



LEADER Project 07/P00078 - The Ethical Dairy

Final report

Project Background

The purpose of this project was to launch The Ethical Dairy brand and the message behind the revolutionary approach to dairy production through the cow and calf ethical production dairy system.

David and Wilma Finlay are the directors of Finlay's Farm Ltd, which is a company registered in 2017 with the aim to make artisan dairy products that would use the milk from their cow and calf alternative dairying system. Finlay's Farm was also converting a barn on their farm into a dedicated cheese making facility in the first year of this project.

The objectives of the project was to build a brand (The Ethical Dairy), build customer following of the business and the Ethical Dairy concept and build sales of the new dairy products being developed by Finlay's Farm Ltd.

The Project took place at Rainton Farm, Gatehouse of Fleet in Dumfries & Galloway. It started on 5th April 2018 and ended on 30th April 2020.

The project cost was £110,000. The LEADER grant is £55,000 with match funding through an overdraft facility from The Bank of Scotland.

Local Development Strategy

The project has promoted The Ethical Dairy brand and helped increase the scale of the cheese making enterprise at Rainton which in turn has provided economic benefits through increased employment with employee numbers rising from 0.75 FTE jobs to 4 FTE. This will ultimately be 6 FTE once fully established. The project fits with the "Economy" strand of the Local Development Strategy and in particular fits with the concept of Tourism as an economic sector alongside its role to strengthen services; (LDS section 5.1). By raising awareness of The Ethical Dairy brand we have stimulated interest in the production system, the produce and the region as a whole.

The development of The Ethical Dairy brand has helped to secure an added value market for the milk produced by James Finlay & Son, the farm business at Rainton, thereby further diversifying the farming business and by providing a premium market for the milk produced, the farm and is less vulnerable to worldwide price fluctuations. This has helped to secure the future of the farm business at Rainton and has enabled it to continue farming organically and to trial agroecology methods which has helped to protect and enhance the natural environment assets. In addition SRUC is undertaking a Knowledge Transfer project which examines all aspects of the farming system at Rainton farm to assess its overall

environmental, resource efficiency, biodiversity and economic impacts. This will be published in 2021 with the aim of raising awareness of the benefits of agroecology techniques.

The project will help to develop and adapt tourism within the region to reflect COVID and post-COVID behaviour and trends. Cream o' Galloway, which is also based at Rainton Farm, is already an established tourism attraction in the region. This project has assisted in the transition of Cream o' Galloway to provide high value socially distanced experiential events. In the longer term the business would also like to offer banqueting style cheese and wine tasting sessions.

Project Actual Experience

The project took place from April 2018 to April 2020.

The main events were:-

- Attended 2 Exhibitions in London in September 2018
- Crowdfunding Campaign Sept-Oct 2018 which raised £57K from around 600 individuals.
- Increased e-commerce sales from 30 at Christmas 2017 to over 150 at Christmas 2018
- 2 Exhibitions in Spring 2019 – in Glasgow and Birmingham
- Visits from MSPs including Mairi Gougeon the Minister for Rural Affairs and Natural Environment and Kate Forbes, Cabinet Secretary for Finance, who wanted to find out more about our Ethical Dairy system.
- Held the Ethical Dairy Conference (with 3 other Scottish farmers) in May 19. It attracted 200 people including farmers, academics, NGOs and school children and students. People came from throughout the UK and also America, Finland, Sweden, Ireland and France.
- Range of videos feature cow with calf system developed.



- Wide range of photography featuring cheese making, cows with calves and people involved in the business produced for promotional use in both print and social media



- Launched a range organic ice creams under The Ethical Dairy brand in summer 2019



- Attended the Speciality Food Show in London in Sept 2019 to promote The Ethical Dairy Cheese, Ice Cream and Rose Veal.



- Undertook a major marketing campaign undertaken through the Speciality Food Magazine's Taste Direct campaign. We contacted 250 businesses and sent 110 samples to new prospects in January and February 20
- Had to change marketing strategy in March 2020 because of COVID-19. We focused completely on e-commerce through targeted social media use. There were only 90 e-commerce orders in April 2019. Because of COVID-19 there was a complete change of emphasis to e-commerce.

This resulted in e-commerce orders increasing to over 1000 in April 2020.

- 2 new trainee cheesemakers have been recruited. One in November 19 and one in April 20.
1 new cheese packer was recruited in November 2019.
- Training in cheesemaking techniques, cheese grading, and hygiene requirements from the farm animals to the final cheese has been on going with 9 people being trained across a range of topics.

Project Delivery

Wilma Finlay of Finlay's Farm was ultimately responsible for the project. The Project Manager was Lorna Young of Indigo Words who managed the project on a day to day basis. Lorna Young undertook all the social media engagement and Wilma Finlay was ultimately responsible for managing the budget Together they sub-contracted to other suppliers as required. They also worked together throughout the project to determine the budget cost items which required to be adjusted and a month's extension was required because of the change of strategy required as a result of COVID-19.

The majority of marketing was done by social media using mainly Facebook, though Twitter and Instagram were also used. Blogs, videos and professional photography were essential. We also engaged in topical food and farming online discussions. We have built our followers to 10,000 on Facebook and 3,000 on both Twitter and Instagram.

Post Project

The main lesson learnt is that social media is critical. It has been necessary to switch demand on and off depending on the supply of cheese we have had at different times. This has been possible to manage through either increasing marketing spend on Facebook, or alternatively when supplies of cheese are low, to reduce social media posts and blogs to a minimum so that The Ethical Dairy is not so visible to potential new customers.

The success of the project has proved to be a vital start to the business. The company's turnover is now meeting initial projections. This would not have happened without this project, and it definitely would not have happened through the COVID-19 crisis had we not had professional marketing assistance.

We will continue to use external advisers but on a more limited basis and with the internal members of our team taking on more of the daily social media work.