

# IMPROVING ON-FARM CHEESE PRODUCTION: BRIDGING GAP BETWEEN PRACTICE AND RESEARCH

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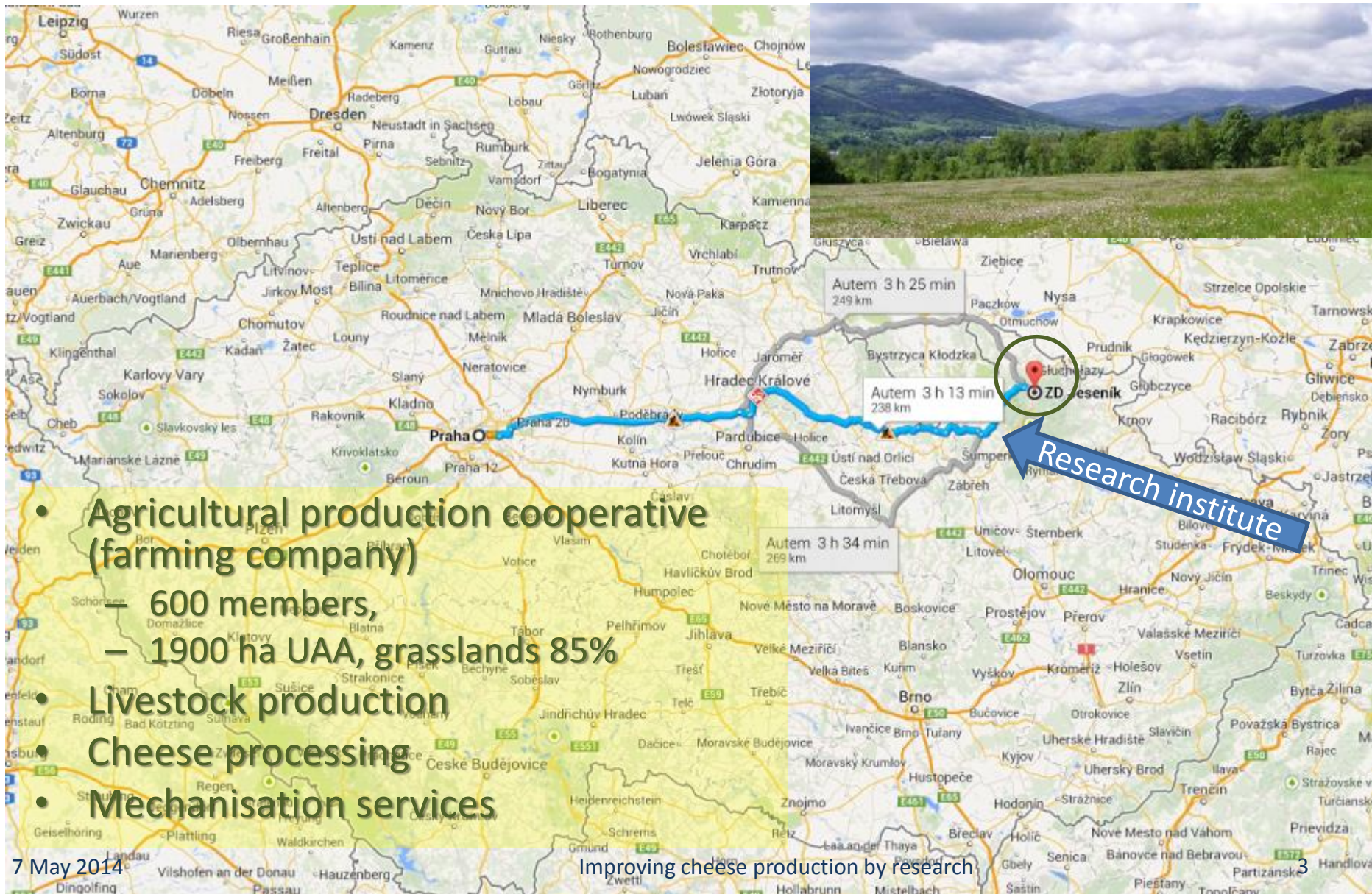
# The problem

- The farm produces mixed sheep-cow milk cheese.
  - Demanded product BUT
  - Variable parameters (consistency, taste, cooking properties) depending on seasonal composition of sheep milk.
  - The issue was how to make the parameters stable throughout the year.
- At the same time, there was need for upgrading the cheese making unit





# Location, farming system



# Initiation

- Sheep cheese (pure or mixed with cow cheese) is regarded as an business opportunity for the farm in marginal (mountain) region
- There is good market for it in restaurants (particularly in large cities like Prague)
  - ➔ to increase the production
- Restaurants demanded improved quality that the cheese is suitable for thermal preparation (grilling, baking, etc.)
  - ➔ to improve the production technology



# Initiation

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→ to increase the production

Strategy: To get an investment grant from RDP

- Restaurants demanded improved quality that the cheese is suitable for thermal preparation (grilling, baking, etc.)

