

A Work Project presented as part of the requirements for the Award of a Master's degree in Management from the Nova School of Business and Economics.

Competitiveness and Internationalization of a Portuguese SME in the Cheese Market

Entry Strategy and Business Model development to foreign target markets

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S4 will be used as an acronym for the Portuguese cheese manufacturer Queijos Santiago.

To facilitate the reading of the presented dissertation and consult the appendices sections for further details, throughout the report all the Appendices stated as “see Appendix X” are linked directly to the respective appendix when clicked, as well as linked back to the main text when clicking the appendix number in the Appendices section.

Table of Contents

1. Introduction and Organizational challenge	2
2. Methodology and Analysis.....	3
3. Situational Analysis.....	4
3.1. Internal Analysis	4
3.1.1. Company Overview.....	4
3.1.2. Product Portfolio	5
3.1.3. Financial Overview	6
3.2. External Analysis	8
3.2.1. Global and Domestic Cheese Market.....	8
3.2.2. Market Trends	12
3.2.3. Competitive Landscape	13
3.3. Competitive Advantages	15
3.4. SWOT Analysis.....	15
3.5. International Strategy	17
3.5.1. Current International Approach	17
3.5.2. International Drivers & Goals	19
3.5.3. Internationalization Readiness	20
4. International Market Selection I: Preliminary Screening.....	22
4.1. First Screening phase: Countries and Variables' Identification and Selection	22
4.2. Second Screening phase: Country Ranking and Clustering.....	27
4.2.1. Standardization and Weights Allocation.....	27
4.2.2. Country Ranking	28
4.2.3. Country Clustering	30
4.3.3. A combined approach: Country Ranking and Clustering	33
4.3. Limitations	36
5. International Market selection II: In-depth country analysis	37
5.1. United States Analysis	37
5.2. Germany Analysis	44
5.3. Canada Analysis	49

5.4. Japan Analysis.....	55
5.5. Target Market Selection	61
6. International Entry Strategy	63
6.1. Entry Mode.....	63
6.2. Business Model	66
6.2.1. Value Proposition & Value Deliver	67
6.2.2. Value Creation: Key Partners & Activities	69
6.2.3. Alliance Coordination & Key Resources	74
6.2.4. Economic Logic: Cost Structure & Revenue Streams	77
7. Marketing Plan	78
7.1. S4's Current Strategy & Positioning	78
7.2. Competitive Landscape in United States and Germany	80
7.3. Marketing Objectives	82
7.4. STP: Segmentation, Targeting and Positioning	84
7.5. Marketing Mix: Product, Price, Place, Promotion	93
7.6. Marketing Budget.....	104
8. Financial Plan.....	108
8.1. Financial Forecasts	108
8.2. Investment Cash-Flow.....	114
8.3. Sensitivity analysis and Scenario analysis	117
9. Conclusion & Final Recommendations.....	123
10. Bibliography	126
11. APPENDICES.....	148

List of Appendices, Tables and Figures

Situation Analysis

Appendix 1: *S4 Product Portfolio*

Appendix 2: *S4 Product Portfolio BCG Matrix*

Appendix 3: *External attributes of the brand*

Appendix 4: *S4 Financial Statements – Income Statement (4.1.) & Balance Sheet (4.2.)*

Appendix 5: *S4 Profitability Analysis – revenues and costs evolution*

Appendix 6: *S4 Historical of M&A activities and investment in production capacity*

Appendix 7: *S4 Liquidity Analysis*

Appendix 8: *S4 Cash-Flow Management Analysis*

Appendix 9: *S4 Capital Structure*

Appendix 10: *S4 ROA and ROE evolution*

Appendix 11: *Cheese Market structure*

Appendix 12: *Global Cheese Market Volume in thousand tonnes from 2017 to 2025 (and YoY growth)*

Appendix 13: *Forecasted 2020-25 Cheese Market Consumption Volume by region (in thousand tonnes)*

Appendix 14: *2019 Cheese Market Volume by region (%)*

Appendix 15: *2019 Cheese Market Value by region (%)*

Appendix 16: *Top 15 countries Cheese Market Value in 2019 (in USD Million)*

Appendix 17: *Top 15 countries Cheese Consumption per capita in 2019 (in kg per capita)*

Appendix 18: *Forecasted volume of cheese imported and exported to and from EU from 2015 to 2025 (in thousand tonnes)*

Appendix 19: *Top 15 Cheese Importers worldwide (trade value in USD million)*

Appendix 20: *Global cheese production*

Appendix 21: *Sales of cheese in Portugal, by category (in million EUR)*

Appendix 22: *Retail value and Sales volume cheese market in Portugal (in million EUR and thousand tonnes)*

Appendix 23: *Processed and Unprocessed cheese categories from 2020 to 2025 (% of total cheese market value)*

Appendix 24: *Projected value of the Organic cheese market worldwide (in million EUR)*

Appendix 25: *Cheese Market share in Portugal: Top Players (% value)*

Appendix 26: *Competitive landscape analysis*

Appendix 27: *S4 Resources and Capabilities Evaluation on VRINE Model*

Appendix 28: *SWOT Analysis*

Appendix 29: *S4 International presence*

Appendix 30: *Current International Product Portfolio*

Appendix 31: *Ansoff Matrix*

Appendix 32: *CORE Readiness Test detailed results*

Figure 1 – *Global and regional Cheese Market Size in USD Million and global YoY growth (%)*

International Market Selection I: Preliminary Screening

Appendix 33: *Variable List*

Appendix 34: *Detailed explanations of less common variables*

Appendix 35: *List of excluded countries at each stage*

Appendix 36: *MVA Test SPSS output (EM Means)*

Appendix 37: *Dealing with missing data approaches*

Appendix 38: *Country Ranking List*

Appendix 39: *Correlation Matrix: variables validation for the clustering analysis*

Appendix 40: *Cluster solutions' sensitivity*

Appendix 41: *Best Cluster Solution (dendrogram, ranking and clusters)*

Table 1 – *Distribution of Weights*

Table 2 – *Country Ranking (Top 20)*

Figure 2 – *Cluster Solution*

International Market selection II: In-depth country analysis

Appendix 42: *United States - Market Sales Potential Analysis*

Appendix 43: *German Retailers positioning map (based on price level and #chains)*

Appendix 44: *Germany - Market Sales Potential Analysis*

Appendix 45: *Canada - Market Sales Potential Analysis*

Appendix 46: *Japan - Market Sales Potential Analysis*

Appendix 47: *Regulations and Requirements United States and Germany*

International Entry Strategy

Appendix 48: *Entry Mode Assessment – Entry Modes (48.1.) and Advantages and Disadvantages of each Entry Mode (48.2.)*

Appendix 49: *Business Model Canvas*

Appendix 50: *U.S. Potential Partners presentation*

Appendix 51: *U.S. Potential Partners Screening Criteria*

Appendix 52: *U.S. Potential Partners Positioning Map*

Appendix 53: *Detailed comparison of Top 3 U.S. Partners*

Appendix 54: *German Potential Partners presentation*

Appendix 55: *German Potential Partners Screening Criteria*

Appendix 56: *German Potential Partners Positioning Map*

Appendix 57: *Detailed comparison of Top 2 German Partners*

Marketing Plan

Appendix 58: *Segmentation Variables per group (B2C and B2B)*

Appendix 59: *United States – Points of parity and Points of difference*

Appendix 60: *Germany – Points of parity and Points of difference*

Appendix 61: *United States – Price competitors benchmark*

Appendix 62: *Germany – Price competitors benchmark*

Appendix 63: *Marketing Budget Initiatives by year*

Appendix 64: *Marketing Budget Assumptions by initiative type*

Table 3 – *Specialty cured cheeses benefits & specificity*

Table 4 – *Promotion KPIs*

Table 5 – *YoY Marketing Budget*

Table 6 – *Forecasted Growth in Marketing budget (United States and Germany)*

Financial Plan

Appendix 65: *Unit Cost of Production – Internal Transfer Price*

Appendix 66: *Projected Profitability evolution in United States*

Appendix 67: *Projected Profitability evolution in Germany*

Appendix 68: *P&L Statement – United States*

Appendix 69: *P&L Statement – Germany*

Appendix 70: *Net Working Capital Requirements – United States*

Appendix 71: *Net Working Capital Requirements – Germany*

Appendix 72: *Cash-Flow Statement United States*

Appendix 73: *Cash-Flow Statement Germany*

Appendix 74: *Cash Flow evolution – United States*

Appendix 75: *Cash Flow evolution – Germany*

Appendix 76: *Sensitivity Analysis United States*

Appendix 77: *Sensitivity Analysis Germany*

Appendix 78: *Scenario Analysis United States*

Appendix 79: *Scenario Analysis Germany*

Table 7 – *Forecasted Volumes sold 2021*

Table 8 – *Forecasted Transportation costs*

Table 9 – *Forecasted Personnel expenses*

Table 10 – *Cost of Equity formula*

Table 11 – *Cost of debt formula*

Table 12 – *WACC formula*

List of Abbreviations

AICEP	<i>Agência para o Investimento e Comércio Externo de Portugal</i>
APAC	<i>Asia-Pacific region</i>
APEC	<i>Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation</i>
BM	<i>Business Model</i>
CAGR	<i>Compounded Annual Growth Rate</i>
CAPEX	<i>Capital Expenditure</i>
CAPM	<i>Capital Asset Pricing Model</i>
COGS	<i>Cost of Goods Sold</i>
DOP & IGP	<i>Portuguese nomenclature for PDO</i>

EPA	<i>Economic Partnership Agreement</i>
EU	<i>European Union</i>
FDI	<i>Foreign Direct Investment</i>
JETRO	<i>Japan External Trade Organization</i>
JSA	<i>Japanese Standards Association</i>
KAM	<i>Key Account Management</i>
KPI	<i>Key Performance Indicator</i>
M&A	<i>Mergers & Acquisitions</i>
MAR	<i>Missing at Random</i>
MCAR	<i>Missing Completely at Random</i>
MIPRO	<i>Manufactured Imports and Investment Promotion Organization</i>
NAFTA	<i>North American Free Trade Agreement</i>
NPV	<i>Net Present Value</i>
NWC	<i>Net Working Capital</i>
OECD	<i>Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development</i>
PDO	<i>Protected Denomination of Origin</i>
POS	<i>Point of Sale</i>
ROA	<i>Return on Assets</i>
ROE	<i>Return on Equity</i>
RSP	<i>Retail Selling Price</i>
S4	<i>Portuguese Cheese Company in Analysis</i>
STP	<i>Segmentation; Targeting; Positioning</i>
U.S.	<i>The United States of America</i>
WACC	<i>Weighted Average Cost of Capital</i>
WCO	<i>World Customs Organization</i>

Abstract

S4, an experienced Portuguese cheese company leader in the domestic fresh segment, aims to expand and consolidate its business internationally. By screening several countries based on macro and industry - specific indicators and conducting an in-depth analysis of the four most promising ones, United States and Germany resulted to be the most attractive markets for S4's internationalization. Following, the most suitable entry mode was defined as well as the ideal business model and marketing plan to effectively run a business in both countries. Financial projections and risk evaluations were performed to assess the viability of the proposed international plan.

Keywords: Cheese; Internationalization; Expansion; SME; Market Selection; United States; Germany; Entry Strategy; Business Model; Strategic Analysis.

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1. Introduction and Organizational challenge

S4 is a Portuguese company with more than 100 years of experience as a cheese manufacturer, having a consolidated presence in the domestic market and a wide portfolio of products inserted in all cheese categories, namely Fresh and Cottage, Cured-Specialty and Grated and Sliced, standing for its traditional values and high-quality standards.

In 2016, S4 started exploring international markets having reached already 18 diversified countries. Since the company already reached the maturity stage of its lifecycle in the domestic market, it highly needs to further invest in its internationalization process, taking advantage of new growth opportunities and consolidating the business in the countries where it is already present. In this sense, the driving objective and organizational challenge laid on defining the most attractive international markets to be explored and successfully present a feasible and viable expansion plan following a sequential structure: S4's **Situation Analysis** (internal and external analysis, current international strategy, evaluation of the competitive strategy and global readiness to expand); **Market Selection and Country in-depth analysis** based on comprehensive market evaluation and selection techniques, namely using country ranking and clustering analysis and deeply evaluating each of the most promising identified markets, thus being able to develop the appropriate **International Business Strategy, Entry Mode and Business Model** for the recommended target markets, **Marketing Plan** with the definition of the marketing mix and the **Financial & Risk Assessment** of both projects.

In this sense, the purpose of this Internationalization plan was to build and assess an International Market Selection and Strategy to take advantage of S4's experience, resources and capabilities within a small firm's setting, flexibility and expectations, and possibly tackling them into the most promising expansion's proposal.

2. Methodology and Analysis

Primary and secondary data were collected to retrieve all the relevant data for the project. Regarding the primary research, semi-structured interviews containing questions and a list of themes adjusted to the specific requirement of the research phase were carried out to the company's Export Manager, Vera Mota, namely one in-person interview, 5 over Microsoft Teams and several emails and direct calls or messages were exchanged depending on the delicacy of the topic to be discussed. Moreover, in the Entry Strategy, Business Model stage for the selection of the potential partners, two semi-structured online interviews were performed to *Norseland Inc.* former New Business Development Manager, to assess the advantages, disadvantages, viability and feasibility of such potential partnership for S4. Accordingly, all the collected information was gathered, structured and analysed leading to concise and logical conclusions to apply in the report. The secondary data collection, necessary for the entire project, involved the research on books, published articles, NOVA courses' content and online sources, namely commercial databases such as Euromonitor International, World Bank, ORBIS, Statista, The Heritage Foundation, European Commission, Government databases and companies' digital platforms, among others.

The assessment of the markets followed a sequential selection process to give theoretical consistency and reasoning given the large number and heterogeneity of the international markets in analysis, adopting a combined approach of techniques - Ranking and Clustering analysis - to identify the most attractive countries. In particular, while conducting the Market Selection it was critical to use the Statistics tool SPSS. Furthermore, the Business Model Canvas by Osterwalder and Pigneur (2010) was applied as a guiding line for formulation and implementation of the expansion plan in regard to the main strategic, marketing and financial decisions. At the Financial Plan level Sensitivity and Scenario Analysis techniques were performed to evaluate the proposed expansion.

