

Introduction ...

One of the key methods used by Meyer Cheese to keep the product safe for themselves and customers is running their own facilities. By doing this they can monitor the cheese and know its origins from being formed inside the cow's udder to the transport around NZ, and exported to Australia. This process begins on Meyer Cheese's two dairy farms, where cows are raised on a variety of grasses that are both drought resistant and flavoursome; milk product can often be bland if only one type of grass is present. This means the cheese is of a higher quality and more is bought by their target higher income consumers ensuring sustainability and a higher demand, and therefore a higher supply of their cheese, ensuring their viability.

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Cows are farmed in low stock numbers, with many trees, to ensure healthy stock for the future, but also less long-term damage to land through pugging and high nitrogen leaching caused by large numbers of stock. Once the cows are milked by a well-trained team of dairy farmers who all wear protective clothing to prevent contamination, e.g. covered shoes and overalls are always worn when around the milk. 10% of all milk is tested to ensure no contamination such as e-coli occurs, as 100% per ML is needed to pass health standards and continue in business. From here just under half the milk is kept and pasteurized, while the rest is sent to Fonterra. It would not be sustainable to keep 100% because milk gives a fast turnover of profit that is needed to ensure the viability of the business.

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The milk is transported from Meyer Cheese's farms to their cheese making facility, along with sheep and goat's milk which is supplied from farms that are ethical to ensure milk is of the highest quality, and to provide a wider range of cheese choices to consumers. It is then pasteurised to kill harmful microbes in the milk and once again prevent any chance of sickness for consumers of the milk.

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Once all the safety boxes have been checked, the cheese goes through a capital-intensive process. As Meyer Cheese only employ four full time staff, a large amount of the cheese is produced by machinery which works the milk into cheese. This means that Meyer are producing more output per unit of input, meaning the machines can make more cheese faster than humans, saving Meyer Cheese money and keeping them viable.

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Once the curds and whey is separated, the whey and waste water is then irrigated back onto the land. As Miel said, "it can be a problem if this is over-concentrated therefore we have a rotation plan which ensures fields are not irrigated for long periods of time or too frequently. The amount of whey we produce is also small". This shows Meyer Cheese's environmental practices and their desire for a sustainable future on the farm.

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After many labour intensive hours of turning the cheese and shaping it, a large variety of cheeses are produced to meet their markets' demand and ensure viability. Once the cheese is ready it is once again tested for any flaws and contamination, before they are delivered around the country in chilled freight, which are insured in case of any transport issues. "We support our cheese right throughout the transport chain and to the end customer". Some cheese is also exported overseas to Australia to reach a larger market and expand their business. There are no plans to export to other countries in the near future. Exports are currently <5% of all of Meyer Cheese's turnover.

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For Meyer Cheese future proofing means running a profitable business that is viable, sustainable, and in line with their cultural beliefs and values. "Food is future proofing in itself". By doing this, Meyer Cheese creates an environment for staff and customers that is both professional and enjoyable. Creating a business that will continue to run for many years to come, even if Miel were to die, is also a main goal for Meyer Cheese. They record all transactions about all produce supplied. This is to both please the auditor who checks to make sure their business meets all requirements to continue running, and in case someone else has to pick up the business it can be done with ease, future proofing it for years to come. "To create a successful business, you must listen to the people around you", is Miel Meyer's answer for us when asked if he followed the influences of others to future proof his business. For Meyer Cheese these influences include economic, environmental, political, social, ethical, technological, biological and legal, along with profitability, ethics and sustainability.

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Technology can also relate to investing in new machinery that is more cost effective than people, and can make more cheese per hour. This is also future proofing as machines do not need breaks or holidays. For example, they could invest in capital machinery that shapes the Gouda cheese, and applies the wax or natural rind ready for aging. Another machine could cut and package the cheese, reducing the need for labour and human handling of the cheeses and reducing the risk of contamination.

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The benefit of having new machinery is enabling more production to be possible and improving productivity, but workers may lose employment as fewer jobs are needed.

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Economic factors for Meyer Cheese affect the business hugely in the short and long term. Depending on the state of the economy, and how much supply and demand there is for Meyer Cheese, determines what price their cheese can be sold at. Short term, Meyer Cheese have to keep up with demand to prevent a shortage from

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occurring, while avoiding overcompensating and creating a surplus, meaning there is too much cheese produced for Meyer Cheese's market. If either of these situations were to happen, the business would likely suffer a loss in profits.

Long term, Meyer Cheese must watch NZ and overseas economies to ensure they can future proof for depressions in the market or changes in general and try to increase their market presence in NZ by implementing a marketing campaign and getting their cheese sold in more speciality cheese and deli retail locations around NZ. Additionally, by increasing production with more capital input as explained for technology, they could look at securing more retail locations in Australia and exporting more cheese to Australia, increasing their market presence there with a marketing and advertising campaign. This would help ensure the long-term viability of the business by securing more retail locations to sell their cheese

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Environmental/ethical awareness is an influence for Meyer Cheese "to protect the land so it is here for future generations". This shows they are looking to future proof the environment in the long term. This is done by keeping stocking rates low on each farm and pumping whey back onto the land as mentioned earlier, and fencing waterways and getting on board with healthy rivers, to stop erosion and major nitrogen leaching, which can stay in the land for hundreds of years, and damage future water quality.

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By doing this, pugging damage to soil is reduced, and nutrients taken out of the land through cropping, grazing, etc is re-applied, keeping the land in pristine condition today, and for the future. Public waterways are kept clean, protecting future generations who may use it for swimming.

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Cultural views within business, such as only using natural calf rennet, and staying in line with their beliefs is huge for Meyer Cheese as it defines them as a business and will continue to do so for years to come. The cheeses produced are non-vegetarian. As Miel said, "we use a natural calf rennet which is keeping in line with our traditional style". Beyond business, vegetarians will not be able to buy Meyer cheese and will take their business elsewhere to cheese makers that use vegetarian rennet. This is a growing market that Meyer is not currently tapping into and so is a lost opportunity to make more sales and future proof the business.

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Social influences are related to aspects such as social media and promoting online, e.g. Facebook, to attract a wider range of people. Social also includes building strong relationships with customers, that will continue to buy the cheese long term, future proofing sales.

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Biological influences such as selective breeding means Meyer farms can breed dairy cows with high production rates. This means they produce higher output per unit of input, and in the future stock will continue to be productive and have the same bloodlines. A consequence of this is that Meyer farms will keep the same bloodlines and local breeders will no longer be needed, leading to decreased income for local breeders.

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Scientific research within business is done by Meyer Cheese to ensure cheese is up to standard for export. By testing each batch for bacteria to ensure safe milk is being used with no bugs, and testing different combinations of cheeses, Meyer can see which cheeses are most popular among customers in the short term. Another consequence is the retail businesses that Meyer Cheese supplies to could sell more cheese to consumers, therefore making a larger profit, and increasing income.

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Legal factors within the business include tax, ACC and company reporting obligations and health and food safety regulations, such as filling out report booklets for every batch of cheese, and making sure all requirements for staff, trucks, factory, etc are met. This avoids a bad review from auditors, or health inspectors which could lead to instant shutdown of a cheese-making business. By doing this Meyer Cheese are protecting and future proofing themselves in the case something goes wrong, e.g. contamination of milk. Problems can be instantly traced, finding what the likely problem was. Meyer's records also help to track any problems. Good reviews from auditors and health inspectors also improves the reputation and business viability of Meyer Cheese.

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Conclusion ...

References:

Miel Meyer
Meyercheese.co.nz
Fonterra.co.nz