

Back on the bovine side, Thomas Menne's Nieheimer Schaukäseerei is located in Niehem, and as such is one of the few cheese makers that produce Protected Designation of Origin Nieheimer cheese, a skim milk cheese that is sold at four to six weeks old. It is pressed, milled and ripened for three days. Cumin and salt are then added, and it is then pressed again into little tablets. No rennet is used.

Menne opened the cheese factory in 2004, as a branch of the dairy farm, which he began with his fellow farmer Gerd Peine. The site processes the milk of 130 cows into Nieheimer cheese, Brünsterhofkäse in various flavours, including wild garlic, paprika, smoked and reduced fat. The operation also makes Tilsiter cheese, which can be wiped with red wine or beer for different flavourings.

The site makes cheese three days per week in a 4,000-litre vat and processes 350,000 litres per year. The dairy farm itself produces one million litres per year of milk.

The cheese making operations are also the site of the enterprise's farm shop, which makes money during the summer months with coachloads of tourists.

Looking again at goats, Konrad Steinlage has taken over from his father and is now milking 120 goats, along with an additional 100 young goats, at the Steinlage Landkäseerei in Rietberg-Druffel. The farmer has a 24-stand circular milking parlour for the goats, and produces several types of cheese from the goats – Edam and Gouda

type cheese, yogurt, and quark. Sizes range from 450 grams to four kilograms for the rounds. Sales come from both farmer's markets and through distributors.

Environmental concerns are at the top of his list, and he is building a €1.4 million bio-gas operation for using the heat generated from processing animal waste to pasteurise the milk, as well as heat and electricity for the farm. He will be able to use the heat generated on the site, and the excess electricity will be sold back to the national grid there.

Another innovation is the mobile cheese van, which goes to markets around the region. He has spent €85,000 on the van, but says it's the easiest way to move products to the markets. **DII**



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