metre, cheese moulds, a cheese press, data box and probe for the pasteurization process, labelling scales and a vacuum packer

## Activities

Teresa had been in contact with her Local Action Group (LAG), Galway Rural Development (GRD), from the onset to see if she could avail of LEADER funding to kick start her cheese making enterprise. In 2018, Teresa applied for funding for a number of pieces of equipment to aid the cheese manufacturing process.

*"I contacted GRD in Athenry, and they're very good to be honest, at the time it was Miriam Stewart and Claire Conroy they were good" Teresa Roche, Proprietor Kylemore Farmhouse Cheese*





The equipment included cheese moulds, a cheese press, labelling scales and a vacuum packer. Other items included relate directly to meeting food safety criteria and food certification standards including a Ph metre, data box and a probe for the pasteurisation process. The application process was helped along with the guidance and input of rural development officers that work with LEADER at GRD and Teresa emphasised that this was crucial in being successful in gaining LEADER funding.

***"I wouldn't have been able to get going, rural funding is vitally important for alternative enterprises off farms"***  
**Teresa Roche, Proprietor Kylemore Farmhouse Cheese**

safe product. Over 1,500 litres of fresh morning milk is used to make one batch of cheese and on average Teresa produces 5 tonnes of cheese per annum. To ensure this is of suitable and safe quality these pieces of equipment do different jobs in helping to monitor quality and safety. For example, the Ph metre is used to check the acidity of the batch, while the data box and probe detects and collects all the data from the milk and feeds it back to the Department of Agriculture Food and the Marine (DAFM). This data includes things like the temperature, time and highlights any discrepancies to ensure the product is safe and that product attributes or claims can be supported. Aside from that, milk is also supplied to Arrabawn Co-op who also do testing and analysis on their milk quality which gives them good monitoring of quality and traceability of milk which the DAFM can access directly.



*Some of the pieces of equipment LEADER funded including the vacuum packer, labelling scales cheese press and moulds*

*Source: NRN*



*The cheese can mature from 6 months and are regularly washed, turned and batch checked - Source: NRN*

### Results

The purchase of these pieces of equipment have had a substantial impact on the enterprise. For example, the equipment related to meeting food certification and food quality standards is crucial in maintaining a high quality and

When Teresa initially started selling her wheels of cheese, she wrapped them in cheese paper with her label as packaging. However, as time moved on she realised that she need to turn to vacuum packing to increase her





customer base and also make her cheese exportable. Many chefs and outlets require products to be sealed and vacuum packed for hygiene reasons and to avoid cross contamination. Furthermore, the scales and labelling are as important for allowing Teresa to weigh out her cheese and include labelling details such as weight, origin, and nutritional values.

***“The vacuum pack holds the moisture in and for clients who want to take the product overseas-it has to be in a vacuum pack... also chefs want the cheese to be in vacuum packs. So even half a wheel or quarter of a wheel when they buy it they want to know if it’s in a vacuum pack its sealed, its closed and no contamination can go and also for hygiene”*** Teresa Roche, Proprietor, Kylemore Farmhouse Cheese



Farmhouse Cheese as well as other tourism aspects of the business which she is keen to develop further.

*Kylemore Farmhouse Cheese as a Rural Tourism experience- Source: NRN*

These pieces of equipment have allowed Kylemore Farmhouse Cheese manufacturing process to become more streamlined and professional, opening it up to a number of new markets. Along with doing a lot of marketing and appearances, Kylemore Farmhouse Cheese has been supported by Nevin McGuire, Rachel and Darina Allen and even the Euro-toques. This has opened up a number of new high-end customers including Ashford Castle, La Rouse Foods and has even attracted the attention from the prestigious Neals Yard in London.

While Kylemore Farmhouse Cheese is still relatively new, it has already picked up a number of awards including two gold awards in the Artisan Cheese Awards in the UK for the best rind cheese and best hard cheese for two years in a row. It has also picked up a bronze award in the newcomer cheese category for the Cais awards in 2018, as well as the ‘Best New Business 2018’ from Galway LEO.

Also, due to these developments and expansion, Teresa has been able to employ 3-part time assistant cheese mongers which impacts greatly on the surrounding rural community. Teresa has also started to develop other aspects of the business including cheese tours in her visitor centre and afternoon teas in the old farmhouse featuring Kylemore

Aside from this, Teresa is a keen advocate for Rural Enterprise development, and she has been involved in the Galway Region of Gastronomy 2018 and was also chosen to represent Galway for the ‘Rural Opportunity Roadshows’. These were a Government initiative to raise awareness of the wide variety of Government supports available to rural communities.



*Teresa representing Galway at the Rural Opportunities Roadshow in Clare - Source: GRD*

***“Diversification has to be one of the key points for the future of farming...and we need access to grants, and better access to the grants and more flexibility with finance and support”*** Teresa Roche, Proprietor, Kylemore Farmhouse Cheese





## Lessons

### Access to capital

As an SME one of the biggest barriers to getting started is capital and access to capital. To access LEADER funding you have to have capital pre-approved and this was a difficult barrier for Teresa, especially considering she was in the start-up phase of her SME.

*“Financial capital is really important like to know that you have to have access for LEADER, you have to have the capital pre-approved and that often is very difficult for start-up businesses... if your tight for capital”* Teresa Roche, Proprietor, Kylemore Farmhouse Cheese

Because of this Teresa thought that doing LEADER applications in phases is probably the best approach for a start-up SME especially given the fact that many SMEs fail. She says it's better to try and plan in advance and prioritise what you need and what will actually make you money.

*“If you have capital it's great, but if you don't like me, phase it out... be aware that you can do it in phases, plan it out be thinking about 2/3 years ahead of yourself... like I'm always thinking now of the next year”* Teresa Roche, Proprietor, Kylemore Farmhouse Cheese

### LEADER Application Process

The LEADER application process can be quite hard to understand. Teresa said sometimes it can be hard to understand all the different ceilings and what you are entitled to, for example grants for marketing and or conducting cheese making training abroad. It is therefore crucial to ask and get guidance from the rural development officers over LEADER.

*“Always ask what you can actually apply for, sometimes it's hard to read between the lines...I'd love if it was a little bit simpler...when you look at the application its quite heavy”* Teresa Roche, Proprietor, Kylemore Farmhouse Cheese

Teresa recommends making contact with your Local Action Group and the rural development officers as they are familiar with the application and can help you through the application process.

*“Work with your mentors...they know better...they how the system runs”* Teresa Roche, Proprietor, Kylemore Farmhouse Cheese

### Funding

<b>Total project budget (i)+(ii)+(iii) =</b>	€120,000
<b>+ (i) Rural Development Programme support (a)+(b)</b>	€11,309.25
<b>+ (a) EAFRD (EU) contribution</b>	€7,102.21
<b>+ (b) National / Regional contribution</b>	€4,207.04
<b>+ (ii) Private / Own funds</b>	€88,317.75
<b>+ (iii) Other funding sources</b>	€20,373 (LEO Galway)

### Contact details

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