

## Ukrainian Cheeses on the World Stage: Highlights of the 'World Cheese Awards 2024: Challenges and Results' Press Conference



On December 3, 2024, a press conference 'World Cheese Awards 2024: Challenges and Results' was held at the Pidgruntia art space. The event was arranged by Ardis Group and ProCheese, the official representatives of the competition in Ukraine. The event was attended by representatives of government agencies, embassies, media, and cheese producers who joined international cheese competition this year.

This is the third year in a row that Ukrainian cheeses have been praised by global cheese experts, and in 2024 they came up with 8 awards. The winners of the World Cheese Awards 2024 can be found at this [link](#).

One of the main highlights of the event was a unique tasting session of Ukrainian cheeses that have been awarded this year. The session was hosted by Oksana Chernova, a cheese expert, founder of the ProCheese Academy and World Cheese Awards judge from Ukraine.

### Results of Ukraine's participation

The participation of Ukrainian cheeses in the competition was sponsored by Switzerland under the Swiss-Ukrainian [Quality FOOD Trade Programme \(QFTP\)](#) jointly with Ukraine-Moldova American Enterprise Fund. Iryna Vysotska, Coordinator of the QFTP Dairy Sector component, noted:

*'Regular participation of Ukrainian cheese producers in such competitions facilitates the trade potential of the Ukrainian dairy sector both through shaping the image of the country with its own cheese-making traditions as well as through ongoing improvement of each individual production facility. Every year this potential is growing, thus boosting local brand awareness and domestic sales, not only in decentralized regions, but also within largest retail chains.'*

Vitaliy Bigdai, SME Development Program Director at UMAEF, emphasized the importance of such competitions for business:

*'Such international trade shows as the World Cheese Awards serve as a platform for businesses to roll out their products to a wider audience, from potential buyers to distributors and industry experts. Therefore, this competition can considerably enhance brand awareness and reveal new business opportunities. For this reason participation of every Ukrainian cheese producer in this event is exciting and motivating.'*

### **Safety and quality are the basis of the Ukrainian producer's reputation**

One of the key aspects discussed at the conference was raising the quality standards of Ukrainian products.

Olena Dadus, Deputy Director of the Agrarian Development Department of the Ministry of Agrarian Policy, stated:

*'Awards for Ukrainian cheese producers are incredibly valuable for the image of Ukraine as a reliable supplier of top-quality and unique dairy products. Our Ministry will keep supporting small producers and will do its best to enhance their capacities in Ukraine, including the involvement of international partners.'*

Ihor Lotskin, Director of the Department of Food Safety and Veterinary Medicine of the State Service of Ukraine on Food Safety and Consumer Protection, emphasized:

*'Events such as the World Cheese Awards 2024 help to adequately represent Ukraine as a reliable cheese producer on the world stage. After all, 'made in Ukraine' equals safety and quality. For its part, the State Service of Ukraine on Food Safety and Consumer Protection makes every effort to maximize Ukraine's export potential as a producer of dairy products, including cheese.'*

Ukraine's quick improvement in this area is impossible without international support. Viktor Shutkevych, Assistant Director for Cooperation at the Embassy of Switzerland in Ukraine, said in his speech:

*'In the agri-food sector Switzerland remains focused on supporting market access and the development of production and trade, expanding financial sector support and access to finance for SMEs. In dairy sector it also ensures an improved regulatory basis, stronger service providers and the business environment, and a risk-based system of control over food safety and quality.'*

Moreover, Switzerland is committed to supporting SME dairy producers in the most war-affected areas. In particular, as part of a three-year humanitarian initiative, Switzerland has already made CHF 4.8 million available to buy the hygiene products necessary to restore and maintain the production of high-quality and safe milk.

### **Ukrainian cheeses on their way to getting globally recognized**

Oksana Chernova, cheese expert and judge of the competition, explained the importance of Ukraine's participation in international events of the kind:

*'Participation in such international competitions, as the World Cheese Awards is beneficial for Ukraine's image in the world. Ardis Group, as the official representative of the competition in Ukraine since 2017, gives its best to make Ukrainian cheeses well-known not only within our country but also worldwide. We*

are meticulously building the cheese ecosystem, which will gradually adjust to our future European integration, and the upcoming WCA competition in our country will be one of these steps.'

Natalia Kovach, the owner of Mamyni Syry Dairy, who won a silver award for her Lopta cheese this year, also shared her personal victory:

*'I started producing cheese having only one cow and after the announcement of the competition results I still could not believe that I would receive an award from an international jury and that my cheese would lie on the table alongside with the best cheese masterpieces in the world. I am grateful to all the partners who made this victory possible.'*

Ukrainian cheese producers are steadily heading forward, gaining ground on the international arena and securing Ukraine's status as a country with rich cheese-making traditions.