

The case of France
Flexibility measures specifically define
for “small dairies”
and their application

*Conference “EU food hygiene Regulations and 'slow' cheese production
principle and practice”
Bra, Italy - Sunday, 22/09/2013*

Definitions

- **Farmhouse cheese**: definition in the French Law (Décret fromage, 1988, actualized in 2007):
 - Only the milk from the farm concerned can be transformed
 - By the producer
 - On the farm
 - According to « traditional methods »

The farmhouse cheesemaker has three professions:

Milk producer + cheesemaker + seller



- **Artisanal dairy**

No official regulation, but an empirical definition in opposition with « big industry »:

~ 1 to 2 millions liters transformed / year

Farmhousecheese sector in France

6 247 Farmhouse dairies

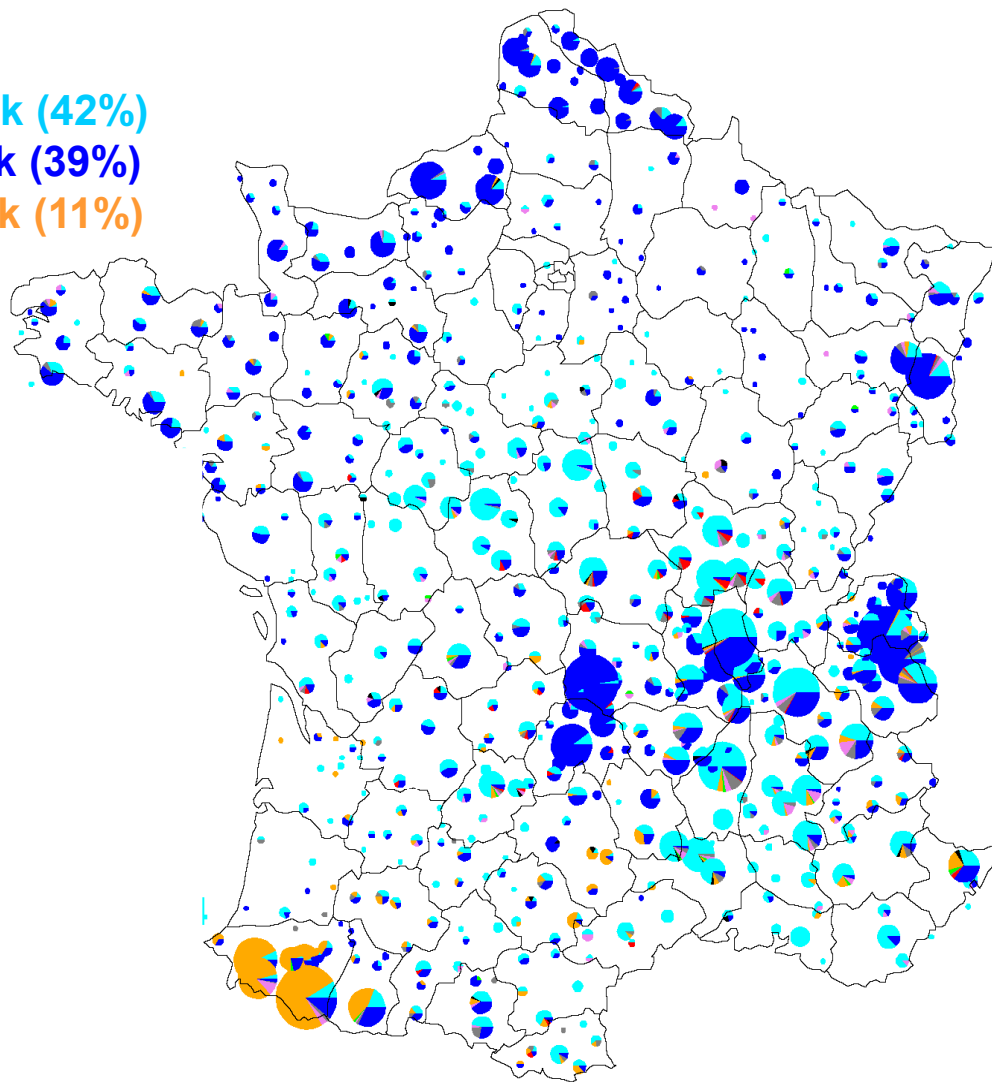
2 624 in goat milk (42%)

2 438 in cow milk (39%)

693 in sheep milk (11%)

8% other

(milk representing
very small activity)



Statutes of farmhouse dairies

Registration and approval

- European approval (Art. 4, Regulation 853/2004)
- Derogation to the approval for marginal, localised (80 km) and restricted activity:
 - Selling $> 30\%$ to retailers = limited to 100 kg /week
 - Selling $< 30\%$ to retailers = limited to 250 kg/week
- Simple registration for retail (handling and/or processing of food and its storage at the point of sale or delivery to the final consumer)

