



## Press release

# Hochland expands production at its subsidiary Fromagerie Henri Hutin in France and launches highly modern, flexible soft ripened cheese production facility

[12th September 2024, Heimenkirch in the Allgäu region]

## **Largest investment project in Hochland's history completed – A beacon “Lighthouse” within the Hochland Group for flexibility, adaptability and sustainability – flexible soft ripened cheese production facility and up to five types of milk**

Since the integration of the French Fromagerie Henri Hutin into the Hochland Group in 1978, the requirements of retail customers, consumer needs and eating habits have changed considerably. In response, a pioneering idea was born to develop the Hochland subsidiary in Dieue-sur-Meuse into a lighthouse for flexibility, adaptability and sustainability by investing in a flexible soft ripened cheese production facility, in further innovative production processes and in multifaceted raw material handling. The aim is to process up to five different types of milk, to expand the portfolio with innovative products and to be able to adapt quickly and flexibly to new customer requirements in all areas. This will be accomplished by highly modern technologies and machines as well as a transformed culture and organizational structure. Hochland also sees the high level of investment in the site, as well as the development of new milk qualities together with French farmers, as an opportunity for the local economy in the Département Meuse and the Lorraine region.

### **Millions invested**

“It's not a 100-metre sprint, it's a marathon,” said Hochland COO Josef Stitzl at the start of the investment. The project was named “Lighthouse” and was a five-year joint project between the French and German subsidiaries. The aim was to develop an impact beyond the Hochland site in Dieue-sur-Meuse for the entire region and within the Hochland Group. The premise was to work together with the milk producers on flexible milk processing, to protect natural resources and to limit CO2 emissions, continued Chief Operation Officer Josef Stitzl. Following the kick-off in 2019, the investment project has now been completed and the production in the newly built facility has started. “The investment in the high double-digit million range will significantly increase the flexibility of the French site and in the Hochland Group, secure jobs, enable even more customer focus and is clearly a sustainable investment for the future,” says Hochland shareholder and Supervisory Board member Claudia Reich.

## **Facts, figures and data**

The five-year project was carried out in four phases and included: The expansion and modernization of the milk reception area, the creation of a new access system for milk delivery, the construction of a new car park for employees and the centralization of all internal traffic, the renovation of the ripening rooms and the construction and installation of the new soft ripened cheese production facility. Finally, a new dressing room was built as an interface between production, technology and administration. The new building covers an area of 7,000 square metres, of which 5,500 square metres alone are used for production and 17 ripening rooms. As part of the construction work, 500 trees were planted on the factory grounds and a further 1,500 in the town of Dieue-sur-Meuse to compensate for the area used in construction.

## **Options for further business units of Hochland**

The French company's main market for its soft ripened cheese products is Germany, but exports to the EU are also increasing. Hochland sees a good opportunity to further develop French products in the strategically relevant private label business and to produce new products under Hochland brands which should boost growth in the future. The Hochland subsidiary believes it is well positioned thanks to the product categories of soft ripened cheese, semi-soft semi-hard cheese and spreads that are produced there.

## **Close partnership with ULM and La Rotte**

Four different types of milk were integrated into the production process during the course of the project. Following the completion of the multi-million euro investment, the site is now significantly more efficient. In order to utilise these expanded production capacities, strategic expansion of the raw material supply was started at an early stage. In addition to the long-standing partnership with milk cooperatives ULM and La Rotte, a further milk supply group from the Département Ardennes was acquired. The milk purchase agreement with ULNE (Union Laitières Nord Est) is the third-largest for the French Hochland subsidiary in Dieue-sur-Meuse and will secure additional raw materials from 2025. During the approximately two-year negotiation period, the investments in the site and the region as well as the associated commitment to milk as a raw material and to milk production in north-east France were particularly convincing.

## **Official opening on 12th September 2024**

Around 200 invited guests came together in Dieue-sur-Meuse on September 12<sup>th</sup>, 2024 to mark the completion of the largest investment project in Hochland's history. Representatives of the shareholder families, the supervisory board of Hochland SE, the Managing board and management, municipal representatives of the Département Meuse in the Lorraine region, board members of the French milk supplier associations, neighbouring companies and, above all, employees of Fromagerie Henri Hutin celebrated the opening of the new production facility. The commissioning of further innovative production processes, such as a cold-filling plant, were also completed. In addition to numerous speeches, the programme included a broad insight into the new production facilities. Volker Büstrow, Managing Director of Fromagerie Henri Hutin, and Géraldine Diard, plant manager at the site, gave the guests an informative tour of the plant. During the tour all questions about production

processes, new technologies and equipment were answered. Around 300 people are currently employed at the plant in Dieue-sur-Meuse. "We are firmly convinced that, with the completion of the Lighthouse project, we have created the best conditions for a successful business and secure jobs for the employees at our French site," said Volker Büstrow.



Grand opening - f.l.t.r.: Xavier Delarue (Prefect of Meuse), Philippe Mangin (Vice President of the Grand Est Region), Jérôme Dumont (Président of GIP Objectif Meuse), Claudia Reich (Hochland Shareholder and Deputy Chairwoman of the Supervisory Board), Géraldine Diard (Plant Manager of Fromagerie Henri Hutin), Josef Stitzl (COO) und Volker Büstrow (Managing Director of Fromagerie Henri Hutin)



The plant in Dieue-sur-Meuse.

### About Hochland

Hochland SE has been synonymous with top quality cheese since 1927. Headquartered in the Allgäu region of Germany, the Heimenkirch based family business is one of Europe's leading cheese manufacturers with a turnover of 2.25 billion euros and 413,800 tonnes of cheese sales annually. Around 6,200 employees in production facilities in Europe, the USA and Australia contribute to its success. Hochland wants to inspire people with its products - the range includes well-known brands such as Hochland, Almette, Grünländer, Patros and Gervais. The Simply V brand offers cheese alternatives in the area of plant-based nutrition for all those who follow a flexitarian diet or want to avoid animal products. Sustainability is a lived commitment for Hochland; this includes a commitment to sustainable agriculture, protection of the environment and social responsibility towards employees and society.

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