3. Situational Analysis

3.1. Internal Analysis

3.1.1. Company Overview

S4 is a Portuguese farmers' family origin company, founded in 1918 in Castelo Branco, with a history of over 100 years in the Portuguese cheese production. It started producing fresh cheeses, where it is the unquestionable market leader, and which stands for the largest part of its production and sales. Over the last decades, S4 engaged in a series of acquisitions of other competitors and expanded its presence nationally and globally. Nowadays, the company is headquartered in Lisbon, has 345 employees, five different factories¹ throughout Portugal that produce all their products and it nationwide actively responsible for the collection, production, packing and distribution, guaranteeing the maximum quality of the cheese that gets to the Portuguese table. The company rigorously selects raw materials from a wide range of regional milk producers, enhancing tradition and quality. Throughout its existence, S4 has been capable of setting up successful relationships with the principal Portuguese retailers in the market such as *Sonae* and *Jerónimo Martins*. Consequently, S4 sells their own branded cheeses in hypermarkets, supermarkets, discount stores as well as the HORECA channel, but also produces for their private labels (grated and sliced cheeses for *Continente* and references in fresh, cured and grated cheeses for *Pingo Doce*).

With a market presence in all cheese segments in Portugal, the company stands for its traditional values and consolidate experience in cheese manufacture, having implemented a Quality and Food Security Managing System and paying attention to innovation to face and adapt to new market trends. S4's mission is to provide their customers with the highest-standard quality products, focusing on a continuous improvement of its processes. The company aims to create value both for the brand and its stakeholders through dissemination and marketing of its

¹ Montemuro, Palmela, Monforte, Torres Vedras, Abrantes and Logistics Center in Venda do Pinheiro.

products on different markets, striving to achieve sustainable growth and consolidate its long-lasting and trustful relationships with customers, employees and business partners along the supply chain. S4 distinguishes itself for the capacity to adequately respond to place quantities in due time to customers, quality policy to respect the health of consumers, employment engagement and, overall, ethical principles, believing in equal opportunities and respect and protection of the Human Rights, actively contributing to a sustainable development worldwide.

3.1.2. Product Portfolio

S4 presents more than 70 products on the market, taking pride in being, in the fresh cheese segment, an undisputed market leader, also being a reference in the cured cheese segment, namely with regional specialties and premium cheeses, so-called PDOs. With a strong product and consumer-oriented approach, the company strives to develop new quality products following demanding consumers' needs and preferences worldwide.

S4's Product Portfolio is a real added value for the company, and it is composed of four main product lines, namely **fresh cheeses**, regional **cured specialty cheeses**, **sliced and grated cheeses**, and **cottage cheeses**, with different attributes (i.e. shelf-life) that should be taken into consideration while exploring new markets (see Appendix 1 and 11). It has cheeses with several formats and a wide variety of textures (from the intense taste of the cured cheeses to the smooth characteristics of blended cheese) and flavours (cow, goat, sheep and blended), made with both pasteurized and raw milk. All products are made following careful processes and balanced nutritional outline guaranteeing the traditional, high-quality and genuine flavour, which have already led them to achieve national and international awards. By analyzing deeply the portfolio's performance through the BCG Matrix it was possible to assess that the Cash Cows are the fresh cheeses being the line producing the highest gross margin, the STARS are the cured-specialty which are expected to turn into Cash Cows through a bigger commitment from

S4, Dogs potentially grated and sliced given the high competition in the market and the Question Mark is the most recent bio line (see Appendix 2).

Even though the diversified product portfolio may appear as a competitive advantage since it allows S4 to satisfy wider target segments, the lack of consistent brand image and online and offline communication prevents it from taking the full potential of this resource. Small logos with different colours in each product are a potential downside when compared to other players that highly invest in their brands' communication and awareness, highlighting the potential need for more branding efforts (see Appendix 3).

3.1.3. Financial Overview

In the financial overview of the company, S4's results, liquidity, cash-flow-management, return on assets and on equity were analyzed. It is important to mention that all the analysis was based on the financial statements provided by S4 and that no additional notes to the aforementioned statements were provided (see Appendix 4.1 for Income Statement and Appendix 4.2 for Balance Sheet).

Based on the profitability analysis it is concluded that the revenues and the EBITDA evolution have been quite volatile since 2015. The figures significantly increased in 2016, providing growth of 48,1% and 59,02% for revenues and EBITDA, respectively. Differently, the two metrics experienced lower growth in periods such as 2019, when revenues and EBITDA grew 7% and 5,94% (see Appendix 5). It is worth to refer that S4's revenues and EBITDA growth over this five-year period have been largely sustained by the ongoing acquisitions or construction of new production sites such as the *Azetitão* DOP production site acquired in 2015, the development of a new production site in 2017, a new factory built in 2018, and by the acquisition of *Queijo Saloio*, one of S4's largest competitors (see Appendix 6).

Considering the credit risk position of the company (see Appendix 7) S4 presents healthy liquidity ratios, that have been improving over the last five years. The company shows other

reassuring signs of liquidity given that for 2019 it accounted for a positive NWC (1) and a current ratio above 1 (1,2). On the other hand, the cash conversion cycle negatively evolved from -122 in 2015 to 37 in 2019, meaning that the company currently needs to fund their operational activity through external sources of financing (see Appendix 8).

Moreover, in order to measure S4's capital structure in terms of how it has been financing itself and the subsequent risk of the current financial decisions, three different ratios were analyzed: Debt-to-Equity (D/E) ratio, Solvency ratio, and Financial Autonomy ratio². The D/E ratio as a measure of the level of financial leverage of a company reflects S4's positive evolution since 2015, even though the D/E value lies outside of the recommended range above³. In fact, the ratio reached a value of 239% in 2019. The Solvency ratio, that indicates the company's ability to meet its obligations, positively evolved from 7% in 2015 to 41% in 2019. Nonetheless, the improved value is still below the minimum level of 50% required by financial institutions. Lastly, the Financial Autonomy Ratio shows that the independence towards the creditors increased from 3% to 29% from 2015 to 2019, which complies with the minimum requirements of 25% set by financial institutions of 25% (see Appendix 9).

Furthermore, the ROA⁴ is significantly low in all the years in analysis, being negative in 2016, demonstrating a probable inability of the company in efficiently using its assets to generate returns. Differently, ROE⁵ increased from 2% in 2015 to 6% in 2019, meaning that returns of shareholders have grown over this period (see Appendix 10).

Overall, the aforementioned analysis led to the conclusion that the financial situation of S4 is relatively risky, in particular taking into account the excessively high levels of debt and the negative management of S4 cash-flow over the last five years. The revenue's growth decreased in the last two years also might suggest a certain saturation of the domestic market and

² Financial Statement Analysis class.

³ Values vary industry by industry but D/E ratios above 66% should be carefully analysed.

⁴ Return on Assets measures how efficiently a company uses its assets to generate earnings.

⁵ Return on Equity measures the profitability of a company in relation to the shareholder's equity.

consumers shifting towards different brands, which in turns highlights the need to invest deeply in products' innovation and enhances the importance of exploring new international opportunities.

3.2. External Analysis

The cheese market is inserted in the dairy products market, representing the second-largest segment after Drinking Milk Products (26,5% of the global dairy sales in 2017 and 26,2% 2022 forecasted) (Euromonitor International 2018). It can be divided into two main categories based on the freshness, quantity of salt, and addition of other ingredients: the **processed cheese** presents more additives and salt, while **unprocessed cheese** is more naturally produced, with less salt, fresh milk and less enzymes. In the unprocessed cheese category are included the soft and hard unprocessed cheeses, where the majority of S4's products lay on (see Appendix 11).

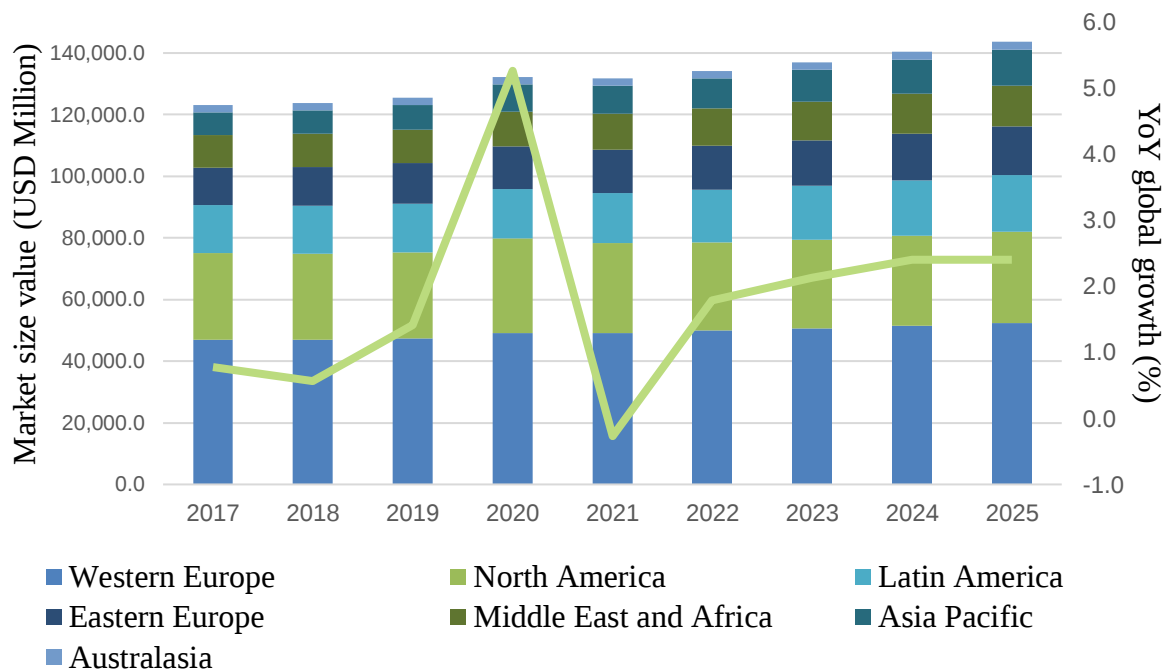
Both global and domestic markets show the positive results of the cheese category, enhancing the opportunities to explore untapped markets and consolidate existing ones. Understanding the performance of the cheese market worldwide and in Portugal constitutes a basis for identifying opportunities and threats, thus enabling S4 to better structure its strategic decisions and the positioning it wants to follow in such attractive cheese market.

3.2.1. Global and Domestic Cheese Market

With 75% of the market represented by unprocessed cheese, the global cheese market was worth⁶ approximately 125578,4 million USD in 2019 and is forecasted to achieve 143698,6 million USD by 2025, growing at a CAGR of 1,7 % from 2020 to 2025, a value which is aligned with the historic CAGR 2015-2020 of 1,8% (Euromonitor International 2020). *Figure 1* highlights the global performance in terms of YoY growth and the specific regions' cheese market sizes.

⁶ The reference to market value along this project is in terms of Retail value RSP (i.e., sales at end price to consumer, including retailer and wholesaler mark-ups and sales tax (except in the US and Canada) and excise taxes), computed using historic and forecast constant 2020 prices and exchange rates.

Figure 1 - Global and regional Cheese Market Size in USD Million and global YoY growth (%)



(Euromonitor International 2020)

By firstly evaluating the market as a whole, it was possible to observe a global substantial increase in value - 5,3% - followed by a slight decrease of 0,3% expected to occur between 2019-2020 and 2020-2021, respectively (reaching 132189,3 USD million in 2020 vs 131834,2 USD million in 2021). This is a consequence of the initial penetration of the global COVID-19 pandemic in the supply chain and the ongoing repercussion of the unstable economic, legal and social situation. In fact, the unusual rise of value in 2020 is mainly associated with the higher prices in key staples while the decrease in 2021 reflects a market expected to rebound (Farm Policy News 2020). On the other hand, due to the pandemic that affected overall changes in demand, namely the plunging orders from the HORECA channel (Farm Policy News 2020), 2020 forecasted global cheese volume is expected to register a drastic drop of 6% compared to the previous year (17765,5 thousand tonnes in 2019 vs 16658,1 in 2020) (see Appendix 12); however, a faster recover is forecasted for the upcoming years (3,5% 2020-2025 CAGR), with

positive expectations (above 3%) within the main regions⁷, particularly Asia-Pacific with the highest volume growth predicted (5,8%) (see Appendix 13) (Euromonitor International 2020).

Secondly, by analyzing deeper the performance of the individual regions from 2017 to 2025, it was possible to assess that not only Western Europe and North America distinguished for being the regions with the highest share in terms of volume consumed (32% and 24%, respectively in 2019) (see Appendix 12 and 14), but also the ones with the biggest market size as shown in *Figure 1* (i.e. 38% and 36% in 2019, see Appendix 15), in particular the United States, France and Germany with the highest value in 2019 (see Appendix 16). Although the two abovementioned regions are expected to still dominating in the near future, Eastern Europe, Latin America, Asia-Pacific, Middle East and Africa are projected to gain market share and grow faster, hence making them other promising markets to explore (CAGR 2020-2025 2,6%, 3%, 5,7%, 3,2% respectively vs Western Europe and Australasia 1,3%, North America -0,8% (Euromonitor International 2020).

In this context, Europe is a major player with the highest level of cheese consumption per capita (with France in the leading position in 2019 - 17,2kg - followed by other 11 European countries and the United States at 11,8kg) (see Appendix 17) (Euromonitor International 2020). In addition, the European market is forecasted to grow in terms of total consumption (CAGR of 0,74% until 2025) (Statista 2020), as well as regarding exported and imported cheese volumes, being the amount of cheese exported worldwide considerably higher than the one imported in the region (see Appendix 18) (Statista 2020). As of 2018, Germany is the top cheese importer worldwide with a trade value of 4379,21 USD million, followed by United Kingdom, Italy, France, Belgium, Netherlands, United States and Japan, respectively (see Appendix 19), (OEC 2018). The global cheese production increased throughout the last years with Europe (with Germany, France and Italy as top performers) being in 2019 the top producer of cheese

⁷ CAGR 2020-2025 by region: Western Europe 3%, Australasia 3,9%, Eastern Europe 2,4%, Latin America 3,6%, North America 3,7%, Middle East and Africa 3,7%.

worldwide with 10 275 thousand metric tonnes of cheese produced, followed by United States (Statista 2020) (see Appendix 20).

