

Mon Lait: quality, sustainability and fair income in the same glass of milk

Mont Lait is a French dairy producer brand benefiting from the EU Optional Quality Term “mountain product”. Mont Lait managed to take profit of the term to keep the added value in mountain areas and redistribute it to producers while also raising awareness on the importance of maintaining mountain agriculture.

Quality and sustainable dairy products

In the Massif Central, agriculture is dominated by livestock farming. Cow's milk accounts for 20% of the farm production in the region and 94% of this comes from mountains. Therefore, being the largest dairy production area of the French mountains, it is all the more important that the Massif Central valorises the origin of its production.

MORE INFO

[Mon Lait](#) is a producer brand benefiting from the Optional Quality Term “mountain product”. This means that dairy products exclusively come from holdings located in mountain areas and from cows fed with at least 60% of grass from the mountains. Processing companies involved in the value chain of Mont Lait products are also located in the Massif Central. From the raw material to the finished products, consumers are therefore ensured to eat locally made dairy products.

Quality is part of the communication of Mont Lait, which raises awareness among the general public on the benefits, but also challenges, of maintaining this sector alive in mountains, both for farmers and consumers. Mont Lait for instance promotes the higher quality of mountain milk, richer in omega 3 and omega 6 as demonstrated the 2018 [study](#) on mountain milk of the National Institute of Agronomic Research.

Mon Lait even wants to go further. By January 2021, producers want to clarify the specifications to ensure that at least 70% of the dairy herds’ feed is grass, that 80% of the fodder area of the farm is covered with grass, and to make compulsory outdoor grazing for dairy cows (with a minimum of 20 acres of pasture per cow during the season going from 1 March to 31 October).

A fair income for mountain farmers and processors

In 2010, a group of farmers from the Massif Central created the Association of Mountain Milk Producers (APLM), owner of the Mont Lait brand, a 100% producer brand. The association managed to develop a balanced partnership between producers and processors to propose products made in mountain areas, throughout the entire value chain.



Credits: Mon Lait



Innovative aspect

Mon Lait does not only base its communication on the proximity of producers but also further explain why mountain farming matters for the socio-ecological system and why is important to maintain it. Through the association, Mon Lait developed a fair relation with processors and producers.

Thanks to the added value created by the Optional Quality Term “mountain products”, the APLM manages the financial redistribution to the different actors in the chain:

- 0.10 € per litre of milk sold are collected. Out of this added value, APLM returns 0.03 € per litre to the companies that manufacture Mont Lait products, as compensation for the additional costs of collection in mountain areas
- Each tray (400 grams) of Mont Lait raclette cheese sold generates 0.36 € for the benefit of the Mountain Milk Producers Association
- Each block (250 grams) of Mont Lait butter sold generates 0.55 € for the benefit of the Mountain Milk Producers Association

The Mont Lait approach therefore supports the whole mountain dairy sector and provides fair incomes to mountain farmers and processors.



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Various benefits for mountain areas

Socio-economic benefits: the agri-food sector accounts for a large share of jobs in the Massif Central, well above the national average. It is estimated that a 100-hectare farm provides a living for an average of 2.5 active people (farmers or agricultural employees) and generates the equivalent of 2.7 indirect full-time jobs, such as employees in processing, transport, marketing and agri-supply companies. Maintaining local production therefore helps to keep the region economically dynamic. Indirectly, maintaining a local active population has also positive effects on rural development and cohesion, with more services being provided.

Environmental benefits: livestock farming plays an essential role in providing a number of ecosystem services, such as providing high quality food, preserving landscapes, protection biodiversity etc. Through grazing, herds maintain open environments that favour a remarkable biodiversity of plant and animal species and make possible sustainable outdoor activities.

More information

For more information on Mont Lait’s ways of working, please visit their [website](#). If you want to discover more inspirational examples of mountain producers and operators using the OQT “mountain product” and learn more on the uptake of the term in the EU, you can read Euromontana 2020 study [“Implementation of the EU Optional Quality Term “mountain product”: where do we stand in the different Member States?”](#)



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