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Value-added Dairy Production on Vermont Grass-based Livestock Farms: Interest, Potentials and Needs  
for Information and Assistance

Abstract

While the dairy industry in Vermont has seen a decrease in the number of small and medium size farms in favor of larger scale producers, the production of value-added dairy products has been identified as a method to increase the success of small and medium scale farms by boosting revenue and reducing dependence on a volatile fluid milk price. The purpose of this research is to examine the characteristics of both current value-added dairy producers and those with interest in future value-added production on Vermont grass-based livestock farms and their needs for information and assistance. Although previous research has identified a wide range of benefits of value-added dairy production, more information is needed about farms with interest in establishing new value-added production and how to help them succeed.

A 2011 mail survey yielding 229 responses from Vermont grass-based livestock producers will provide information about the demographics, farming practices, and level of success of Vermont farmers involved in value-added dairy production and those with expressed interest in establishing future production. Preliminary results suggest value-added dairy producers have a lower average number of animals while showing higher levels of self-reported success and satisfaction. Further analysis will examine the characteristics and success of those interested in beginning value-added dairy production with further exploration of information and assistance needs for future development. Results will help inform Vermont agricultural policy by identifying a unique group of farmers as likely beneficiaries from continued development of the Vermont value-added dairy industry.