Portugal, the domestic market of S4, reflects positive results as the global cheese market. In 2019, the cheese market was the third most valuable among all the Portuguese industries, with the unprocessed category leading with 96% of the total market sales, especially hard cheeses, where the cured line is included (see Appendix 21). The cheese consumption reached 12.5kg/per capita accounting for 965,7 million USD spent in the category (Euromonitor International 2020) and has been growing in the last years. Notably, in 2019 the total volume and value increased by 2,6% and 2,8%, respectively, compared to the previous year (see Appendix 22), and the forecast made from 2019 until 2025 confirms an ongoing stable growth (2,2% CAGR in retail value and 4,03% in volume) (Euromonitor International 2020). The value of exports of cheese from Portugal totaled 42 million USD in 2019, decreasing by 10,5% in value terms compared to 2018, with Angola (19,5% - 8,38 million USD), Spain (17% - 7,31 million USD), France (10,9% - 4,69 million USD) and United States (8,64% - 3,7 million USD) as the top export destinations⁸ (Trend Economy 2020).

In terms of distribution channel, the global and domestic performances are aligned with Modern Grocery retailers representing the majority of the total sales (76% globally and 87% domestically), in particular with supermarkets accounting for 40% and 57%, followed by hypermarkets. In addition, in the global traditional groceries, the independence small groceries are the third largest (12,5%), while in Portugal the discounters (6,1%) (Euromonitor International 2020).

⁸ Followed by Switzerland with a share of 8,29% (3,55 million USD), United Kingdom with a share of 4,4% (1,88 million USD), Canada with a share of 4,23% (1,81 million USD), Cabo Verde with a share of 4,03% (1,72 million USD), Luxembourg with a share of 3,92% (1,68 million USD), Morocco with a share of 3,69% (1,58 million USD).

3.2.2. Market Trends

Emerging health concerns, dairy-free demand, sophisticated snacking and high-quality distinctive cheese flavours and textures identify target consumers who are willing to pay more premium prices for quality and experience. As consumers become more informed and conscious about their health and the production of the dairies they eat, the demand for more natural and nutritional cheeses with higher levels of protein, calcium and vitamins is increasing. The emergent concept of cheese as a healthy snack is confirmed by the upcoming growth of the global unprocessed cheese category (higher than the processed one – 9,36% vs 4,21% CAGR 2020-2025), (see Appendix 23), as well as the rise of the organic cheese market (11% CAGR 2019-2025) (see Appendix 24) (Statista 2020). Moreover, gut health issues, rise of flexitarians⁹, concerning intolerances and changes in consumers beliefs around sustainability and animal welfare are increasing the demand for plant-based dairy options, namely in Western countries and the United States, since the APAC continues to rely heavily on tradition (Euromonitor International 2020). In fact, vegan cheese is gaining popularity, not only by being dairy-free but also because it is considered to be a rich source of protein (Euromonitor International 2020).

In 2020 the global vegan cheese market was valued 2,50 billion USD in 2020 and it is expected to grow at a 9% CAGR 2020-2025 (Market Data Forecast 2020). In light of the abovementioned health and wellness trend manufacturers' brands and private labels are investing more in the fresh and free-lactose cheese segment as well as in innovative dairy alternatives, very differentiate and with some exclusive limited-edition products to fulfil the need of young millennials looking for new and adventurous flavours, high-quality options enhancing the eating experience (Euromonitor International 2020; FoodBev Media 2020).

Furthermore, another noticeable trend is related to sophisticated dairy snacking as innovative, healthy, on-the-go cheese and other dairy options are arising, with consumers

⁹ A Flexitarian Diet is a style of eating that encourages mostly plant-based foods while allowing meat and other animal-based products in moderation (Healthline 2019).

lifestyle demanding for smaller and more easy-to-eat meals, such as hand-held less sugary cheese snack bars or simple snack-size cheeses. Overall, flexibility, convenience and pleasant experience are influencing brands across the dairy snacking industry, which is expected to growth at 5,14% CAGR during the forecasted period 2020-2024 (FoodBev Media 2020).

3.2.3. Competitive Landscape

Competitor analysis is the first step to examine the rivalry among each market player. Given the attractiveness of the cheese market based on performance and new opportunities to explore, the risk of new entrants is high, hence companies need to distinguish and consolidate their position.

With 300 players in the Portuguese operation of dairies and cheese making industry, the main market for S4 is unsaturated when compared to other countries, but highly competitive (ORBIS 2020). *Fromageries Bel Portugal SA (Bel Groupe)* leads the market (21,4% value share in 2019), followed by the Portuguese company *Lactogal* with 16,7% and finally S4 with 10,5%, (see Appendix 25 and 26) (Nielsen 2019)¹⁰. The two abovementioned direct competitors are both a huge international name and a national company with well-established and strong positions. To evaluate the extent of S4's competitors it becomes important to understand their market commonality and similarity in their resources (Hitt et al. 2009, 140). These companies operate in the dairy industry, not only within the cheese category but also with milk, butter and other dairy products. Particularly, in the cheese market, both brands offer a wide product portfolio with fresh, creamy, sliced, grated and semi-hard cheeses. In addition, *Lactogal* offers also specialty cheeses, in particular for the HORECA channel, and *Bel Portugal* created a bio cheese and started offering snack-size options, also as bundles with dry fruits, to follow emerging trends. While *Bel Portugal* shows a high and fast adaptation to tendencies, *Lactogal* focuses on communicating the brand's history and tradition, without compromising its

¹⁰ Information provided by S4.

authenticity. Although the top 3 firms have become very diversified, making multimarket contacts are inevitable when operating in such fast-cycled market, where some competitive advantages might be temporary. All three players' strengths lay on their market expertise, high-quality standards, focus on product development and internationalization objectives, however when compared to S4 they do not exclusively focus on cheese or offer such broad regional cured specialties (where PDOs are included), which can be seen as a domestic competitive advantage point for S4 to take into account in the internationalization process.

Globally is *Kraft Heinz Co.* who takes the lead as the biggest manufacture brand in the cheese category (7%), followed by *Lactalis Groupe*, (6,6%) and *Bel Groupe* (3,1%) also present in Portugal. *Kraft Heinz Co* is the world 5th biggest company in the food & beverages industry with 26 brands and a wide cheese portfolio, specifically focused on butter, cream and mainly processed cheeses as well as natural or cheese bundles with crackers, offered sliced, grated and creamy. Besides, it is worth to mention *Savencia SA*, the worldwide 4th cheese player that with 2,9% market share leads the global specialty cheeses segment outreaching the market with strong and solid brands with distinctive products (Euromonitor International 2020). The firm focuses on continuous product innovation, not only adapting to local tastes and habits but also be aware of the quality of manufacturing and the authenticity of the products, namely in the PDOs' cheeses, which can be seen as a good role model for S4 futuristic approaches.

Private labels are the worldwide leaders accounting for 19,9% of the total cheese retail value. They continue to consolidate their result and leadership even after the COVID-19 outbreak, which can be justified by the increasing development of innovative products and premium offers (such as for the organic market) with an excellent balance between quality and price which is impacting positively the customers' loyalty towards these brands (Euromonitor International 2020).

3.3. Competitive Advantages

To be successful in such a competitive market a firm must clearly understand the strategy and acquire the necessary skills and resources to compete in the cheese industry, the so-called *Key Success Factors*. In this sense, the identification of the resources and capabilities that constitute sustained competitive advantages is critical for a sustainable survival and growth (Carpenter and Sanders 2014, 80). Given the resources and capabilities S4 owns and by evaluating them accordingly to the VRINE Model Criteria (see Appendix 27) (Carpenter and Sanders 2014, 80) it was possible to identify the main competencies of S4 that can be effectively exploited as sustainable competitive advantages: its **Market Expertise**, with more than 100 years of experience in the Portuguese cheese market and constantly paying attention to innovation to accompany trends and demands, **Quality Standards**, contributing to the brand image in its domestic landscape and playing as an advantage when entering untapped markets, **Specialty cheeses offer (particularly PDOs)**, that enhances the uniqueness, tradition and value to Portuguese origin and finally, the **entire Operation Process control** in the domestic market with a considerable production capacity, enabling the company to be independent. S4's **Financial Resources**, **Wide Network** (not only concerning the domestic market but also through previous international expansions) and **Special bonds** with the Portuguese communities across the world constitute temporary competitive advantages being imitable and substitutable. Furthermore, the Brand image and Wide Portfolio diversity cannot constitute a competitive advantage due to the lack of branding efforts and the improper leverage of such a broad offer, respectively.

3.4. SWOT Analysis

By understanding S4's **strengths**, it was possible to identify the potential **opportunities** the company may pursue in the future, as well as assess **weaknesses** in order to mitigate the risk and consequences of potential **threats** to the company's sustainability (see Appendix 28).

S4's strengths lay on the wide range of cheeses, based on Portuguese tradition, allowing it to tackle different segments, being the only supplier in the Portuguese market present in all cheese market categories and notably the market leader in fresh cheese and a critical player in the regional specialties' segment. The high-quality of the products, the PDOs' certificated cheeses as well as the attention the company pays to innovation to continuously accompany changes in market trends developing healthier and tasteful cheeses, namely within the organic market through the most recent bio line and specialty segment whose demands have been growing worldwide, constitute a differentiator factor from competitors. In addition, S4 controls all the national operational cycle, allowing it to be constantly aware of all the stages of the process and its products' performance.

Although the international expansion has intensified over the last years, difficulties in controlling the operations process arise due to the nature itself of the applied entry mode, which implies a high dependency on each local distributor performance. Moreover, limitations in terms of shelf life of some cheeses – especially the fresh line – as well as obstacles in terms of following all local regulations adjustments regarding food standards, particularly towards animal-based products, are identified. With regard to S4's weaknesses, it is also important to point out the limited brand awareness and image which is narrowing the target customers the company could captivate. The weak promotion channels' efficiency, namely investments in organic marketing such as SEO, Google Ads and international social media accounts as well as the perceived inconsistency of brand communication and packaging differences – in brands' names on packages (possibly mistaking consumers), in logos (colour pallet choices, small size almost non-noticeable in the packages and shelves) – all reflect the company is not taking full potential of marketing, branding and advertising.

Therefore, S4 should leverage its investment not only in marketing but also innovation and digitalization to truly grab the opportunity of the growing demand for plant-based, healthy

cheeses and high-quality premium segments, exploiting its commitment to some of the current markets – including the domestic - with different entry strategies and business models.

As for potential threats, there is an increasing rivalry in the Portuguese and global market with the growing importance of the private labels who threaten S4's dominant position in the Portuguese market within the fresh cheese, and also internationally, where, in addition, there is a strong presence and dominance of larger companies, such as French, Italian and American producers. To successfully enter in different international markets, it is required an extensive number of resources and capabilities in order to adapt to each market characteristics which might be difficult to achieve. Finally, the saturation of some markets due to the increasing number of dairy and cheese companies in the industry, the stricter regulations towards animal-based products and bureaucratic restrictions in terms of production and labelling processes as well as the increasing number of lactose intolerant people and no animal-based products' consumers are all potential obstacles for a future foreign expansion.

3.5. International Strategy

3.5.1. Current International Approach

International markets are a crucial part of S4 business. The company's internationalization process started in 2016 and has been consolidated over years, selling nowadays to 18 countries and having already established commercial relationships with Brazil, Morocco, Dubai and Saudi Arabia (see Appendix 29). In 2019, exports accounted for approximately 8,8% of the total turnover, with Angola, France, Poland, Germany and Luxembourg, respectively, representing the top markets in terms of sales¹¹.

Its business model involves exporting a variety of cheese-products with several references to each country, adapting its wide portfolio offer to the clients' specific needs and taking into account the attributes of each product line, namely the shelf-life and the distinctive flavours. In

¹¹ Information provided by S4.

particular, as observed in Appendix 30, S4's positioning in foreign markets is mainly turned towards the cured-specialty cheese category, which, thanks to the longer shelf-life and unique characteristics, allows the company to expand the business to overseas regions such as America, Africa and Asia-Pacific.

Each internationalization expansion starts with a research phase, followed by the penetration into the selected market via trading (direct or indirect exports). The company gathers information through its wide national and international network of contacts, attending European and International fairs and webinars, collaborating also with different Portuguese trade and food associations (such as Portugal Foods¹² and AICEP¹³) that support Portuguese businesses in their expansion plans. The potential explorable markets' viability and feasibility are in general analyzed taking into account several criteria such as political¹⁴ and economic situation, and more specific market indicators - consumption per capita, cheese imports, competitive landscape, consumer preferences and trends. Based on the research stage, S4 plans the next steps into the market, adapting its strategy mainly in terms of portfolio evaluation and product choice (bearing in mind the shelf-life issue) to local demand and negotiate procurement and logistics terms with potential clients.

Depending on the country, the products will be delivered over direct or indirect exporting. In the first case, S4 will directly sell to a customer (whether distributors or retailers) in an international market, usually local retailers or Portuguese clients set in loco with their own stores. While, through indirect intermediation (such as the United States case), the company uses trading companies or export management companies set in Portugal to deliver its products to the final customers in foreign markets. Portuguese communities, the so-called *mercado da saudade*¹⁵, play an important role in S4's international expansion and presence as the company

¹² Non-profit organization that supports the agri-food Portuguese businesses in their expansion plan.

¹³ Trade & Investment Agency that contributes to the success of Portuguese companies in foreign markets or exporting operations.

¹⁴ For instance, S4 excludes Nigeria from the internationalization plan due to extreme political and legal instability.

¹⁵ International markets that represent a connection between Portuguese communities across the globe whose purpose is to provide them typical Portuguese products.

relies on them to spread the Portuguese cheese tradition abroad, having the highest linkage to the domestic country.

In light of the abovementioned entry mode, S4 does not develop any coordinated partnership in terms of business structure¹⁶. Hence, taking into account the mature stage of the industry life cycle in which S4 lays and the current expansion approach, there is a need to consolidate the presence abroad and gain more control over the international operational model.

