

Quality Statement

Neal's Yard Dairy aims to sell cheese made by people who share our desire to collaborate and improve. While for many years our definition of *quality* began and ended with deliciousness, we feel it is time to define more specifically what we mean by cheese quality, and furthermore, allocate our resources to support producers who share a commitment to the same principles.

Our understanding of these principles and our goals will continue to evolve over time, and so will this statement. We commit to reviewing it annually to ensure that it remains aligned with our values.

In terms of the cheeses that we sell, we define quality as a combination of three factors: *technical control*, *progressive farming*, and *transparent expression of milk*.

Technical Control

We wish to sell cheeses made by people working to achieve mastery of their process: to understand the effects of variability in their milk, make, and maturation environments and how to adjust their methods to produce consistently excellent cheese. We prize consistency of eating quality, not uniformity of flavour: excellent cheeses evolve across the seasons and reflect the changing inputs with which they are made. However, this is not an excuse for technical faults and inconsistencies that detract from the eating quality and handleability of the cheese.

The second part of technical control is proactively taking responsibility for understanding and managing food safety. In addition to maintaining a strong food safety culture, we require all cheesemakers who have been in production for more than five years and make more than five tonnes of cheese to have SALSA plus Cheese or equivalent TPA.

Progressive Farming

Our use of the term 'progressive' does not refer to a certain style of farming: rather, regardless of their starting point, we want to work with producers committed to increasing their net environmental contribution over time. [A draft list of examples can be found below.] Our interest in the integrity of farming systems is not limited to the farmhouse cheesemakers with whom we work, but also to those who buy in their milk to make cheese. Our aim is to find an effective environmental impact metric for cheesemakers and have the majority of our suppliers measuring their impact by 2025 and talking with us about the process. In the spring of 2023, NYD will be evaluating farming impact metrics with a focus group of suppliers.

Transparent Expression of Milk

The best cheeses are expressions of the quality of their raw materials, not driven by the flavour of adjunct or ripening cultures. Classic British styles of cheese are at an advantage when it comes to this principle, as they have the capacity when made correctly to transmit the character of the milk from which they are made. Cheeses made with carefully produced raw milk also have an advantage in this respect. We also wish to support cheesemakers experimenting with producing starters from their own milk, soured milk, or whey—in line with industry best practice—that amplify the character of their raw milk and the uniqueness of their cheeses.

Allocation of NYD Resources

We commit to providing meaningful support to our producers. This encompasses

- Quality feedback on a regular basis (short and medium-term)
- Connections with further resources when appropriate (e.g., other cheesemakers and maturers, cheese and farming consultants, industry bodies, etc.)
- Resources devoted to collecting and analysing data and carrying out experimental trials, in particular pertaining to maturation
- Support for new cheesemakers and cheeses under development, including research and development spend and advice on commercial considerations
- Organisation of industry events designed to deepen knowledge of best practices globally (e.g., Science of Artisan Cheese, Cow Club, etc.) and assistance to industry bodies (e.g., Specialist Cheesemakers Association, Daphne Zepos Teaching Award, American Cheese Society, etc.)
- Responsible advocacy on behalf of cheesemakers on technical matters
- Providing tools in our shops and on our website that allow customers to make buying choices with greater information about environmental impact
- Being transparent about where cheeses stand in their progress towards the quality goals above

We recognise that not every cheese we stock currently achieves these standards. We are most interested in setting down our aspirations, starting a conversation, understanding where we meet our suppliers now, and promoting a positive direction of travel.

Appendix: Net environmental contribution - areas of interest

INCREASE	DECREASE
Biodiversity: pasture, species, breed, microbial	Carbon emissions, greenhouse gasses & other pollutants
Soil health: mycorrhizal network, increased organic matter, microbial diversity	Use of inorganic nitrogen & pesticides
Water course health: limiting run off, flood prevention, increased soil permeability	Reliance on the grid (energy, coal-fired electric & water)
Animals' physical health and quality of life	Reliance on chemical cleaning products
Human capital: wages, skills, mobility	Excessive packaging
Transparency: sourcing, labelling	
Forage as proportion of diet	