TOUR 1 – FROM COOPERATIVE FARMING TO FAMILY INNOVATION: TWO MODELS OF FARM-BASED CHEESEMAKING

BIZKAIGANE (Errigoiti, Bizkaia)

BIZKAIGANE is a livestock and agri-food project located in Errigoiti, created in 1983 as a collective initiative that has been committed from the outset to a model linked to land, extensive production and direct sales, moving away from the classic family model to work cooperatively. Since its early years, BIZKAIGANE has developed a milk production system based on extensive livestock management, incorporating both cattle and sheep, and subsequently opting for organic production.

Initially focused on the direct sale of milk, the cooperative began a process of diversification over time, incorporating cheese processing to add value to its production. Currently, BIZKAIGANE produces fresh cheese, matured cheese, yoghurt and other dairy products, mainly from cow's milk, and incorporating productions linked to sheep's milk, all of which come from the farm itself and are made under organic criteria.

In addition, the project also develops a line of meat derivatives, made from animals raised on the farm itself under an extensive and ecological system. These products seek to take full advantage of livestock.

The project has grown progressively, incorporating new people and guaranteeing a better organisation of work and a higher quality of life for its members. In recent years, a process of generational renewal has been carried out, accompanied by the modernization of the facilities. In addition to livestock farming, BIZKAIGANE maintains complementary productions, such as vegetable gardens and other products, mainly for local consumption and local sales.

The visit includes a tour of the farm and the cheese factory, as well as a final tasting of its products.

SOLOITZA Gaztandegia (Arespalditza, Álava)

SOLOITZA is a family-run cheese dairy based in Arespalditza, established with the aim of adding value to the milk produced on the Urruela family's own dairy farm. Cheese production began in 2021, following a period of reflection on the economic and social sustainability of dairy farming.

The dairy farm dates back to the 1960s and became a professional operation in the 1970s, with a clear commitment to modernisation. Today, it produces around one million litres of cow's milk a year, an increasing proportion of which is processed into cheese and other dairy products. The rest of the milk is sold to the KAIKU dairy farmers' cooperative.

The cheese dairy stands out for integrating technological innovation and sustainability, both in the building's design and in its production processes. It features robotic milking systems and modern pasteurization and cheesemaking equipment, enabling precise control over milk quality and animal welfare.

SOLOITZA currently produces fresh cheese, blue cheese, yoghurt and pasteurised milk. All of them are made using milk from their own farm, combining advanced technology with a clear focus on high-quality artisan products.

The tour includes a visit to the livestock farm and the cheese dairy, as well as an explanation of production methods, innovation and diversification, with a tasting of their products.

TOUR 2 – GOAT'S MILK CHEESE AND WINE-GROWING LANDSCAPE IN THE RIOJA ALAVESA REGION

MORAITA (Laguardia, Rioja Alavesa – Álava)

MORAITA is an artisan goat's cheese dairy located in the historic centre of Laguardia. It is a family-run business linked to a long-established livestock farm that has been producing goat's milk for several generations.

The farm has a herd of approximately 300 Malagueña goat breed. For several years, all the milk produced was sold to third parties. With the aim of improving the farm's economic sustainability and adding value to the milk produced on the farm, it was decided to diversify the business by producing cheese.

Following a period of preparation and project planning, the cheese dairy began operations in July 2023, gradually converting part of its milk production into various types of cheese. In its first year of operation, around 40% of the milk produced was processed, amounting to some 24,000 litres.

Since its inception, the cheese dairy has been accredited with the Eusko Label quality mark, and the livestock farm holds Euskal Esnea (Basque milk) certification, producing and marketing all its products in accordance with the relevant specifications.

Currently, MORAITA produces: "Txuria", fresh goat's cheese made from pasteurized milk; "Auntzai Ondua", matured goat's cheese made from raw milk; "Otzara", matured soft cheese made from pasteurized milk. The cheese dairy is a fine example of recent diversification in livestock farming and artisanal production, set within a historic urban environment and closely linked to its local area. Visit includes a tour of the cheese dairy, an explanation of the livestock project and the cheese-making process, and a cheese tasting.

🍷 Visit of a winery

The day will conclude with a visit to a winery in the Rioja Alavesa region, offering an insight into the region's characteristic wine-growing landscape and its connection to local food production. (Full details to be confirmed in the final programme).

TOUR 3 – CHEESE PRODUCTION LINKED TO EXTENSIVE LIVESTOCK MANAGEMENT

TELLERIA (Mutiloa, Gipuzkoa)

TELLERIA is a livestock and cheese farm located in the rural environment of Mutiloa. The activity is based on the breeding of Fleckvieh cows, managed in an ecological and semi-extensive production system, with a strong link to the territory and the use of pastures.

With the milk produced on the farm itself, Beñat makes cow's milk cheeses, using artisanal and small-scale processes. The cheese factory works with a reduced range of products (soft cheese, semi-cured cheese and blue cheese), focused on the quality of the raw material and the direct control of the entire process, from the handling of the cattle to the production.

The visit includes a tour of the farm and the cheese factory, with an explanation of the production system, livestock management and production processes, as well as a tasting of its cheeses.

ONDARRE (Segura, Gipuzkoa)

Located in the town of Segura, in the province of Gipuzkoa (Basque Country), and very close to the village of Idiazabal, which gives its name to the renowned PDO, Ondarre is an artisanal cheese dairy deeply rooted in the pastoral traditions of the region. Set within a landscape of rolling green hills and mountain pastures, it reflects the strong cultural and agricultural identity of this shepherding territory.