3.5.2. International Drivers & Goals

Although the company already exports to many countries, this cannot be considered as a deterrent factor for the internationalization expansion, since this presence highly lacks on consolidation, namely on following a better-structured mindset and priorities' definition, having a higher control over the process, and a general focus on expanding globally with a defined organization and product strategies.

In the next years S4 aims to pursue a continuous and sustainable global strategy's growth by exploring new markets and consolidating the existing ones, spreading the unique Portuguese value around the world with existing and innovative new products aligned with market trends. Following the *Ansoff Matrix*, in existing markets, the approach will lay on a market penetration or product development (such as with the most recent bio line), as well as a market development strategy in new untapped countries (see Appendix 31). Particularly, new partners with solid business structures and within their line of action will play an important role in the company's internationalization strategy since they can more effectively guarantee a dedicated commitment of introducing, distributing and placing the products in the destination markets. The company's preferences among potential markets vary with the United States considered an interesting potential country to better explore given its market size, followed by some highly diversified and attractive countries such as UAE, Morocco and Saudi Arabia, where the attention and

¹⁶ Information provided by S4.

demand for dairy and cheese products are expected to progressively grow. Moreover, in the upcoming years, the company seeks to enhance competitiveness by acquiring market knowledge through a developed relationship with existing and new business clients and a more consolidate brand image, awareness and recognition. In addition, enlarge the Cardex volume in active customers, drive sales, increase profits, diversify risk and gain more control over the entire international process are goals the company aims to achieve.

Bearing in mind the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, which has inevitably affected some markets, the worldwide dairy and cheese consumption was not significantly affected based on the results presented in the Global Cheese Market Overview which highlights the decrease in volumes, but the increase in value in 2020. To confirm, several players¹⁷ in the cheese market grew even after the outbreak and more than half of Portuguese consumers stated they were purchasing the same quantities as before (Portugal Foods 2020). However, some adaptations might be necessary depending on the market S4 is going to further explore.

3.5.3. Internationalization Readiness

Based on an overall evaluation of the company resources, capabilities, competitive advantages and current internationalization approach and objectives S4 has an opportunity for a further expansion in foreign markets. More specifically, the level of the company's readiness to internationalize was assessed through the application of the CORE model, which is defined as a self-assessment and diagnostic tool of a company's readiness to extend its business and operations to international markets, also evaluating the capacity of the firm to export certain products among its portfolio (GlobalEDGE 2020). The test analyses the organization and product readiness namely through the following dimensions: Competitive Capabilities in Domestic Market, Motivation for Going International, Commitment of Owners and Top Management, Product Readiness for Foreign Markets, Skill, Knowledge & Resources and

¹⁷ Private Labels, *Lactalis* and *Bel Portugal*.

finally Experience and Training. Based on a mutual assessment by the Team and the Company, the results showed a **MODERATE** score of S4's readiness to expand (see Appendix 32) (GlobalEDGE 2020). It was possible to notice that some adjustments might be necessary for future expansions: although the Product Readiness highlighted the need for more emphasis in training and after-sales support service, a lower willingness to modify internal tangible attributes of the products (such as flavour, texture, etc.) and an overall less strong recognition compared to leading competitive products, S4's broad portfolio with several distinctive attributes might easily be selected according to foreign consumers' trends and successfully penetrate distinctive markets. Moreover, in terms of Experience and Training for international marketing, improvements related to management experience abroad, participation in trade fairs and overall organizational structure's efforts are highly suggested.

In the general assessment the company seems ready to explore new markets showing a high motivation for going international, a deep commitment of Owners and Top Management and the necessary competitive capabilities in the domestic market which enhance the likelihood of success abroad, as well as the right skills, knowledge and resources to make the expansion effective and worth.

5. International Market selection II: In-depth country analysis

In order to assess whether the selected markets United States, Germany, Canada and Japan truly represent a potential opportunity for S4 and culminate the final suggestion, an in-depth country analysis grounded on Domestic Market Overview and Trends, Retail Landscape and Market Sales Potential, Entry Conditions, Porter's 5 Forces and lastly Contacts was performed.

5.1. United States Analysis

Domestic Market Overview and Trends

Cheese is the largest dairy segment in the United States and remains one of the faster-growing ones, reaching 3884,9 thousand tones consumed in 2019 and forecasting to grow in the next five years by 3,6% (Euromonitor International 2020). The COVID-19 is expected to impact this growth making it drop to about 2% per year prior pandemic, yet remaining one of the most popular dairy categories (European Commission 2020). 78% of the market volume is represented by unprocessed cheese, which is divided into hard and soft cheeses, being the preferred when compared to the processed category that continues to shrink while the other grows (European Commission 2020). The U.S. is the 2nd largest cheese producer with 5,950 thousand metric tonnes produced in 2019 (see Appendix 20) (Statista 2020), over 300 varieties mainly made from cow's milk and with American as the most common processed cheese type produced and consumed (European Commission 2020). In 2019, 40% of the total cheese production in the United States was American cheese and 60% other types (Statista 2020).

The value and volume production's capacity shows the country's great potential, however, U.S. consumers also have an appetite for imported cheese (in 2018, among the 71 countries analyzed for the final ranking it positioned 7th in the world in terms of cheese imports with a trade value of 1303,56 USD million) (OEC 2018; Euromonitor International 2020). Notably, the EU accounts for 75% of the total imports, with Italy as the main place of origin, and after France, Spain and the Netherlands (European Commission 2020). In 2019, most of the imported

cheese eaten by Americans were regular types²⁸ with approximately 200 million consumers. 20 and 5 million people appreciate more low-fat cheese and fat-free, respectively (Statista 2020).

One of the reasons for the continued rise of cheese consumption – 11,8 Kg per capita on average in 2019 and projected to rise to 12,2 Kg in 2025 – is the increasing globalization, adaptation to food consumption's habits, premiumization trends and the shift towards a multi-ethnic cuisine, which influenced the ascent of new types of cheeses (AGMRC 2020). Indeed, in terms of consumer's preferences, an increasing consumption was noticed in specialty²⁹, artisanal³⁰ and farmstead cheeses³¹ (the European-style cheeses) since distinguished attributes such as place of origin as well as bold flavours correspond to a sign of differentiation and a quality gage (Euromonitor International 2020). Specialty cheeses (both imported and domestic) are growing five times quicker than the entire cheese market over the last 10 years due to U.S. population travelling to foreign countries and experiencing distinctive types of cheese, European tradition emphasis on food services in America (such as the fine dining), successful merchandize in retailers, interest in ethnic food and the overall demand for robust flavours (AGMRC 2020; Euromonitor International 2020). As a centrepiece during gatherings cheese is driving premium eating experiences, especially among unprocessed cheeses, that are also increasingly used for cooking (European Commission 2020). This premiumization of cheese has been having a particular effect on the unprocessed category, namely European cheeses as mozzarella, parmesan, gouda and cheddar which are among the most preferred since 2016 as well as more traditional like *Havarti* (Danish), *Kasseri* (Greek-Turkish) and *Cabrales* (Spanish) that are increasing in demand (Euromonitor International 2020; European Commission 2020). In fact, provenance and place of origin are becoming critical buying criteria among more premium cheeses (European Commission 2020).

²⁸ Made with whole milk containing 4 percent milk fat.

²⁹ Specialty cheese translates high quality, exotic or traditional origin, distinguished production process, and more premium packaging, distribution channel and availability (not in scale). Includes natural flavours and texture profiles, or flavourings (herbs, spices, among others).

³⁰ Hand-made production, in small quantities, where tradition is core. Cheeses made through several types of milk and vary in terms of tastes.

³¹ Farmstead cheese is an artisan cheese type originated from a farm which uses exclusive milk from the farm's herd or flock.

Furthermore, convenience and suitability for the occasion constitute key drivers for cheese's purchases, particularly as cheese as a snack trend increases. The cheese industry in the United States has been also influenced by a growing demand for snack-sized and healthy cheese products. As the market gets more mature with also an increasing use of premium cheese for cooking and gatherings, cheese in convenient formats for snacking and also for preparing meals is greatly appreciated. The easy usage and the on-the-go packaging have served positively both the unprocessed and the processed cheese, in this last case, an example is *Babybel* which combines taste and format. This trend has given the opportunity to softer cheeses in the unprocessed market (such as grated and cottage cheeses) to broadly benefit from the new expectations of consumers wishing to save time with snacking conveniently packaged cheeses and the youngest people who desire to have a greater protein content valuation of their meals.

Although the premium and snacking trends exist and are growing, many consumers are still highly driven by low price and discounts. A survey conducted in 2017 already revealed the importance of quality (80%) as the primary feature in food purchasing decisions, however, followed by value for money (72%), low price (49%) and lastly brand (43%) (Statista 2019).

Retail Landscape and Market Sales Potential

The cheese market in the United States has faced a particularly constant evolution over the last years in retail value (-0,01% 2015-2019 CAGR) reaching 24188,2 USD million in 2019 and expected to decrease by 1,2% in the next five years. With regard to retail volume, in 2019 the country reached 1884,2 thousand tones sold, experiencing a positive growth (0,01% CAGR 2015-2019) and forecasted to decrease by 1,7% over 2020-2025. In the same year, the cheese sold through large modern retailers - discounters, hypermarkets and supermarkets accounted for 88,6% of the total market retail value. This result is significant and depending on the price level and the large number of retailers that exist, S4 has several opportunities to place its products. In particular, supermarkets and hypermarkets drive retail sales with 42,9% and 39,5%,

respectively, followed by discounters (3,8%), independent small grocers (2,9%), convenience (1,5%) and forecourt retailers (1%) (Euromonitor International 2020).

In order to estimate the **cheese market sales potential** in the United States, three main factors were taken into consideration, namely consumption value per capita, target population size and forecasted projections (see Appendix 42). Assuming there is no segmentation in terms of the target population in the cheese segment, the U.S. population as a whole was considered. Based on the previous market identification analysis, the total market sales potential in 2019 was 24125 million USD, forecasting to reach 25158 million USD by 2025. The growth between 2019 and 2025 is relevant, also considering the impact of COVID-19 pandemic.

Entry Conditions

The United States has a strong economic and politic freedom, and commercial openness. It takes part in several organizations and has signed important treaties, namely APEC, A.T.A. Convention³², HS Convention³³, NAFTA, OECD, WCO and WTO, which enhance the easiness of doing business. In addition, the Logistics performance index - 4 out of 5 - also indicates that the country has strong infrastructures and services associated to make the supply chain entirely reliable. Portugal and the United States have been developing a strong relationship in terms of commercial trade in the past few years with a bilateral trade in goods and services that reached 8,9 billion USD in 2019, 6% higher compared to the previous year (AgroCluster 2020). To further confirm, the country is recognized as the 5th market destination for Portuguese goods exports and largest partner outside European community (Instituto Nacional de Estatística 2020), with cheese accounting for 12% of total Portuguese exports to the United States in 2019 (GPP 2019). Moreover, in the midst of COVID-19 outbreak, the U.S. market was the only recording a positive result in the Portuguese sales of goods (Jornal Económico 2020). This market could become even more critical to the Portuguese exports with the

³² Customs Convention on the temporary entry of goods.

³³ International Convention on the Harmonized Commodity Description and Coding System.

completion of the *Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership Agreement*, which has been arranged between the EU and the U.S. since July 2013 and aims to create the largest free trade area in the world, by eliminating the barriers commercial, customs and non-customs applied on a wide range of sectors of the economy and harmonizing regulations. In light of this, Portuguese companies like S4 could benefit from an accelerated internationalization process.

Currently the penetration to the U.S. market needs to follow some approaches and requirements, namely selecting trustworthy local importer with an import license, obtaining the Certificate of Label Approval, paying all applicable federal fees and customs duties, and requires necessary documentation such as the certificate of Origin, Export Invoice, Transport document (i.e. BL and Air Waybill), Freight Policy (contract of maritime transport under a contracting regime free whose purpose is the transportation of large volumes of merchandise in complete ships) and Insurance Policy (AgroCluster 2020). In addition, the labelling and packaging need to follow the *Code for Food Regulations*, requiring necessary adjustments and the attention to specifications. In general, the inspection time and the fees to be paid vary depending on the type of merchandise and/or the mode of transportation, however, the cheese industry is subject to relatively high average rates and quantity restrictions (AgroCluster 2020). A tariff's increase of 25% ad valorem for agricultural products has been applied by Washington since October of 2019 to several products from EU. In Portugal, the application of this additional duty will have an impact on cheese exports to the United States (GPP 2019). Moreover, ongoing temporary tariffs on European cheese are leading to several concerns for both European producers and the overall cheese industry (European Commission 2020).

Porter's 5 Forces

The following analysis aimed to assess the business competitiveness and external forces that affect the cheese industry in the United States to identify how it can impact the profitability of S4 and adjust the future suggested strategy accordingly.

Concerning the threats of new entrants, barriers to entry are medium. The American consumer appreciates diversified flavours hence the main capital expenditures to incur may come from innovation processes. More taxes certifications are appearing with significant values, creating some concerns in particular for European exporters. Government policies are restrictive and the exports of products from S4's side might take time since the importers need to have authorization. However, large wholesalers and importers already own the necessary documents and knowledge of the market which might accelerate the process. The access to distribution channels is easy due to the existence of many different actors in the market. Besides, given that the market is fragmented, it is assumed that Brand loyalty is relatively low, as also confirmed by the openness of the market to new products, the ongoing interest of many buyers towards low price mainly due to the power of private labels, resulting in low switching costs. Bearing in mind all the abovementioned considerations, the **threat of new entrants** is assessed to be moderate. Although there are a lot of players operating (more than ten thousand including big private labels) offering pleasing prices and diversified portfolios, which can discourage smaller companies, the United States continues to be an attractive market with new opportunities to explore, namely due to premiumization trend, appreciations for European-style cheeses and artisanal offers. Concerning the **threat of substitute products**, as cheese is a very specific product with its uniqueness, it was identified as low, however, the number of direct competitors (companies operating in the cheese industry) is high and should be taken into account. In fact, the large population size and the medium differentiation given by big players, in particular, the ones focus on price, enable the final consumers to switch to other companies.

