

Foreword by Joseph Deiss, President of the Swiss Confederation



Enjoying a piece of mountain cheese evokes many images: cows, goats and sheep grazing contentedly on lush Alpine pastures, meadows with their particularly colourful carpet of wild flowers, the enticing aroma of warm hay drying on the steep slopes. Mountain cheeses are also ambassadors of mountain regions and their agriculture. The particular characteristics of the fodder, the special environmental conditions and the knowledge and skills passed down through generations of mountain farmers and cheese-makers are evident in a great many ways in their numerous dairy products.

Not only is mountain cheese produced under difficult conditions but it also has particular qualities. It is for this reason that it sells at a higher price, which will only be paid, however, if the cheese is well enough known and if the corresponding demand is there. The Mountain Cheese Olympics play an important role in achieving this. They encourage and pay tribute to the past and future efforts made by mountain farmers to take responsibility for shaping their lives. Manufacturing their own products and foodstuffs such as mountain cheese generates added value, thus ensuring the economic basis of mountain farming.

For mountain farmers, to be able to offer special products such as mountain cheese and to sell them at a good price is more than merely an economic opportunity, however. It is also part of their cultural identity and a source of self-confidence. And for this reason, I hope that mountain farming will continue to be creative and that the Mountain Cheese Olympics, which is being held in the beautiful canton of Appenzell this year, will be a great success.

Joseph Deiss