Ondarre's activity is closely linked to traditional sheep farming. The dairy works primarily with Latxa sheep, a native breed perfectly adapted to the mountainous environment of the Basque Country. The flocks are managed through extensive grazing systems, maintaining a direct relationship with the land and seasonal cycles. This pastoral approach not only ensures high animal welfare standards but also plays a key role in preserving biodiversity and the rural landscape.

The dairy specializes in the production of traditional semi-hard sheep's milk cheese under the Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) Idiazabal. Made from raw milk and following traditional methods (including natural rennet), Ondarre cheeses express the unique characteristics of the terroir. The maturation process, carefully monitored over several months, produces cheeses with a firm texture, rich aromatic profile, and the characteristic intensity and balance that defines Idiazabal cheese.

In addition to cheese production, Ondarre has developed a strong agrotourism activity, offering visitors the opportunity to experience firsthand the full process from pasture to cheese. Guided visits include insight into shepherding practices, milking, cheesemaking techniques, and sensory tastings. This experiential approach fosters a deeper understanding of artisanal production and strengthens the connection between consumers and rural traditions.

TOUR 4 – FROM FARM TO CHEESE: DISCOVERING CATTLE AND SHEEP FARMS

BELAZE (Elorrio, Bizkaia)

BELAZE is a mixed farm and cheese dairy located in Elorrio, the result of years of work by Berenize and Markel. Although it was initially conceived as a self-sufficient model, over time it has evolved into a professional venture dedicated to milk production and processing, closely linked to the local area and its rural surroundings.

In its early years, the farmstead was characterised by a wide range of activities and the full use of its own resources, combining crop and livestock production. Over time, the project expanded to include new activities such as poultry farming, beef cattle rearing, and fruit growing.

In 2018, the farm took a decisive step by shifting its focus to dairy production and producing its own dairy products. This transformation was accompanied by the adoption of agroecological principles, adapting production systems to meet sustainability criteria, environmental responsibility, and the careful management of natural resources.

BELAZE currently works with a small herd of Fleckvieh-Simmental cows, a dual-purpose breed that allows milk production to be combined with calf rearing. Production is small-scale and tailored to the dairy's processing capacity, ensuring direct control over the entire process, from milk collection to the final product. Their range includes yoghurts, fresh cheeses, and a variety of artisan cheeses, all made from milk produced on the farm.

A visit to BELAZE offers an insight into the farm and its agroecological production model, as well as the process of turning milk into dairy products. The experience concludes with a tasting of their artisanal products.

GOMIZTEGI (Oñati, Gipuzkoa)

GOMIZTEGI is located in the surroundings of Arantzazu, within the Aizkorri-Aratz Natural Park. In addition to being a livestock and cheese farm, it is the headquarters of the School of Shepherds (Artzai Eskola), playing a key role in the training of new generations of shepherds.

The farm manages a flock of Latxa sheep, with which it produces pressed sheep's cheese PDO Idiazabal, as well as other types of cheeses and dairy products. The management of the herd is carried out from the use of natural and communal pastures.

Gomiztegi combines tradition and innovation in an exemplary way, keeping the heritage of Basque sheep farming alive and adapting it to the current needs of the sector. In addition to the productive activity, it carries out intense training, dissemination and awareness work on shepherding and cheese culture.

The visit includes a tour of the flock and the cheese factory, explanation of the production system and the formative role of the School of Shepherds, as well as tasting of its cheeses.

TOUR 5 – DIVERSITY AND SMALL-SCALE CHEESEMAKING IN LEA ARTIBAI

This tour takes place in the Lea Artibai region, where the ESNEKI Dairy Centre is located, and brings together three nearby artisan dairies that reflect the diversity of livestock systems, species, and cheesemaking approaches in the area.

Txikiñena Esnekixek (Etxebarria)

Txikiñena Esnekixek is run by Aimar and Amalur, who manage both the livestock and the dairy production. Their farm is based on a mixed herd comprising around a dozen cows (mainly of the Fleckvieh breed, with some Brown Swiss) as well as a flock of Alpine and Florida goats.

The animals graze freely on the meadows surrounding the farmhouse, following a system closely linked to the local environment. Part of the milk is sold directly, while the rest is processed on-site into a diverse range of dairy products, including yoghurt, fresh cheese, lactic coagulation cheeses and soft cheeses.

The project stands out for its species diversity, product range, and direct relationship between grazing, milk production, and cheesemaking, offering a comprehensive example of small-scale diversification.

Baskaran Gaztak (Santamañe)

Baskaran Gaztak is a sheep dairy operation run by Bidane and Arkaitz, who have taken over the farm from their father, continuing the family tradition.

They manage their own flock of Latxa sheep, the autochthonous breed. All the milk is processed into PDO Idiazabal cheeses, maintaining strong adherence to established production standards and local cheesemaking heritage.

The dairy represents a model of generational renewal within a traditional system, combining continuity, family knowledge, and a strong connection to designation-of-origin production.

Larruz Gaztak (Markina)

Larruz Gaztak is owned by brothers Gorka and Iban, who run a goat dairy focused on the transformation of their own milk.

They manage a herd of Alpine goats, currently in transition towards the Murciano-Granadina breed. All the milk produced is processed on farm into fresh and semi-cured goat's cheeses, with a clear focus on product specialisation.