Farmhouse cheesemaking's characteristics

Advantages and constraints of farmhouse cheesemaking **are recognised by the competent authorities**

Specific advantages

- very concentrated responsibility
- raw milk production well handled by the producers' control on breeding
 - process starting quickly after milking
 - cheesemaker know how
- with « direct sale », producers are connected to the consumers: continuous feedback on the quality

Specific constraints

- « small scale » enterprises
 - limited turn over
 - limited time availability

Flexibility measures

Flexibility is recognised in the Regulation (CE) n°852/2004 as follows:

- (15): *“The HACCP requirements should take account of the principles contained in the Codex Alimentarius. They should provide **sufficient flexibility** to be applicable in all situations, including in small businesses. ... the requirement of retaining documents needs to be flexible in order to avoid undue burdens for very small businesses.*

Derogations are planned in Regulation (CE) n°852/2004:

- Art 13 §3: *Member States may, ...adopt, ... national measures adapting the requirementsThe national measures ...shall have the aim of:
(i) enabling the continued use of **traditional methods**, at any of the stages of production, processing or distribution of food...*

Flexibility measures

Two important references at national level:

- **« Instruction to the local inspectors concerning Flexibility »**
(note de service DGAL du 07 novembre 2011)
 - Result of discussions between the professional organisations and the Ministry of Agriculture
 - Gives the list of flexibility measures accepted by the competent authorities, concerning: premises, equipments, staff, materials, processing, health monitoring plan
 - It is not a Law, but it corresponds to the instructions given by the Ministry to the inspectors, so it is a reference
- **Arrêté du 7 novembre 2012: Law concerning milk products presenting traditional characteristics**
 - All farmhouse dairy products are considered as « traditional products »
 - Gives derogations concerning premises and concerning materials, equipments, and packaging

Flexibility concerns:

- Building, organisation, and equipments
- The concrete realization of the safety plan (HACCP replaced by Guide to Good Practices of Hygiene)
- The dairies which transform less than 2 millions liters of milk / year (most are “farmhouse dairies”, but small artisans can also be concerned)
- These dairies may have different statutes:
 - Direct sale
 - Derogation to European approval
 - European approval

Flexibility measures

Premises

- No specification in Regulation 852/2004 for the use of rooms but a **clear separation** between clean area and outdoor is required.
- Flexibility for farms : packaging room or changing room can be regarded as a separation.
- Forward flow principle not always relevant (separation in time can be acceptable)
- Wood accepted
- Must be regularly and well-maintained

Flexibility measures

Example of premises : cleaning room and entrance



Equipments

Can be simple but must ensure a safe handling of the products

Some examples:

- Pest control tools: no specific requirements except avoiding any tools above of unprotected food
- Maintenance: corrosion regarded a minor defect if not in contact with food
- Washbasin not always possible (e.g milking in mountain pasture or outside): other equipement allowed (wipes, bucket...)

Flexibility measures

Example of equipments



Flexibility measures

Staff

- Medical certificate not required anymore => stress on prevention of contamination by the staff more relevant
- Clothing requirements to be adapted for farmers: clothing used in the barn must be different from the one used in the dairy
- Hygienic rules panels not mandatory in small dairies
- Training on hygiene : GHP guidelines sufficient (national guidelines validated)

Analysis

- Raw milk must be analysed
- European requirements to be adapted when milk is not collected:
 - Antibiotics can also be controlled through the registration of vet treatments on animals
 - Count cells not always relevant
 - E.coli more relevant than total germs
- Criteria of 2073/2005 mandatory
- Frequency determined by the producer but analysis must be done regularly all over the year (at least one / quarter of production)

Flexibility measures

Functioning

- Moulds in halloir, cave, processing rooms: permitted according to the process
- Milk conservation after milking : derogation possible to refrigeration according to the process (e.g, transformation right away, geographical indications...)
- Rooms temperature : no obligation, can be variable.
e.g: temperatures of the ripening rooms have a technological justification and not a sanitary one
- Both own starters and rennet are allowed

Flexibility measures

Functioning



Flexibility measures

Functioning



Flexibility measures

Safety plan

National guide to good hygiene practices officially validated by the competent authorities



- No « mandatory » CCP. There can be none ! (raw milk cheese)
- GHP are often sufficient
- Control of this safety plan through analyses :
 - 2073/2005, others to be justified according to the production ;
 - Frequency : decided by the producer, guidelines, information note made by the producers
- Non compliant results => reinforcement, corrective actions
- Surface samples not mandatory

Records

- Recording daily cleaning not needed
- For small producers, records can be limited to:
 - For instance : non compliance for room temperatures, acidity control, milk tank temperature...
 - But it is important that corrective measures are planned
- No flexibility for traceability of products

Consequences of the flexibility for the producers

- The controls of the inspectors concern hygiene practices and safety plan
- The producers must take training courses about GGPH
- The producers have to apply the GGPH
- The controls insist on the capacity of the producer to explain and justify his practices