How is the public engaged with TMK Creamery?

In addition to buying products on the dairy, customers may also take a tour of the facilities and pet a milk cow (cowlebrity). “The secret to success is...don’t have secrets,” says Tessa Koch. “Have transparency; have trust in your product.” At TMK Creamery, the whole cheese making process is shown through a window in their farm store.

“A customer can taste all the different cheeses and watch that same product being made from start to finish.”

— Tessa Koch
IMPACT OF VAPG FUNDING

Overall, the operation became more efficient with the addition of equipment and people. They also were able to expand their marketing and branding.

“TMK Creamery was able to add cheese making tools which, in turn, allowed for more products and shortened the window of production.”

—Tessa Koch

NEEDS FOR FUTURE FUNDING

Koch says there are always funding needs in a small operation. However, immediate needs are to make improvements in their payment process, parking lot and milking robot. Longer term goals include expanding their market to Portland, add more varieties of cheeses, add beef, ice cream, and distilled spirits (whey from cheese).

ADVICE FOR OTHERS

The creamery applied twice for funding. During the first round, the farm made connections with Mandy Cole from the USDA Rural Development office. According to Koch, applying was a long process and Mandy working with them was helpful. When inputting information in the application process, they found the dates had to be very specific or the system would not accept it.