

Cotswolds LEADER Case Study – Capreolus Distillery

Capreolus Distillery launched for sales in June 2016, producing both award winning gin and eaux de vie (fruit based brandies). The eaux de vie is distilled with fruits from local farms. Barney Wilczak, Director comments “these are high value sales for the farms as we demand fruit that is perfectly ripe, high quality, and we also work with mainly handpicked fruit. As the yield is extremely low (taking 16 - 45kg of fruit to produce each litre of eaux de vie) we use large quantities of fruit.”



After 12 months sales exceeded all forecasts. Demand for the products was boosted by the winning of the hugely prestigious Spirit of the Year award and production limits soon hit capacity. It was clear that in order to grow, the business needed to invest in new equipment.

In December 2017, a £10,462 Cotswolds LEADER grant was awarded to Capreolus Distillery for new equipment. Distillery equipment included a custom built still, fermenters, mash pump, piping and additional storage containers. A new trailer and straddle stackers helped with transport. By spring 2018, all the equipment had been purchased and an improved 3 phase power supply was connected.



The new equipment immediately eased the manual handling by eliminating a number of the steps in the production process and reducing manual lifting to a minimum. This had a major impact on throughput, as well as personal safety.

This increase in capacity has been extremely significant. The distillery has gone from around 11 tons of fruit processed in 2017, to 26 tons in 2018; with several new fruit varieties now included. Barney expects to process over 30 tons of local fruit in 2019.

Fruit is often sourced from traditional orchards that are considered uncommercial. For example, traditional local perry pears - many originating from old abandoned trees. This provides much needed investment into the local economy and helps preserve these rare and near lost cultivars. By working with these “uncommercial” varieties Barney is able to pay a fair price to the farmers and to elevate the fruit into high-end products that are appreciated at home and abroad. The distillery’s range of products is now being exported to France, Switzerland, and Italy.



A selection of the apples from an orchard with 1,000 apple trees, each tree a different variety, an incredible genetic store and resource for the inevitable changes that will come.

All Photos Credit Barney Wilczak

The increased production and sales has allowed the business to create two new jobs; a full time and a part time role. Welcoming these new team members has created more time for sales, more capacity for processing and packaging, and has allowed greater focus on individual tasks resulting in further efficiency gains.

Jo Burgon, Independent Chair of Cotswolds LAG: “The funding that the Cotswold LEADER programme was able to offer this young company and move them onto to their next development stage is a good example of how this type of programme supports enterprise, run by people, such as Barney, who have a passion for both for their locality and their business. The benefits both to the environment and business success are well described here.”

For more information on Capreolus Distillery visit: www.capreolusdistillery.co.uk



Cotswolds
LEADER
Programme

The European Agricultural Fund for Rural
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