

Quality and safety in the French dairy sector

● The present document was produced on the initiative of CNIEL, the French National Interprofessional Centre of the Dairy Economy, an association set up in 1974 by the three national federations of the dairy sector : FNPL (milk producers), FNCL (dairy co-operatives) and FNIL (dairy industry). Its purpose is to outline the regulations and controls that are implemented to offer the buyers of French dairy products a full quality and safety guarantee.

● In a country with over 400 types of cheese, milk production has a long history. Most of the regions of France produce milk and this diversity of origins and traditions accounts for the uniqueness and sheer variety of French dairy products. As the French are fond of raw milk products, they set out very early to define particularly strict sanitary rules which apply to all dairy products and all professionals in the sector.

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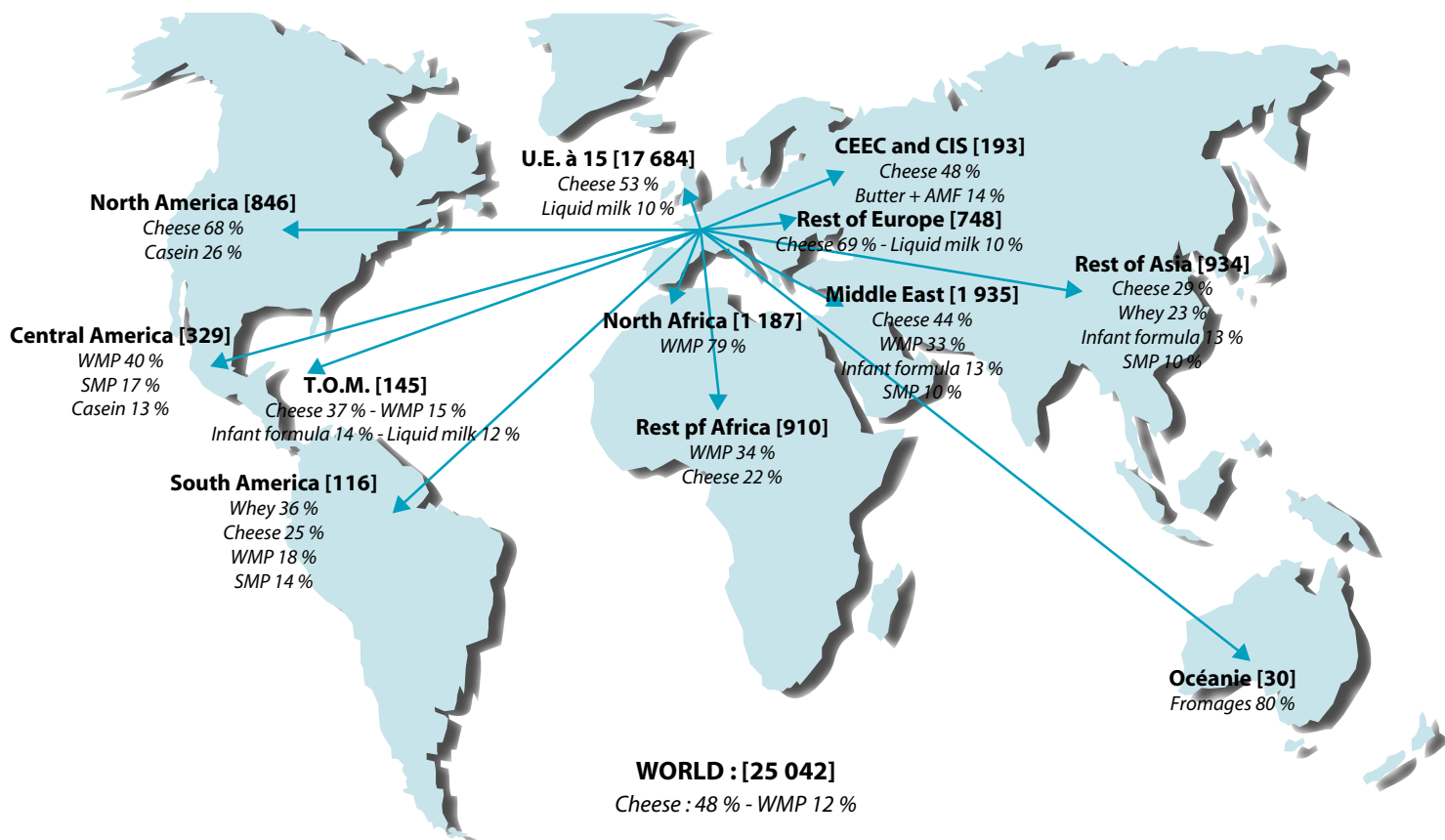
Introduction

France, the first milk producer in Europe until the reunification of Germany in 1989, has a milk quota of about 24 million tonnes, i.e. 20% of the potential of the European Union (EU). The consistent performance of the dairy sector, which employs 200,000 people (140,000 in production and 60,000 in processing) is based on a genuine quality culture, both in gastronomic and sanitary terms.

Take the Godefroy law of 1969, linking the price of milk to its fat and protein content and the number of bacterial germs it contains : this law provides, for instance, that the farmgate price can be reduced – sometimes considerably – if the milk is not of the utmost quality. As a consequence, over 90% of the raw milk collected in France has been classified in the top category for a number of years,

to the greatest benefit of health and safety downstream.

The vast array of French and EU regulatory provisions applicable to the dairy sector is enforced by a multitude of inspections and self-checks, both at the farm as in the dairy, with prevention of sanitary risk accounting for 5 to 8% of the turnover, i.e. billions of francs every year.



Exports of main products by major destination in 1999

In FRFm - source : French customs.



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