Given that retailers will be the final distribution channels for S4's products, these play also as buyers in B2B terms. The high number of chains presented in the United States and the opportunities in several distribution channels enabled to conclude that the power of these B2B buyers is low, however, the overall **bargaining power of buyers**, both B2B and B2C, is considered to be medium. Analyzing the **suppliers' power**, it also cannot be considered a threat since the American market is highly saturated when it comes to the number of companies raising cattle and in dairy products manufacture (65 508), hence companies can continuously make adjustments on the suppliers according to their demands (ORBIS 2020).

Finally, United States has some important actors in the cheese market, namely *Kraft Heinz* (24,1%) and the leading private labels which record an ongoing growth since 2015 (32,9% to 2020 37,7%), followed by *Sargento Foods* (5%) and the retailer *Walmart* (3,7%). *Kraft Heinz* has succeeded in securing its position with a wide range of goods including diversified cheese categories, ranging from economic options to more premium (Euromonitor International 2020). Even if the retail value of the cheese industry is going to slightly decrease in the next years (–1,2% from 2020-2025), the overall consumption volume is increasing by 3,6%, hence more players will try to consolidate their presence in the market and new small companies as S4 will try to enter, thus the **rivalry among competitors** can be seen as high. The market in the United States is really fragmented, meaning that the rivalry can be particularly significant among big players, however guaranteeing room for smaller companies to enter and satisfy niche targets' needs (Euromonitor International 2020).

Contacts

Furthermore, it might be crucial to contact responsible entities to succeed in exportations operations to United States, namely Direção Geral de Agricultura e Veterinária, United States Department of Agriculture, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service and Food Safety and Inspection Service. Finally, AICEP Portugal Global (Agência para o Investimento e Comércio

Externo de Portugal)³⁴ and the Cheese Importers Association of America³⁵ may also play a key role in facilitating the trade between the two countries.

5.2. Germany Analysis

Domestic Market Overview and Trends

The German cheese market is the 4th largest in the world with 999,5 thousand tonnes consumed in 2019 and it is forecasted to grow in the next five years by 0,75%. In addition, a high consumption per capita at 12,04 Kg is registered, with 78% of the total market represented by the unprocessed category which is projected to grow at 1,6% CAGR vs 2,4% of the processed one (Euromonitor International 2020). Germany is the highest cheese importer in the world accounting for 4379,21 USD million in trade value in 2018 with a significant presence of foreign products, especially Dutch, French, and Italian cheeses that represent almost 58% of the total cheese imports (OEC 2018).

In terms of most preferred cheeses in the country, gouda, a cured cheese, lead with more than 300 thousand tonnes sold in 2019, followed by the cottage cheese category with almost 280 thousand tonnes and by the edam cheese with 224 thousand tonnes. From the most relevant cheeses by type, both gouda and edam cheeses volumes sold have grown from 2018 to 2019, while cottage cheeses have decreased. From all type of cheeses, the one with the highest growth from 2018 to 2019 was the cream and double cream cheeses with a 17% YoY growth rate (Statista 2020). Consumers in Germany are price sensitive, hence the elasticity of the product is high as they are used to a hard-discount approach. Although the country remains a market focused on price, a growing range of consumers is giving more importance to the high-quality and civic statement, which is why gourmet cheese is a growing opportunity to explore. This premiumization trend with niche markets has high relevance in Germany with smaller players

³⁴ AICEP has an extensive network of more than 200 professionals around the World, aiming to develop promotional activities of Portuguese products in foreign countries, and helping to assist Portuguese companies on the implementation of their business plans in foreign markets.

³⁵ Responsible for the majority of cheese imports into United States aiming to facilitate the entrance of foreign companies into this market.

continuing to exploit opportunities in more distinctive “exotic” cheeses such as Bulgarian cheese or goat cheese that are becoming popular. This reveals a chance to implement specialty cheeses or other types from goat and sheep in different product lines. Moreover, the concern about sustainability and health is driving consumers to change their purchasing decisions, opting for more organic, lactose-free products or even vegan options, paying also more attention to package and fair trade. Notably, the organic food category was growing the most in recent years (7% from 2018 to 2019), representing the 2nd largest organic market in the world with 4 014 million USD (Euromonitor International 2020) and 5,68% of the total food market (Global Agricultural Information Network 2019). Some dairy companies intend to launch “flexible” grilled cheese formats to cater vegetarians and flexitarians³⁶, but also offer a desirable option for consumers who do not usually have concerns about eating meat (Euromonitor International 2020). Furthermore, fast-paced and individualist society – single households – are growing, hence the demand for convenience, ready-to-meal and clean label foods is following this trend, revealing a chance for grab and go cheeses and more convenient packages (AICEP 2019).

Retail Landscape and Market Sales Potential

In 2019 the German market reached a retail volume of 795 thousand tonnes, accounting for 8102 million USD in terms of retail value. It experienced a slight value decrease of 0,5% from 2018 to 2019, and it is predicted to remain quite steady in the next years (Euromonitor International 2020; European Commission 2020). Given the current pandemic situation, in 2021, retail sales will face a slight dip in volume and value terms, after the spike observed in 2020, before returning to “normality” in 2022, with generally stagnating year-on-year sales (Euromonitor International 2020). The country, traditionally one of the biggest food producers, is more known by its retail chain than for food brands (AICEP 2019). In 2020, the cheese market sold through large modern retailers – discounters, hypermarkets and supermarkets, accounts for

³⁶ Growing plant-based diet contributing to healthier habits and lower carbon footprint. Mainly vegetarian but allows meat occasionally.

86% of the total market retail value (Euromonitor International 2020). Besides the modern retailers, the traditional grocery stores have 9,6% of market share, while the remaining market is represented by mix groceries and e-commerce distribution channels whose representation is quite irrelevant (Euromonitor International 2020). Depending on the price level and the number of retailers that exist, there are different chains where S4 can place its portfolio depending on the product choice (see Appendix 43). *Aldi* and *Lidl* are the most popular hard discounters in Germany, *Kaufland* and *Real* the largest ones among hypermarkets (32 % and 23% market share, respectively) and lastly, *REWE* and *EDEKA* are among the main supermarkets, selling also a more gourmet assortment (Statista 2020). These retailers are also direct competitors of cheese manufacturers considering the significant presence of private labels in the market. A group of specialized retailers with gourmet and organic products are satisfying niches, placing more premium cheeses such as cured cheeses, PDOs and organic references (AICEP 2019).

Considering the three factors consumption value per capita, target population size and forecasted projections – the cheese market sales potential in 2019 was estimated at 8091 million USD, growing at a CAGR 0,3% reaching 8240 million USD by 2025. The small CAGR can be justified by the already high performance of the German cheese market and the upcoming consequences of COVID-19 (see Appendix 44).

Entry Conditions

Germany is the 4th largest economy in the world and the major one in Europe with a critical political and economic influence as well as strong respectable organizations that contribute to the country's stable position (World Bank 2020). The market's international influence is reflected by its presence in the NATO, G4, G7, and G20 organizations (Bundesregierung 2020). Besides, the country is also a member of the OECD, WTO, and the EU, which enhances the easiness of doing business and economic freedom in Germany, reflected by the score of 73,5 in the *Index of Economic Freedom*, the 24th highest in the world (Heritage 2020). Establishing a

partnership with a local distributor, becoming responsible for logistic processes from the moment S4's products are in a certain country, is a desirable approach to international markets to guarantee the transportation and logistics performance's safety and success. Germany scored the highest in *Logistics Performance Index* - 0,054 - meaning that the country provides solid and reliable infrastructures to support a business along the entire supply chain, independently of the entry mode that a company opts to apply (World Bank 2018).

As for food safety rules, considering Portugal and Germany are both part of the EU, S4's products already comply with the EU food regulations, hence it is not necessary any specific adaptation to this market, rather than packaging and labelling adjustments. Regarding taxes burden, within the members of the EU, any movement of goods and services is tax-free. Particularly, cheese products are subjected to a reduced VAT rate of 5%, which, combined with the free trade of goods, is a positive factor for S4 (European Commission 2020). Finally, the high cheese market potential, the second position in the organic market and the GDP per capita, which confirms a wealthy position (12th highest in the world), are undoubtedly favourable conditions for an expansion to Germany (Euromonitor International 2020).

Porter 's 5 Forces

In terms of **threats of new entrants**, barriers to entry are low. In the cheese industry capital requirements are relatively reduced since there are no mandatory specifications to accomplish the majority of the market rather than just niches, that can be covered with some of the existing products of S4, namely the cured-specialty line. The cumulative experience in the industry is quite important given the specificities of the cheese market. In the German cheese industry, in particular, brand loyalty is not that high since the costumers are highly price sensitive. Thus, the switching costs are low. The access to distribution channels is easy considering there is a wide network of retailers, especially modern grocery retailers who account for 86% of the market, although some of these are direct competitors that can prioritize their own products.

Government policies are easy to comply with since most of standards and regulations are the same in the entire EU. Hence, it can be assessed that, given the relatively low market barriers, the **threat of new entrants is high**. Despite being difficult to differentiate from the competition, S4 may explore the German niches and the growing organic market, taking also an advantage of the existing contacts with retailers that operate in Portugal and Germany.

Overall, the **bargaining power of buyers** is also **high**: the number of customers in the German cheese market is significant and it is expected to grow; the differentiation is medium given that on one hand, the switching costs are low among the largest discounters since price-sensitive customers tend to push the prices down. However, on the other hand, niche markets demand for differentiated products. In S4's specific case retailers are also buyers. The number of players is high, in particular, there is a concentration in the largest chains hence the customers can choose from a large number of options meaning the switching costs are low. There is also the threat of backward integration, with many retailers producing their own cheese products (private labels). Furthermore, the **bargaining power of suppliers** is low since there are a high number of suppliers within the industry (1913 firms) (ORBIS 2020), meaning that several milk producers can lower suppliers' control over prices. If the current suppliers are not complying with the demands switching to another provider turns out to be easy. The threat of **substitute products** is **low** as cheese represents a special market: the demand for cheese is not affected by the difference in price in the substitute product rather than within the same category.

Based on the analysis, it was possible to observe that the **competition** in the cheese industry in Germany is **high** and the market is highly fragmented, with a significant number of experienced cheese manufacturers. The market is also characterized by several foreign companies, namely, among the largest non-retailer cheese producers the French *Savencia* (the largest non-retailer in the market with also 9% of market share), *Bel Groupe* and *Lactalis*, the Dutch *Friesland Campina*, the Danish *Arla Foods* and the well-known American *Kraft Heinz*

stand out. In addition, private labels as *Aldi* and *Lidl* actively lead the market with 31,6% of value share in 2020 and have a critical impact in the market since big retailers compete directly with the same cheese types, pushing manufacture brands to differentiate their products (Euromonitor International 2020). The industry is predicted to increase in the next years, even if at a low pace, considering also the reduced brand loyalty and barriers to entry, besides capital requirements, the competition might increase as well. Hence, the **intensity of rivalry among competitors** can potentially exist due to market saturation, with an ongoing market growth and powerful private labels' in particular in common cheeses' categories, highlighting better opportunities for SME'S like S4 among distinctive cheese flavours and textures.

Contacts

As part of the European Union Germany operates in the European Single Market that establishes a free trade zone of goods, services, capital, and people between the 27 members of the EU and some other European countries through bilateral agreements, meaning that S4 would have to register their business in the Trade Office and Tax Office, as any other business in Germany. Besides, the company can also establish contacts with AICEP, namely contacting the delegate in Berlin responsible to aid Portuguese businesses abroad (AICEP Portugal Global 2020). In addition, other useful entities may be contacted to help S4 in its internationalization plan, such as the Portuguese Embassy in Germany, Germany Trade & Investment which helps foreign companies establishing themselves in Germany and the Association of the German Dairy Industry (MIV), whose purpose is to support the whole dairy industry.

5.3. Canada Analysis

Domestic Market Overview and Trends

Canada is one of the 5th largest global cheese producers after EU 27, United States, Russia and Brazil, accounting for 519 thousand tonnes produced in 2019 (Statista 2020). Even if the country registers a huge production capacity, imports account for 12% of the total cheese

market retail value, showing that consumers also value imported cheese from different origins and with distinctive flavours, such as specialties (Euromonitor International 2020; OEC 2020). Moreover, the cheese consumption per capita in 2019 accounted 10,3 Kg and the total volume consumption 385,8 thousand tonnes, which is projected to increase at a 4% CAGR 2020-2025 (434,74 thousand tonnes by 2025) (Euromonitor International 2020). In Canada, the cheese production in 2019 was mainly dominated by specialty cheeses, the most common varieties are cream cheese (21,6 %), followed by the cottage (11,6%) and parmesan with 6,3% (Statista 2020). In terms of consumption, processed cheese and unprocessed cheese are both performing well, however, it is notable that 86% of the market is represented by unprocessed cheese and only the remaining 14% belongs to processed. The pandemic situation will affect sales in 2021, especially for the processed category, but the situation will remain stable afterwards. The overall projections highlight a 4% increase in sales with the unprocessed category (hard and soft cheeses) leading the market. This can be explained by the ongoing healthy trend that Canada is experiencing with an increasing number of consumers opting for more natural and less transformed products (Euromonitor International 2020).

In fact, 2020 is a paradoxical year for Canada. Even though the pandemic situation will lead to a decrease in 2021 results as mentioned above, the rise of at-home cooking is expected to be one of the reasons for 2022 onwards positive performance. However, the situation represents a risk for the cheese industry since consumers are affected by the economic context and started looking for lower price options. Indeed, impulsive purchases and less adventurous consumption are increasing due to a shift towards familiar products and spreadable, sliced and grated cheese types due to their easiness of usage (Euromonitor International 2020).

Another relevant trend is related to consumers' healthy and sustainability concerns. In fact, they are becoming more and more aware of the environmental impacts of their purchasing decisions, hence they started demanding for more plant-based, organic and lactose-free

products, as well as vegan options (nut-based, coconut-based winning cheeses), leading retailers to place them in higher quantity at stores, accordingly. Notably, Canada is one of the top 10 countries in terms of organic packaged food market value, which might represent a good opportunity for S4 to explore (Euromonitor International 2020). Furthermore, some other relevant trends to highlight include cheese snacking size options to satisfy younger targets: increasing e-commerce usage, which allows to place and discover a wider and new tasting offer such as specialty cheeses; and finally, the demand for distinctive and stronger cheese flavours such as goat and sheep (Euromonitor International 2020).

