

Objective One case study knowledge economy

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The projects in the Knowledge Economy investment cluster include those developing the Combined Universities and activities that support the development of much stronger links between Higher Education and business.

Developing the Combined Universities in Cornwall is considered so important to the development of Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly it was the only project specifically outlined in the Single Programming Document contract. Prior to commencing the Objective One Programme in 2000, there was no such university opportunity in Cornwall.

University level provision in Cornwall and its links with business encourages graduates to start their own businesses, attracts new business and encourages innovation and knowledge transfer, thereby increasing the overall wealth of Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly.

Roskilly's

A well known family run dairy business on the Lizard peninsula is expanding rapidly, supported by several strands of Objective One investment.

Roskilly's, at St Keverne, is best known for its delicious organic ice cream. But it is increasing its range of products to ensure year round business and has just launched a new product – organic, pro-biotic yogurt. The yogurt, which comes in natural, gooseberry and raspberry flavours, was showcased at the Organic South West show, held in September 2007 in Bristol.

The company received direct Objective One investment in 2004 (£166,000 of European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund with a matching amount from Defra) to build larger production and storage facilities and buy equipment. It has also received support from Objective One gateway fund Organic South West to develop products, including fudge (launched in 2005), Jersey milk (launched in April 2007) and the new yogurt. Other products include clotted cream, jams, apple juice and chutneys.

And now Marco Spiezia has been employed as Sales and Marketing Executive under the Unlocking Cornish Potential project, which places graduates with businesses in the region and provides support for up to one year.

"Part of the reason I am here is to spread knowledge about the business," explained Marco.



Marco Spiezia has been employed by Roskilly's as Sales and Marketing Executive under the Unlocking Cornish Potential project

"Roskilly's is well recognised in Cornwall but only for ice cream. That is good because it means people know we have a quality product. But we have a lot more products which people don't know about."

Marco is also tasked with expanding the business within Cornwall as well as ensuring core customers remain satisfied in an increasingly competitive market.

"The more time I spend with customers the more I realise there are two different markets – Cornwall and elsewhere," Marco added. "Outside Cornwall the word 'organic' can be used as a marketing tool as it means well made and healthy. In Cornwall however many people are more sceptical about organic food so our key words are 'made on the farm' and 'made locally'.

"What we do here is truly simple. We have always tried to make ice cream like you would at home so there are no stabilisers, colourants or preservatives – you just don't need them. Cornwall is changing and people from London and elsewhere are coming down and buying property. Why? Because they remember their parents coming here for holidays and they remember the tastes of food so we try to keep our products like they used to be.

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“The yogurt is a great example of that – using our Jersey milk we have managed to make it zero fat but it tastes extremely rich.”

David Rodda, Cornwall Agricultural Council spokesperson, said: “Roskilly’s is an example of a farming business that embarked on adding value to their milk as a form of diversification when it was not common to do so. The fact that they continue to grow and develop their business and continue to innovate via the introduction of new products is an encouraging sign and an example to others. By engaging with the UCP initiative they are proving that the farming and food industry has a lot to offer graduates and is a positive career choice.”

Clotted cream production at Roskilly’s first started on the family farm in the late 1950s. The company currently employs about 50 staff in peak months dropping to 25 in the winter. About 90% of those staff live within three miles and return each summer. It is hoped the ambient (non frozen) products will increase the year round business.

In 1998 Marco’s family moved to Cornwall from Sorrento, in Italy, when he was 14. He went to Mullion School and Helston College and graduated in Spanish and Management from Bangor University, Wales. His family now run two homeopathic companies Inlight and M&L Organics.

Within a few days of graduating Marco took the job at Roskilly’s. “We are keen to persuade local producers to make what we need and this will help Cornwall’s economy,” he added.

Andy Phillips, Roskilly’s Commercial Manager, said: “Roskilly’s has experienced impressive growth thanks to investment through Objective One and UCP; Marco has been an integral part of this, helping us win new customers and improve relationships with existing customers whilst at the same time being heavily involved in areas of new product development and innovation.”

Ben Leonard, of Unlocking Cornish Potential, added: “Roskilly’s is a fantastic example of a developing local business benefiting from an injection of fresh graduate knowledge. Marco has really taken ownership of his project and is already heavily involved in spreading the word about the new products. With the additional training and mentoring that UCP provides we know he will have a dramatic positive impact on the business.”



Part of Marco’s job is to spread knowledge about Roskilly’s, including the fact that ice cream is only one of many products the company makes

The Unlocking Cornish Potential programme places graduates with small and medium sized businesses in Cornwall for up to 12 months. Investment in UCP through Objective One means that participating businesses receive 30% of the cost of taking on their graduate for the duration of the project. Graduates and their employers also receive support from an independent mentor, 70% of previous UCP graduates have been offered a permanent position with their host company at the end of the project. UCP was the first project launched by the Combined Universities in Cornwall (CUC) initiative to offer direct business support and is managed by Cornwall College.

UCP has proved highly successful in ensuring graduate knowledge remains in the region and gets harnessed for the benefit of businesses. Two key priorities for the EU’s Lisbon Agenda, which aims to achieve economic regeneration, are knowledge and innovation for growth and to create more and better jobs. UCP is an effective way of achieving these aims.

For more information about Unlocking Cornish Potential visit www.unlockingcornishpotential.co.uk.