

## Farmer gets cheesy for World Cup in Germany

Prenzlau, Germany - Dutch dairy farmer Pieter Wolters has hit on an original idea for selling cheese from his German farm.

The Dutch cheese maker whose farm lies across the border in Germany plans to produce a football of a very particular kind.

"I want to make a round cheese in the colours of a classic football in my cheese factory for sale to football fans," says Pieter Wolters.

The milk will come from German cows in the Brandenburg region near Berlin. Wolters, who hails from the northern Dutch province of Groningen, has lived here in the small village of Bandelow, with its 200 souls, since 1994.

**'I wanted to process some of the milk myself'** He has around 1 100 dairy cows and calves in his stables.  
Before then Wolters had a 50-hectare farm near the city of Groningen, where he maintained a herd of 70 cows.

"My sons were growing up and wanted to farm themselves. At some point the farm became too small for us," says the farmer.

He moved with wife Wipkje and sons Andries and Jacob to this village in Brandenburg, where he converted the old village school to a comfortable home with offices.

Before settling upon Bandelow he looked around in the United States, France and in Denmark for a place to farm.

**'But when Germany wins then things go well here'** "I stayed here because the soil is very good," the greying 57-year-old says.  
Since then the weather-beaten farmer has increased his holding to 780 hectares of agricultural and grazing land.

He now employs 31 staff. His cows produce around 4,5 million litres of milk annually, which is delivered to large dairies.

"In the end that was not enough for me. I wanted to process some of the milk myself," Wolters says.

He set up his own cheese making factory, which now processes some 800 000 litres of milk annually into a local cheese that is made with various herbs in 14 different varieties.

To date he has sold his farm cheese in his own shop on the farm, at markets and in specialist shops, but Wolters is not entirely satisfied with the result.

This high quality cheese is offered for sale in the relatively thinly populated Uckermark part of Brandenburg, far from the kind of clientele Wolters is looking for.

"If the customers can't come to us, we must go to the customers," the farmer says.

Using the name Q-Regio he has since 2005 started his own chain of outlets.

"I couldn't fill these shops with my products alone, so I have convinced other farmers in the region to come on board," he says.

There are now some 50 partners delivering a total of 850 different products to the Q-Regio shops.

Meat products, apple juice, liqueurs, fruit and herbs are now on sale alongside the cheese.

Wolters has big plans to expand outside the region into Berlin and further afield, setting up 20 more shops.

"We already have applications pending," he says.

The shops are run on a franchise basis, with each shop owner running his own business, while Wolters ensures delivery.

But the farmer places a high value on the quality of the produce and the way the shops are fitted out.

Wolters is not short of ideas and plans to turn the World Cup to his own advantage, although he is himself not much of a football fan.

"I will probably watch the final only," he says. But he is well aware of the intense rivalry between his native and his adopted countries.

"If the Dutch win against Germany, then I have a bad day commercially with grumpy customers. But when Germany wins then things go well here," Wolters says. - Sapa-dpa

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