Retail Landscape and Market Sales Potential

As Canada is among the best countries in regard to the total consumption of cheese, the retail sales are forecasted to faster increase in the next five years both in terms of volume (1,8%) and value (1,7%). In 2020, cheese products were mainly sold through modern grocery retailers, namely Supermarkets, Hypermarkets and Discounters holding 78,21% of the total cheese sales. Independent small grocers, within the traditional channel, are also an important selling place for S4 as they represent 9,1% of distribution channel for cheese consumption and in which the usual customers' profile evidences the appreciation for the place of origin and tradition of the products (Euromonitor International 2020).

The total **market sales potential** in 2019 was 3658,31 million USD, forecasted to reach 4351,33 million USD by 2025. The expected net evolution of the market between 2019 and 2025 highlight great opportunities in the Canadian market (see Appendix 45).

Entry Conditions

Canada is a stable economic, politic and open market where trade, investments and business opportunities are well established as confirmed by the high score in the indicators *Index of Economic Freedom* (87,9 out of 100) and *Ease of Doing Business* (79,6 out of 100). Furthermore, the 65% value of *Trade (as a % of GDP)* enhances the Canadian openness to

foreign importations. Particularly, Portugal and Canada have a consolidated trade relationship: in 2017 Canada was Portugal's 9th biggest goods trade partner outside the EU (European Commission 2017). Established trade agreements such as CETA³⁷ facilitate the connection between Canada and EU through lower trade barriers as well as the elimination of more than 99% of custom tariffs and higher food safety, workers' rights and environmental standards. Moreover, it contributes to the greater availability of offerings at more convenient prices, such as flavoured burrata, sheep ricotta and more premium specialty cheeses (European Commission 2020). Portugal is among the countries benefiting from the new trade agreements that came into force. Based on the previous market selection analysis, Canadian logistics, commercial infrastructures, transport services and burden of customs procedure are efficient. Positive soil conditions, large reserves of natural resources and a highly educated workforce are also aspects to be considered. Furthermore, Canada has been experiencing an average cheese market annual growth of 3% since 1993 (European Commission 2017).

Some of the requirements to enter in the Canadian market include firstly find an exclusive and local importer, obtain a Cheese Import License from the CFIA and pass through the Food and Drugs Act³⁸ to guarantee the products' safety and quality (Government of Canada 2020). As stated in CETA, all dairy products exporters to Canada have to contact the Global Affairs of Canada and the Canada Border Services Agency for import permits, tariff classification and customs information, respectively. Moreover, there are specific tariff quota systems for some European products, particularly dairy and meat. Above this quota, Canada maintains prohibitive duties on the majority of cheese imports at a pace higher than 245 per cent (European Commission 2017, 150).

³⁷ Comprehensive Economic & Trade agreement which helps the imports of EU products by cutting tariffs and benefiting people and businesses.

³⁸ Primary federal legislation applied to all foods sold in Canada, considering domestic and imported products (European Commission 2017).

Porter's 5 Forces

Concerning the threats of new entrants, barriers to entry are moderate. The market concentration is high with 82,4% of the cheese market divided among four big players (*Saputo*, *Agropur Alimentaire*, *Lactalis Canada* and *Kraft Heinz*), which may act as a threat to enter, however as demand for less common types of cheese increases (such as specialties) there is space to explore these niches. The Canadian cheese market experience is strong since it is in a state of “mutation” towards a more responsible and higher valuable product acquisition, hence entering in the market might demand monetary investments in innovation due to the rise of plant-based, sophisticated and distinctive tastes, that used to be covered by only smaller companies and now are getting the attention of the major players. Moreover, a strong domestic production base may be a potential limitation to foreign imports from the EU. The supply management system supports the dynamics of the market limiting opportunities for external manufactures when entering Canada. However, even if the availability is reduced, a good demand for EU cheeses exists. The improved conditions that resulted from agreements such as CETA depend on the market's demand for foreign cheeses, which represents a positive point for S4 potential expansion to Canada. Even though the access to distribution channels may be limited by the strength of the biggest players that control the majority of them, several smaller players are operating in the market, enhancing the potential opportunities to explore niche channels (such as traditional groceries) and e-commerce. Given that the barriers to entry are **moderate** the **threat of new entrants** follows the same line.

As Canadians get older they are less likely to consume dairy goods and express loyalty towards local or domestic production. In addition, the older generation continues to value more quality over price hence for this target group brand loyalty and switching costs are higher. Therefore, Brand loyalty is divided: even if many customers are open to trying new differentiated products, the older generations continue to show some reluctance, sticking to

local or traditional producers (European Commission 2017). Switching costs are moderate since the older generation might miss some good opportunities such as special treatment (special offers, discount) by switching to other retailers. Overall, the **bargaining power of buyers** is **medium** based on the concentration of the market (between the four biggest players), but also on the consumers' demands for tailored offers. The bargaining power of retailers (also buyers) is high considering the concentration and number of them. In Canada private label share is relatively low (5,3%) and there are no expectations to grow in the following years, meaning branded products are highly appreciated and showing that the threat of backward integration is relatively low, since retailer brands do not have an active role in the market. Furthermore, the **threat of substitute products** is **low**. However, some of the trends that Canada is experiencing must be considered, especially the one concerning the shift towards plant-based options that can lead consumers to purchase them instead of regular cheese. The **Bargaining power of suppliers** is also **low** due to the high number of milk suppliers (10,371 dairy farms in 2019) (Government of Canada 2019), enhancing the possibility to switch between existing ones.

Finally, the market is highly concentrated, with 4 top players accounting for 82,4% of the total market: *Saputo* (25,4%), *Agropur Alimentaire* (18,7%), *Lactalis Canada* (18,2%) and *Kraft Heinz* (17,7%). **The rivalry among competitors** is **relatively high** between the 4 top players mainly because they are actively investing in innovation in order to accompany all the market trends for both niches and more general consumers, particularly imitating the approach to the market of smaller players, namely among the vegan, more natural and sustainable products' development. However, given that the rest of the market is divided among less big companies, the expected retaliation is relatively low for SMEs like S4.

Contacts

As a first approach S4 may establish contact with AICEP Toronto and benefit from Portugal Canada Chamber of Commerce and Industry, which helps to promote and facilitate

bilateral trade, investment and business development between Canada and Portugal. Their main goal is to sustain the international expansion of Portuguese organizations, but also foster the Portuguese exports to Canada (The Portugal Canada Chamber of Commerce and Industry 2020). Moreover, it is important to highlight that this foreign country plays an active role in multilateral forums, demonstrating their commitment to trade sustainability and prosperity being a member of G7, NAFTA, G20, OCDE, OMC, etc. (Canadian Government 2020).

5.4. Japan Analysis

Domestic Market Overview and Trends

The Japanese traditional cuisine usually does not incorporate many dairy products, hence there is not an education regarding cheese as in several European countries (EU-Japan Centre for Industrial Cooperation 2017). However, the cheese category is expected to increase progressively, and notably in 2019 had already registered positive results with a total volume consumed of 247,9 thousand tonnes and forecasted to grow by 3,42% CAGR in the next five years, reaching 270 thousand tonnes by 2025. The market is balanced within both main cheese categories (unprocessed and processed), namely hard cheese in unprocessed, which indicates good opportunities for both. Despite a relatively low consumption per capita in 2019 (1,96 Kg) compared to all the other countries previously analyzed, the demand far outweighs local production, which makes Japan distinguish itself for the number of cheese imports mainly cream cheese as well as specialties. Additionally, 35% of the imported natural cheese is used for domestic production (Euromonitor International 2020; Cheese Market News 2015).

Japanese consumers' key purchase drivers include the dairies' quality and health added value. However, the price also frequently affects the purchasing decision since a higher value might discourage people to try and buy particular cheeses, which can be seen as an obstacle for cheeses' importations as they usually have higher prices than the domestically produced ones (European Union 2019). Flavour-wise, softer and mild cheeses are the most preferred ones due

to their low level of salt, hence processed cheese, as well as mozzarella and cheddar, are highly appreciated. Nevertheless, stronger flavours are usually less popular and consequently the availability in the market is lower. In fact, sheep and goat cheeses such as feta are not highly valued due to their unique and slightly rich flavour (European Union 2019). The consumption of soy products as tofu, natto, and soy sauce is particularly valued among the Japanese culture. In this sense, many adult Japanese citizens shift towards plant-based dairies as an alternative to milk to avoid digestive concerns (European Union 2019). It is also worth to mention that most Japanese are lactose intolerant, however, the market does not pay the necessary attention to this demand showing a limited availability of lactose-free dairy products (European Union 2019).

Health concerns have been particularly highlighted after the COVID-19 outbreak with a lot of consumers paying more attention to their eating habits, which positively affects the cheese sales. Cheese has increasingly been perceived as a healthy good given its benefits related to rejuvenate blood vessels and as a rich calcium's source. Thereby, as Japan has a rapidly ageing population, this can potentially increase the cheese consumption (European Union 2019).

The domestic cheese market continues growing driven also by the ongoing demand of consuming cheese as a snack to eat at home or during social gatherings, as well as a cooking ingredient. In addition, as the Japanese wine consumption increases, namely after 2015, the cheese category has been registering a steady rise since it is one of the best complimentary products (Cheese Market News 2015). Finally, cultural issues highly influence the purchasing trends in Japan as many buyers intend to show social status. The tendency is to buy small luxuries, with Japanese paying a lot of attention to finishing touches, preferring smaller serving sizes with quality. Notably, colours in Japan are attached to emotions having symbolism, hence the labelling and branding must be considered (European Union 2019).

Retail Landscape and Market Sales Potential

In Japan, retail sales are predicted to positively grow in the next years. With a value of 2019 at 4037,7 USD million the forecast is to increase by 2,8% over the next five years. Accordingly, volumes will rise 1,8% by 2025 (Euromonitor International 2020).

Multi-layered distribution is usually the main channel model in the Japanese market, where wholesalers, producers, traders and retail chains have a wide networking and active relationships among them. Within the retail sector, most dairy products are present in grocery retail chains (57,1%), being supermarkets the biggest segment (49%), and after convenience shops (6,7%), with a very low representation of traditional grocery stores that account for only 1,4%. Besides, mix retailers have also a significant presence in the market, with 31% of market share (Euromonitor International 2020). Some of the top largest supermarkets in Japan are *AEON*, *Ito Yokado* and *Familymart UNY Holdings* and potentially S4 might directly sell to them, however bearing in mind the eventual necessity to provide large volumes as well as respect specific criteria for imports and sales that stores impose (European Union 2019).

It is crucial to mention that domestic and imported cheeses' distribution channels vary, while the first is mainly found in convenience shops and supermarkets, the second ones are placed in more specialized stores. The number of convenience stores in the country has been increasing due to its recent popularity with Ready-to-Eat Meals, being the main operators: *Seven Eleven*, *Family Mart* and *Lawson*. Moreover, the popularity of the Japanese e-commerce channel has been increasing, with *Rakuten*, *Amazon Japan*, and *Yahoo! Japan Shopping* as the key companies in this sector (European Union 2019). Notably, the total **market sales potential** in retail value in 2019 is 4037 USD million, is expected to reach 4945 million USD by 2025. The forecasted CAGR (3,44%) reflects the increasing demand for cheese in Japan regardless of the COVID-19 effects (see Appendix 46).

Entry Conditions

Japan is the 30th freest economy in the 2020 Index, with an *Economic Freedom* score equal to 73,3, that had increased by 1,2 points mainly due to an improvement in fiscal health (Heritage Foundation 2020). Among several countries located in the Asian-Pacific region, Japan ranked 8th, being its overall score significantly above the regional and world averages (Heritage Foundation 2020). In terms of EU agricultural exports, Japan is in the top four, being the 4th biggest country. The tax burden percentage on total domestic income equals 30,6 which might not be the most positive indicator. However, offers regarding subsidies, tax credits, and other incentives are given by the Japanese government to attract foreign investments (Heritage 2020). Moreover, the market in Japan faces high regulations, constituting a threat to European exportations (European Commission 2019). The most critical challenges are both tariff and non-tariff requirements, namely technical issues and regulations, complex and long procedures and high costs of compliance. Nevertheless, the recent EU-Japan Economic Partnership Agreement³⁹ will contribute to the foreign access to the country, excluding or reducing tariffs and overcoming non-tariff challenges. In this sense, the EPA will potentially benefit EU exportations to the Japanese market, also for key agricultural products, processed agricultural products and cheese (EU Business in Japan 2018; European Union 2019).

Porter's 5 Forces

In the threat of new entrants' analysis is observed that the barriers to entry are relatively high. Firstly, high capital requirements might be needed, considering that there is a preference in the market for high-quality and more specific cheeses (for instance lactose-free) and R&D investments may be necessary to develop new and innovative products thus matching the target demand. Moreover, the cumulative experience in the market based on previous acknowledgement is crucial to succeeding in meeting new market trends and preferences. The

³⁹ EPA is an economic arrangement that eliminates barriers to the free movement of goods, services, and investment between countries.

Japanese cheese consumers tend to look for high-quality products, that reflect a status, meaning they care about the brand showing their high brand loyalty, hence big switching costs as well. As for the access to distribution channels, there is an extensive network, however, some requirements are needed (for instance in the supermarkets – the biggest channel – might be necessary to offer large volumes and specific criteria for imports), which might represent an obstacle when trying to access these channels. Government policies concerning food regulation are strict especially compared to EU standards. For companies in the dairy industry a certificate for animal products obtained from a relevant authority is required when doing business in Japan. New AQS provisions, set in 2017, defined new regulations for inspecting dairy goods, but not applicable to any processed products (European Union 2019). As for taxes, the EU-Japan trade agreement facilitated the trades of goods between the two parties in particular products like cheese, with an import tax of 30%-40%, show a higher openness to enter in the Japanese market. It is concluded that the **threat of new entrants** is **medium** considering the market is growing and is likely to attract more companies, although the barriers to enter the market are high.

