

Selling ice-cream adds value to farm-produced milk

Farm: **Björketorp**
Location: **BLEKINGE, SWEDEN**



Photo: Linda af Geijersstam
Text: Nilla Nilsson-Linde, 2019

Background

Björketorp Farm (220 ha) is located close to Ronneby in south-east Sweden, in a temperate continental mild climate with a risk of summer droughts. The soil type varies from sand to loam. Winter oilseed rape, faba beans, triticale and barley are grown, plus 15 ha of semi-natural grassland and 100 ha of temporary grassland for silage with perennial ryegrass, timothy, meadow fescue, red clover and white clover. Machinery services are contracted in for harvesting and manure spreading. Björketorp Farm has organic production, with 120 dairy Swedish Red and Holstein cows milked in an automatic milking system with two robots. The average production is 9600 kg of KRAV-certified milk per cow and year. There are also 11 horses.

Björketorp Farm has an interest in being more efficient by adding value to products, instead of extending the farmland area. A passion for ice-cream making led to upscaling of ice-cream production six years ago. This strategy is also a result of a greater ambition; to be able to influence and make a difference through the farm's activities. In the background, there were influences from the previous farming generation, who were dedicated to good management and taking care of all resources. The choice of ice-cream arose from a passion for ice-cream.

Dealing with the authorities was a problem, as it was a slow process and interpretation of regulations was unclear. Increased skill in making the product has been awarding. Contacts and meeting skilled producers of ice-cream have been of great importance.

Detailed description

Homemade ice-cream in many flavours, sold on-farm

On Björketorp Farm, milk from the farm's dairy herd is used for manufacturing ice-cream. Production is driven by an interest in using the farm's products for good food and no artificial ingredients are used. The ice-cream is offered in a great variety of flavours and is sold on-farm, together with milk and some local products. The ice-cream is also delivered to local restaurants and sold at fairs.

The farm maintains close contact with consumers. Numerous groups visit the farm and a great public event is when the cows are let out of the house after winter. The mission is to spread knowledge of farming to a wider audience.

The farmer's five pieces of advice on how to develop an idea are: Do what you like doing, sell what you want to eat, fill a niche, create good working conditions and cooperate, involve neighbours and be helpful. The farmer emphasises: 'I refuse to do things only for economic reasons. Everything we do has to contribute to the farm and the people working here'.

Results

The economic benefits are important, but also the privilege of working with something you like. The production target has been reached on Björketorp Farm and a full-time employee now works in ice-cream production. This also means that a large number of people visit the farm to buy ice-cream. This indirectly achieves Björketorp Farm's overall goal – to spread knowledge about agriculture and give more people access to added value in a farm environment.

The passion for the product makes for success. Commitment to making a genuine product, interest in developing it and interest in cooperation and communicating about agriculture on the

farm are keys. Visitors are the future customers. And the ice-cream is really tasty! The product fills a niche and the farm is strategically close to a highway.

Adoption criteria

Close to an urban area, sociable and good at ice-cream

Björketorp Farm sells almost all of its ice-cream within the immediate area. This means that there is scope for at least one dairy farm in every community to develop ice-cream production and sales. Of course, on-farm sales require a strategic position close to a large town. It could also be possible to have collaboration between a dairy farm and a business that only produces ice-cream. Product quality is a key issue. Björketorp Farm is highly dedicated to investing in excelling at ice-cream production and has used knowledge and contacts to achieve this goal.

Future prospects

Drive – the key and the pre-condition for development

There is no lack of new ideas about development of the farm. Ice-cream production is part of the desire to develop all of the farm's potential. Ice-cream sales are promoted by all activities that draw in more people. However, the driving force is still to do something good. One idea is to involve the farm's horses in the concept. Another idea is to develop a restaurant and event/party venue. One option is to collaborate with a restaurant that cooks food using raw ingredients from the farm. The farm already hosts study trips, but this can be expanded further.

Many people are important for the success of the enterprise. It is important to employ skilled workers instead of trying to master everything alone. It is also important to have help to move forward. It is a great advantage to have a sounding board, which is regarded as essential on Björketorp Farm. More collaboration will be needed to deal with the future climate: 'If you don't keep swimming all the time, you drift backwards'.