Trial and Error

→ to improve the production technology

following what they saw in Austria

# Initiation

- Strategy: To get an investment grant from RDP
- An option: instead of going for Measure 123 “adding value to agricultural and food products” **to apply for Measure 124 “Cooperation for development of new products, processes and technologies ...”**
- And to approach an research organisation which might help to resolve the “cheese problem”
- It was assumed as a chance but with no high expectations

# The innovation process

- **Initiator:** The management of the cooperative farm – the director (the president of the board of managers) and the manager of the cheese processing unit.
- **Knowledge gathering:** visit to Austria since they new there are farms producing sheep cheese (other sort than in Slovakia or Poland) in the framework of the contacts of the Czech and Austrian farmers' unions.
- **Strategic decisions:** Board of managers
- **Implementation of the strategy:** the director (the president of the board of managers) and the manager of the cheese processing unit

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- **Implementation of the strategy:** president of the board of managers of the cheese processing unit

**Further knowledge gathering:**  
The networks did not lead to a research organisation  
Farmers are not used to work with research



# The innovation process

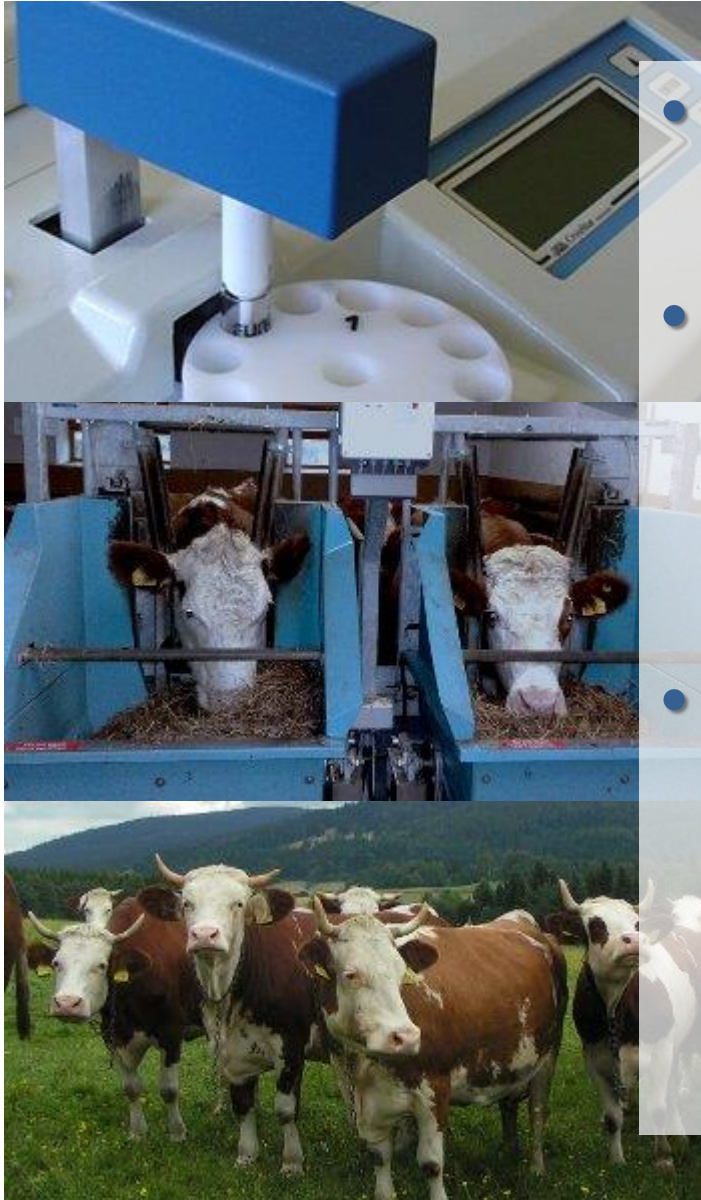
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However:

Farmers are used to use support programmes [use their opportunities]

# Research partners

- Research Institute for Cattle Breeding (RICB/VUCHS)
- Chosen because it was near, not because of their expertise
  - Had no experience with cheese making
- The first meeting was disappointing – the language was different and seemingly far from practical needs of farmers.



# Result of the collaboration

- The collaboration turned in the success
  - Because RICB/VUCHS listened to farmers !!!
- Knowledge of RICB/VUCHS concerned properties of milk and its components, and was translated (in mutual cooperation) in the product improvement.
- Also RICB/VUCHS suggested improvements in marketing:
  - branding (a logo),
  - improved packaging (better look).







# Results of the collaboration

- **The Agricultural Cooperative farm Jesenik:** learned that research can help to resolve a problem on a cooperative (knowledge is worth to pay for it)
- **RICB/VUCHS:** gained important experience in working with farmers (processors) on practical solutions relating milk and consequently milk product properties.
- **Both** learned how to communicate and collaborate.

# Lessons learned

- Success factors:
  - inspired by seeing another example (in this case Austria)
  - policy guiding innovation initiators to researchers
  - researchers listening to farmers
- Bottlenecks:
  - farmers used to buying technology BUT not to buying knowledge/advice {knowledge perceived as public good}
  - different language: **farmers** (the ability of farmers to express what they want to solve and why) <> **researchers** (the capacity to anticipate what should be solved)
- Trust grows while working. In the area of cheese making the collaboration established.

# Final result