The **bargaining power of buyers** is perceived to be **high**. The number of customers in the Japanese market is low, however, it is forecasted to significantly rise in the upcoming period. The differentiation level is relatively high considering there is a demand for high-quality products with specific attributes, still, some consumers tend to push prices down and the EU-Japan trade agreement might support it. As previously stated, in S4 perspective it is also important to consider retailers as buyers. Considering the wide diversity of retailers, with many alternatives growing, such as the convenience stores, non-grocery specialists, and e-commerce, the **bargaining power of retailers** is **medium**, since the high concentration in the market for supermarkets should also be considered. The threat of backward integration in the market can be disregarded given the preference for high-quality products over private labels. As for **suppliers**, their **bargaining power** is **medium**, based on the number of companies in the

operating of dairies and cheese making industry compared to the ones raising dairy cattle and manufacturing dairy (415 vs 1213) (ORBIS 2020). **Buyer propensity to substitute** is **low**, given that cheese is a unique product, however, the lactose-intolerance issue in part of the population can act as a threat increasing the substitutes rate.

Finally, the **competition** in the Japanese cheese market is high, with a significant number of producers. *Megmilk Snow*, a local company, leads the market with 28,1% share, followed by other Japanese companies, such as *Rokko Butter*, *Morinaga Milk*, *Meiji Co*, *Tokyo Dairy* as others, with the French Company, *Bel Groupe* (being the foreign exception), all with a market share lower than 11,3%, translating into a fragmented market with several smaller players operating. As Japanese consumers tend to prefer high-quality products, private labels are less valuable with only 3,2% market share. This leads to assuming that brand loyalty is higher in comparison to other regions (Euromonitor International 2020). Bearing in mind the high growth expected of the industry and the openness to foreign companies due to trade agreements, the number of **competitors** and the **rivalry** among them is expected to increase accordingly. In light of this, S4 might face some challenges which are offset by the growing demand for high-quality products leading several companies to see a chance in placing specialty cheeses, namely the ones with less strong tastes given the consumers' reluctance to stronger flavours.

Contacts

Japan has been a reliable agriculture and food trading partner for Europe continuously focused on importing EU goods and establishing useful contacts. In details, these associations and institutions may be important to exploit business opportunities in loco: Portugal's Embassy, AICEP in Tokyo, JETRO, Financial Services Agency, The Tokyo Chamber of Commerce and Industry, MIPRO, JSA and Bank of Japan (AICEP 2018). For S4 there may be many opportunities to a successful entrance, considering the long-term trading connection between both regions and the newly EPA, which leads to several benefits.

5.5. Target Market Selection

Based on the in-depth analysis of the four countries selected, United States and Germany are the target markets recommended for S4's expansion and consolidation. Canada was not chosen since it has the worst sales potential among the four and it is in the same region as the United States (North America). By comparing them directly it is noticeable United States is more promising. Japan was also disregarded as it would be the riskiest market to target: although it is trying to make entry conditions easier and increasing cheese consumption, dairy products are still less present in their traditional culture, namely due to the food habits and the high number of lactose intolerants, which may impact the expected sales. In addition, consumers' preferences towards less strong flavours would limit S4 from taking the full potential of commercializing cured cheeses and PDOs, which are the product lines usually exported overseas. The U.S. and German cheese markets are significantly the most attractive worldwide, registering both high levels of cheese consumption per capita, economic and trade stability, established trustful relationships with S4's domestic market as well as solid and reliable logistics and service infrastructures to support a business. Furthermore, the wide retail network in both countries would facilitate the access to distribution channels, enhancing the possibility to reach a broader and diversified range of consumers. If on one hand the U.S. cheese market distinguishes itself for the highest global retail value of 24188,2 USD million in 2019 which is forecasted to grow faster than Germany (2020-2025 CAGR 3,6% vs 0,75%) and the presence of the largest Portuguese community in the world (roughly 1,5 M people) that may facilitate S4's entry in the market, on other hand Germany is the highest cheese importer in global comparison, with low barriers to entry for European companies. While in Germany there is a reduced VAT rate of 5% for cheese and the tax free for any movement of goods and services (European Commission 2020), a Portuguese company as S4 that exports to the United States needs to expect a tariff of 35% and an extra import permit's value that might be added

depending on the type of milk. Each commercial import of food and beverage goods shipped to U.S must fill the Prior Notice via electronic platform, namely a 5-day prior notification must be received by the FDA before the arrival of the products (European Commission 2020) as well as register their goods with the same organization for admission as each year the import permit for milk should be renewed. Overall, S4 will have to comply in both markets with the health and food legislation and regulations, governmental policies and certifications (i.e., U.S. FDA in United States and Animal health legislation in Germany) as well as more restrictive labelling and packaging requisites (European Commission 2020). More specifically, in United States all required statements must be in English and both labels must accurately describe the specifications of the products, such as the milk base, place of origin and nutrition declaration (Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture 2020). Particularly to sell products in Germany, S4 needs to have certification on PDOs and a DNA test on goat cheeses⁴⁰ (see Appendix 47). Finally, the high number of players operating in both markets and the notable level of rivalry, with private labels continuously gaining market share, at first sight may appear as a discouraging signal for the expansion, though, S4 may take advantage of the new emerging trends and opportunities within niches. Particularly, in United States with the increasing demand for European high-quality cheeses – namely specialty and artisanal - recognized through the place of origin and the unique and robust flavours and in Germany with the growing demand for premium diversified cheeses. Moreover, consumers in both countries are more concerned about healthy, organic and snack-sized options which may reveal another opportunity for S4 to increase its popularity and distinctive position worldwide. Since both countries show a great potential in terms of cheese consumption habits, market size, expected sales and explorable new trends, a multiple expansion approach is recommended.

⁴⁰ Information provided by S4.

6. International Entry Strategy

Having assessed the most attractive target markets for S4 to explore, the next phase outlines the appropriate entry strategy to the United States and Germany, bearing in mind the company's current approach to both countries as it is already doing business there, and assessing possible better opportunities within other entry modes. Accordingly, the most promising Business Model was explored and used as a guiding line for the proposed internationalization plan, potentially guaranteeing a successful penetration abroad.

6.1. Entry Mode

In order to understand and define the most suitable strategy to penetrate the suggested geographic arenas, S4's current foreign entry mode was assessed. Nowadays, the company relies exclusively on trade-based strategies to reach both markets, particularly direct and indirect exporting⁴¹. On one hand, this type of entry implies more flexibility, lower risk and resource commitment, however, on the other, S4 has less control over its foreign operations leading to some critical downsides (Hitt et al. 2009, 225).

In the United States particular case, the company follows an indirect exporting approach, collaborating with two Portuguese trading organizations specialized in sea-traffic, namely *Loia Foods - Import & Export* and *Pedro & Vicente*. Once they receive S4's cheeses in a designated warehouse in Portugal, named by the client, the products are consolidated along with other companies' goods, becoming responsible for future operations' decisions (i.e., shipping and distribution). In this sense, S4 loses the entire control over the further value-chain activities as soon as the products are delivered to the trading company. Consequently, it is only aware of the type and volume of cheeses shipped to the United States, not having access to most elementary information such as the exact locations where its cheeses will be available to final consumers.

⁴¹ Indirect exporting involves contracting with intermediaries, usually an export management or trading company in the firm's domestic country to implement all the export operations, whereas direct exporting involves selling goods directly to a client (such as importers, wholesalers, distributors and/or retailers) in an international market (Delaney 2019).

Regarding Germany, a trading entry mode is also being pursued through direct exporting, mainly in Munich and in the North region. In this country, S4 relies on five different clients, namely *Delina GmbH*, a finest food distributor responsible exclusively for S4's sales of goat cured cheeses; Portuguese companies operating in the HORECA channel, in particular *Fonseca Import-Export* (specialty store focused on Portuguese, Brazilian and Spanish products), *Vinhoteca* (distributor to Restaurants and Cafeterias, with a focus on gourmet goods) and the small grocery *Silva*; as well as the worldwide retail chain *Lidl DE* especially during thematic "Lidl weeks" with campaigns dedicated to a specific country. In fact, S4 delivers the order directly to the clients' warehouse in Germany or transfers the responsibility to a transport company designated by the client.

As noticed, the company's current business in both foreign markets is exclusively based on spot sales, without any coordinated and sustained partnership regarding business structure and marketing strategy (such as pricing policy and communication tools to final consumers)⁴². This assessment suggested the need to move away from the trade entry mode to a possible contracting, with the aim to drive sales and reach a sustainable, reliable and steady presence in both the United States and Germany, playing a more active role.

Accordingly, before making a final suggestion, a comprehensive evaluation of the several potential entry approaches to foreign markets was followed (see Appendix 48.1) considering each option advantages and downsides (see Appendix 48.2) particularly in terms of flexibility, control level over foreign operations, necessary resources' commitment and adjacent risk (Hitt et al. 2009). Moreover, it was taken into account S4's specific concerns namely timing of entry, financial situation, risk aversion, liability or advantage of foreignness and culture & institutional distance⁴³.

⁴² Information provided by S4.

⁴³ According to Doing Business in Emerging Markets course at Nova SBE (2020).

Following, it was possible to conclude that the current strategy S4 is pursuing is indeed not the ideal for market growth and consolidation in the United States and Germany where it has to face not only strong players within the cheese industry but also a wide range of distributors and retailers who might take control over S4's operations due to their power and stability.

Investment entry modes (collaborative or individual), expressly joint ventures, other equity alliances and wholly owned (M&A and Greenfield) were also left aside taking into consideration the company's unwillingness to have a high financial commitment as, although conceiving higher control over the external market, they are the riskiest and less flexible ones due to the demand for substantial financial resources and CAPEX. Besides, the penetration in an international market must be an incremental process, thus, firstly, S4 needs to build brand awareness and consolidate its presence, and only after it might consider equity-based entries which result to be more viable in a long-term futuristic approach (Carpenter and Sanders 2014, 457-460; Rugman and Collinson 2006, 7-9). Furthermore, the uncertainty due to the current global pandemic situation and the unstable political environment, in the United States particular case, may also negatively impact a potential FDI entry mode.

Therefore, the final choice grounded on strategic alliances based on contractual agreements not implicating equity participation, but rather a partnership between companies with the joint execution of critical activities along the value-chain, while maintaining the individual independence. In light of the previous internal analysis and current trade entry mode, S4 showed the need for consolidation in both markets due to the loss of assessment and tracking of outbound logistics (Transportation, Storage and Delivery system), Marketing, Sales and Service (i.e., after-sales retail clients' feedback), causing an overall insufficient monitoring and understanding of the cheese market dynamics, namely consumers' trends and needs. Given the low control and commitment of the aforementioned activities, Storage, Distribution, Marketing

& Sales to final retailers and HORECA constitute the alliance major value-chain coordination points that will be acknowledged when assessing the potential strategic partners.

Within this type of entry mode, S4 will have the support from other companies to penetrate both countries, gaining a competitive advantage through knowledge sharing, complementary resources & capabilities, a more effective management and opportunities to accumulate experience over time (Carpenter and Sanders 2014, 260-261). Given its degree of intensity⁴⁴, which guarantees more flexibility and independence as it does not require financial ownership investment, it represents the most suitable approach to reduce time-to-market, reach a broader customer base, build brand awareness, image and drive sales by taking advantage of the strategic partners' market know-how, expertise, network and forms of doing business (Carpenter and Dunung 2011, 356-401).

Nonetheless, this approach might imply some downsides, namely a low contract development when negotiating the alliance and assessing the termination planning, a misunderstanding of the partner's strategic intent that might not be aligned with S4's goals, misrepresentation and misappropriation of the ally's capacities and the failure to make complementary resources available which might compromise S4's independence, direct control, brand identity and overall performance (Carpenter and Sanders 2014, 272-274). Thus, the main implications of the selected entry mode will be considered during the selection of the strategic partners, execution and suggested coordination of the alliance and in the overall definition of the most crucial points of the Business Model.

6.2. Business Model

To guide the most suitable strategic and further marketing and financial decisions the Business Model Canvas by Osterwalder and Pigneur (2010) was followed, being a comprehensive approach that provides a holist perspective in the international strategy

⁴⁴ The degree of intensity depends on the nature of the time and investment & inputs commitment.

formulation and meaningful methods for delivering, creating and capturing value (Müller 2019). The multiple expansion plan for the United States and Germany will be guided throughout its nine building blocks grounded on the definition of the **Value proposition**, identification of the **customer segments**, expected **relationships** and **channels** through which S4 will deliver its value. As well as the assessment of **key partners**, in particular the strategic allies that will support S4 in **key activities**, along with the appraisal of the necessary **key resources** for value creation. Lastly, a straightforward economic logic approach details the **cost structure** and **revenues streams** to capture value (see Appendix 49) (Wirtz et al. 2016).

6.2.1. Value Proposition & Value Deliver

Once selected the two countries S4 will potentially explore, it is important to make specific decisions about these geographic-market and product-market arenas in the proposed Business Model (Hambrick and Fredrickson 2001, 51). In fact, it is worth to mention that given the large size of the United States the strategy will be focused on targeting specific regions/states while in Germany the entire country will possibly be addressed.

Currently, S4 is present in the U.S. market with two product lines, namely the more common sliced and grated cheeses and specialty cured references due to their longer shelf-life, distinctive flavours and pleasant experience provided, particularly the PDOs. Based on the insights from the previous in-depth analysis, although the United States has a highly competitive market mainly in the convenient cheese segments (such as cheddar and mozzarella), opportunities for more premium and specialty cheeses have been arising in the most recent years. The premiumization trend is increasing the demand for European high-quality cheeses and distinctive tastes among consumers that value the products provenance and the eating experience during their social gatherings. In Germany, goat, cow, blended cured cheeses and PDOs are the main offer from S4, but also some fresh options. Notably, the

specialty line is among the most preferred in the country and niche targets revealed an appetite towards stronger and unique tastes.

By combining the company's current products choice and foreign emerging trends with the primary outcomes of the previously assessed corporate-level analysis of S4's broad portfolio (see Appendix 2 for BCG Share Matrix) bearing in mind S4's products' preferences⁴⁵ and the cheeses' shelf-life⁴⁶ that inevitably affects the offer to foreign markets, it was possible to define the product-market fit and S4's value proposition. In this sense, the specialty-cured line was identified as the most promising to explore the opportunities in both countries. Based on the BCG Matrix this line lays in the *STARS* quadrant, being the one with higher potential for market development and future transformation into cash-cows once the presence in the United States and Germany is consolidated. Notably, these cheeses have a longer shelf-life of 180-270 days being an advantage when expanding abroad, guaranteeing quality for a longer period and potentially optimizing exportation costs. Moreover, the cured specialties are well-known for their premium quality, distinctive tastes and textures, particularly among the certified PDOs.

