

## Pearl Valley Cheese's Sizeable Expansion Expected To Be Complete By Spring

Fresno, OH—The expansion project that began last September at the Pearl Valley Cheese facility located here is slated for completion this spring.

Since its inception, Pearl Valley has made several upgrades to keep current with the demands of a changing business environment. The company began in 1928 and seven years later, the building where operations still take place was constructed.



Pearl Valley first utilized bulk milk in the 1950s. The company added its Colby line about 10 years later and expanded its Swiss cheese cutting operations in the 1970s. Pearl Valley developed its reduced-fat and reduced-salt cheese varieties during the 1980s and expanded its retail store in the late 1990s.

**“New markets for our wholesale products will be explored when the new expansion project is completed later this year.”**

A sizeable 2,000 square-foot construction project is currently underway that will enable Pearl Valley to more than double its manufacturing capacity. At present, the company produces about 10,000 pounds of cheese per day. After the upgrade is

complete, Pearl Valley can produce roughly 25,000 pounds a day.

The new facility will also contain larger and less labor-intensive cheese vats, along with an automated control system that will allow for tighter monitoring of the make process.

Likewise, an improved material handling system has been designed to reduce the amount of manual movement of cheese products and the new two-truck milk receiving bay will allow delivery tankers easier access for unloading milk.

Pearl Valley Cheese receives 70 percent of its milk supply from local independent producers and about 30 percent of surplus and contracted milk from Dairy Farmers of America (DFA).

The entire project should be completed this spring, according to Pearl Valley president Chuck Ellis. Processing is expected to begin this May.

According to company officials, volatility of cheese and milk prices over the past several years have challenged Pearl Valley to manufacture quality products and offer competitive prices to its wholesale and retail customers.

“New markets for our wholesale products will be explored when the new expansion project is completed later this year,” Pearl Valley reported.

In 1928, Ernest and Gertrude Stalder, a Swiss immigrant couple, began making Swiss cheese wheels in a small stone building using a copper kettle and milk from neighboring farms.

By the 1960s, the Stalders' son John and his wife Grace took over operations and moved the company into its present facility. The couple also began diversifying the types of cheese manufactured at Pearl Valley.



Currently, John and Grace remain owners of Pearl Valley and a third generation of Stalders helps to manage the company. Fifteen full-time employees and 15 part-time workers make up Pearl Valley's staff.

The company distributes its products to grocers and specialty retail markets in Ohio, Virginia, Pennsylvania, Maryland and West Virginia.

Pearl Valley produces a full line of cheese products including Mild, Baby, Aged and Smoked Swiss, Colby Longhorn, Pepper Jack Longhorn, Marble Cheese and Lacey Baby Swiss.

According to the company, its “Deli-Horn” line of Colby products has gained in popularity due to its ease of slicing and capability of producing smaller, sandwich-size slices for the consumer.

The slice is four inches in diameter and takes less space in the retailer's deli case, enabling him to offer a wider selection, Pearl Valley

noted.

The company has also received a host of awards for its cheese. Pearl Valley was named Ohio's Grand Champion Swiss Cheesemaker in 1994-1996, 1998 and 1999. It also received a bronze medal at the US Championship Cheese Contest in 1999.

“We believe that God has blessed Pearl Valley with dedicated employees and milk producers who all desire to make the best quality product at a reasonable price,” the company noted.

“Our loyal customers are also an important part of our company's success. It is our desire to serve them in the future with the highest of business standards as in the past,” Pearl Valley continued.

Customers can get information on cheesemaking, review the construction progress and order cheese by visiting Pearl Valley's website at [www.pearlvalleycheese.com](http://www.pearlvalleycheese.com). •

## NM County Commission Refuses Request For A Moratorium On Local Dairies

Clovis, NM—New Mexico's Curry County Commission decided this week to refuse an environmental group's request to place a five-year moratorium on local dairies.

The Concerned Citizens for Clean Water wanted to restrict dairy construction and expansion in the area.

Local farmers, dairy operators and business advocates packed the commission meeting on Tuesday to protest the proposal.

“The dairy industry is the only thing this community has to brag about right now,” said Clovis/Curry County Chamber of Commerce director Ernie Kos.

Ranchvale resident Paul Elders requested the moratorium in order to study the impact dairies may have on the Ogallala Aquifer, which supplies water to the county.

“Let's hold it for a little while, and find out what our situation is,” Elders said. “What is a four or five-year wait in order to get the real facts?”

Elders said the 18 dairies in Curry County are depleting water supplies and polluting the aquifer with harmful nitrates.

Dairies contribute more than \$225 million annually to the county's economy, according to the Chamber of Commerce.

Farmers said the commission could not regulate land use of private property without compensating the land owners.

“We have paid for these (water) rights, and that has to be understood,” said local farmer Stan Ware. “As citizens we are allowed to do what we want with our property.”


Commissioners said the dairies are regulated by state and federal laws.


“I don't think this county commission should tell people what to do with their property,” Commissioner J.W. Whalen said.

Commissioner Kathryn Tate said the dairies are increasing the tax base and county revenues.

“We are in charge of running this county, and we need that money,” Tate said. “There's an old saying that says, ‘Don't bite the hand that feeds you.’” •

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