Accordingly, the expansion **Value Proposition** lays on S4's market expertise, quality standards, regional Portuguese tradition and exclusive and exceptional eating experience that these cheeses provide, as well as the premium value and compliment they can add to the business clients' portfolio. In light of this, the suggested positioning strategy is the **focused differentiation** as defined by Michael Porter's Strategic Positioning Model, through which S4 can target niche customers segments with a clear value proposal, both business segments (B2B) – specialized modern or traditional grocery retailers operating in the gourmet food and cheese segment or food services and others across the HORECA channel who value high-quality and distinct products - as well as final consumers (B2C) willing to pay premium prices for quality,

⁴⁵ The cured-specialty was highlighted by S4's Export Manager as the line with higher potential due to its distinctive attributes (multiple presentations, sizes and maturation periods) with a focus on the recognized PDOs. Moreover, sliced & grated cheeses are not the current focus for developed countries and fresh & cottage short shelf-life was pointed out as a deterrent factor when targeting more distant markets.

⁴⁶ The cured-specialties (including PDOs) have a medium-long shelf-life, Sliced and Grated – medium - and finally the Fresh and Cottage cheeses a lower resistance, 12 and 30 days respectively, which limits the exportation of these cheeses overseas.

regional delicatessens and outstanding eating moments. Moreover, S4 can improve the customers' **relationship** by enhancing its value proposition through the uniqueness of its products and tailored approach to clients. Particularly, together with the further selected strategic partners, S4 might build active and personalized relationships when dealing with the retail chains, namely encouraging market feedback, analysis and trust.

In the United States specific case, the Portuguese communities might represent crucial customer segments as they are the first valuing the Portuguese tradition and assortment. Hence, the proximity to these communities will be taken into account when assessing the target U.S. states. Furthermore, to raise awareness of S4's products and fully deliver the value proposition, the primary **channels** used will be S4's strategic allies' network and the abovementioned specialized retail and HORECA channel as well as digital platforms such as alliance partners', retailers' and S4's website and social media.

6.2.2. Value Creation: Key Partners & Activities

Having identified the most suitable entry mode, the value proposition and the strategy to deliver S4's value, the next critical step involved assessing the key partners, particularly selecting the strategic allies engaged in the internationalization plan. Along the value-chain S4 will remain responsible for all the support activities (Firm infrastructure, H&R, R&D and Procurement), Production, and Labelling & Packaging. Apart from the milk suppliers and transport companies (in charge of the products' shipment to the United States and Germany, exclusively) the key players involved in the process are the **strategic alliance partners** identified based on the previous assessed necessary value-chain coordination points to support S4 abroad namely in terms of Storage, Distribution, Marketing and Sales.

The identification of these necessary **key activities** within the internationalization enabled to recognize importers, wholesalers and/or distributors as the most promising alliance partners for S4, to maximize the efficiency of all the operations while reaching the final customers'

segments (B2B and B2C) and guarantee the overall success of the expansion. Moreover, bearing in mind the formerly detailed value proposition among the high-quality cured cheeses, the choice was oriented towards partners operating in the gourmet food industry, with capacities to support S4 in the selected activities and recognized market position.

To assess and accurately suggest the most suitable partner-candidates in both United States and Germany, a comprehensive screening method allowed to rate several options based on three main criteria: **size in terms of turnover (i)**, **product fit (ii)** and **geographical presence (iii)**. Through this approach the best strategic, financial, cultural, geographical and structural fit partners for S4 were identified as well as their distinctive resources and capabilities (Carpenter and Sanders 2014, 281). More specifically, the **(i) size of the partner** enabled to evaluate its financial situation to understand if it would suit or not S4's economic position⁴⁷. For **(ii) product fit**, three main aspects were taken into account, particularly the *product mix breadth* to assess the variety and number of product lines offered (within the specialty food industry), the *product line depth* in the specialty cheese segment to appraise the number of items within this category and finally the offer and attention to European specialty cheeses. **(iii)** The **geographic presence** was evaluated in terms of retail network and in the U.S. specific case, given the big size of the country, the selection was narrowed to companies that collaborate with retailers located in closer or same states where the major Portuguese communities are present (such as New Jersey and California) so that S4 can increase reach and sales (WorldAtlas 2018).

Following this approach, the Positioning Maps were created for both markets to easily visualize how the potential partners perform according to the three main criteria (*X-axis* = turnover; *Y-axis*= product range; bubble's size = geographical presence). The results were then combined with a deeper evaluation of the market expertise and differentiation factors to make a proper suggestion of the best potential strategic partners.

⁴⁷ In 2019, S4 consolidated sales accounted for 51 million EUR (Company information 2020).

U.S. Partners Screening

Seven possible allies were identified and evaluated namely *Schuman Cheese*, *Norseland Inc.*, *Gourmet Foods International*, *Deco Food Services*, *A&B Distributors*, *Gourmet Imports* and *Forever Cheese* (see Appendix 50). To build the Potential Partners Positioning Map, points were attributed to *Product range* based on *breadth* (food with general cheese-1; food with specialties-2; exclusively specialty cheeses-3 points), *Specialty cheeses depth* (few options-1; medium-2; many-3 points) and *European extension* (Yes-1; No-0), while the *Geographic presence* was assessed through the Retail landscape⁴⁸ (small-1; medium-2; large-3 points) and proximity to Portuguese communities⁴⁹ (Yes-1; No-0) (see Appendix 51 and 52 for the Map).

Norseland Inc. and *Schuman Cheese* seemed to have not only the best product range fit, exclusively focused on specialty cheeses with several European options, but are also among the ones with the highest geographic presence, particularly close to Portuguese communities. Although *Schuman Cheese* has a vast network, brand recognition and range of foreign fine specialties, when compared to S4 it has a significantly higher turnover and also produces its own cheeses, which might act as a critical downside if after allying with an SME like S4 tries to imitate the Portuguese cheeses. In fact, its development's philosophy grounds on growing by learning from European producers, which was the main reason for disregarding this company.

Forever Cheese, *Gourmet Imports* and *Gourmet Foods International* perform similarly well in the cheese specialty segment. Even though they do not exclusively focus on providing specialty cheeses, but also other food gourmet complements such as chocolate and jams, these potential allies should also be considered. As they have a close position on the Map, an in-depth comparison was made to identify in *Forever Cheese* and *Gourmet Foods International* best fitting opportunities. While *Gourmet Imports* has a smaller retail landscape serving mainly

⁴⁸ Retailers and/or services the potential partners can reach (retailers, specialized stores, HORECA). When the number of facilities or presence in selling chains was not detailed, the points were attributed based on the company's turnover, assuming that a higher turnover is related to a greater retail landscape.

⁴⁹ When the information was not detailed, the assumption of proximity to Portuguese communities was based on the assessed retail landscape, considering that a higher landscape means a potential reach to Portuguese communities.

Chefs and the greater culinary community around Los Angeles, *Forever Cheese* reaches retail and online stores throughout the United States, being the leading importer of various artisan cured cheeses from Italy, Spain, Portugal and Croatia. Finally, *Gourmet Foods International* is also mostly present in the American market with several European references. The remaining two options, namely *A&B Distributors* and *Deco Food Services* were left aside due to their product range performance in terms of *breadth* and *depth*, offering a broader product mix where the cheese specialties category is not comparable with the aforementioned companies.

In this sense, the best promising partners include *Norseland Inc.*, *Gourmet Foods International* and *Forever Cheese*. Since these companies are highly similar, a deeper comparison was performed based on each individual's strengths, possible coordination points with S4 and overall alliance opportunities (see Appendix 53). *Gourmet Foods International's* potential downside lays on offering several specialty products, not focusing exclusively on cheeses as the other two. *Forever Cheese* has not only a lower turnover (3,76) which can be justified by the fact that it only imports cheeses from four countries, but also a lower experience in the market. Finally, *Norseland* main advantages ground on its 40 years of market expertise with high brand equity, the capabilities in several value-chain activities, namely for S4 gains in Distribution, Marketing, Sales and Customer Service, as well as a wide retail landscape and proximity to Portuguese communities. Besides, it has already established successful alliances with other European cheesemakers⁵⁰ being a positive sign for a future partnership with S4. The approach it usually follows is to support companies with Warehousing, Distribution, Marketing & Sales never compromising the partner's independence, identity and uniqueness of the brand.

Since *Norseland Inc.* showed high potential and it was possible to establish direct contact⁵¹ with the company, it will be the first suggested partner to enter the American market. Particularly, partnering with *Norseland* and taking advantage of its market expertise, wide

⁵⁰ The French *Couturier and Soignon*, the Italian *Parmigiano and Igor*, Spanish *Garcia Baquero*, and gouda from the Dutch *Old Amsterdam*.

⁵¹ Without compromising the confidentiality agreement, the former New Business Development Manager was contacted.

sales' network and services constitute a tremendous opportunity for S4 to build brand awareness and expand marketing reach and combined sales.

German Partners Screening

Following the proposed plan to consolidate S4's cured cheese line in Germany, a similar approach was applied to the German potential partners screening. Five wholesalers, distributors and importers, namely *Fritz Bendel*, *Tiho*, *Heiderbeck*, *Frisch Konzept Service* and *Ruwisch & Zuck*, offering specialty cured cheeses were identified, some focused solely on this segment, while others offering a broader gourmet delicatessen range (see Appendix 54). The evaluation grounded on the *depth* of the specialties' portfolio⁵², also bearing in mind the cheeses' availability from other European producers and the retail landscape as the geographic presence measurement. In light of this, the criteria were defined (see Appendix 55) and the Positioning Map created (see Appendix 56).

Among the five presented partners, *Fritz Bendel* showed a lower geographic reach and focus on specialty cheeses, possibly justifying its reduced turnover value. Regarding *Ruwisch & Zuck*, even though it imports from more than 15 countries (including several European) and showed a high geographic reach in Germany, its core activity as a trade company lays on warehousing and distributing products to wholesalers and/or retailers, hence not providing the necessary collaboration in potential beneficial activities for S4, such as Marketing and Sales. Moreover, the increase in S4's market consolidation, namely brand awareness, image and positioning, will not be fully addressed since, considering *Ruwisch & Zuck's* online position and promotion, the company does not appear to invest in communicating the individual partners' value among its widely broad portfolio, hence it was left aside. Besides, *Frisch Konzept Service* was also disregarded as its chain activities' support is mainly focused on the retailers and the final consumers (offering cutting, packing, POS marketing solutions for

⁵² If these companies provided many options of specialty cheeses 3 points were given, medium options 2 points, few options 1 point.

instance in terms of disposable and presentation), being less concerned about the actual partner's identity, which can possibly compromise the Portuguese origin in S4's case.

Finally, the two most promising companies *Tiho* and *Heiderbeck* required a more detailed analysis (see Appendix 57). Both represent good opportunities for S4, yet when compared directly the noticeable reach of *Heiderbeck* and provided support activities make it the preferable option. *Tiho* has a wide and diversified distribution network and portfolio-brands, namely from the Mediterranean region and quality requisites that match S4's competitive advantage. However, weak online communication and digital presence highlighted that the brand awareness might be less strong. On the other hand, *Heiderbeck*, with 80 years' expertise in the German market and several capabilities in KAM, Logistics, Distribution, Marketing and other value-added services, might help S4 efficiently penetrate foreign distribution channels and have a quick time-to-market. The extensive retail landscape with the best sellers (including its own specialized stores), the attention to specialties and gourmet cheeses from small dairy firms and the promotion of the local culture, particularly through digital marketing (i.e. Website Social Media and Newsletter) made it the best partner-candidate suggestion for Germany.

6.2.3. Alliance Coordination & Key Resources

Having passed the foundation phase where the partners were identified, being the best fit *Norseland Inc.* and *Heiderbeck*, the alliance must be established. At this stage, it is crucial to have a top-level commitment from both parties on defining the alliance scope and the most appropriate contract framework to develop and operate the BM as well as outlining means and metrics to monitor the effectiveness of the alliance and the value it delivers (Spieth et al. 2020).

It is crucial to mention that the suggestion of a single partner to each country is a function of the first entry approach to both markets not implying any exclusivity agreement, as S4 must have the flexibility with multiple allies to diffuse the risk of poor contract development, overcome the danger of being contractually held hostage and overall maintain its independence

(Carpenter and Sanders 2014, 272-274). In light of this, a 5 year-period non-exclusive contract is assumed and in the year 2024 another partnership in each country is expected to be settled alongside *Norseland Inc.* and *Heiderbeck* as S4's brand awareness and overall sales performance are more consolidated. All subject of further negotiation with the partners.

The proposed strategic partnership aims to be a win-win situation, hence during the negotiation phase the expectations of S4 and its partners should be transparent and aligned. The contract will endeavour a fair balance between the parties without providing an unfair advantage to any. In particular, it will be set that both companies will not only jointly decide on key business specifications, but also develop the alliance culture (trust and clear communication), collaborative behaviour (develop transparency, cost drivers and effectively coordinate and define resources' usage) as well as establish the alliance objectives and KPIs (Kaplan et al. 2010). While Storage, Distribution and Sales will be physically performed in loco by the partners, the Marketing Plan concerning the specific cheeses' choice within the cured-specialty line, pricing policy (negotiating the price to final retailers to avoid price distortions) and promotion initiatives, will result from a collaborative discussion aiming to quickly and successfully adapt to the market. The partners will play an advisory role providing meaningful feedback and guidance concerning the local market dynamics given its expertise and knowledge. They will also help to choose, reach and build a closer relationship with the B2B segment as well as contribute to evaluate the performance of the selling chains.

The following **alliance objectives** along with financial, strategic and operational KPIs (monthly and yearly assessed) will also be established to measure the effectiveness of the recommended partnership, namely: **Increase Sales** (measured as a % of growth in volumes sold⁵³); **Grow customer base** (Number of new B2B and B2C acquired); **Increase Market**

⁵³ Forecasted growths assumed based on the insights from the *Norseland Inc.* contact, projected given S4's size and potential intended business with the partner. The values were confirmed by S4 and aligned with its expectations which will be further detailed in the financial plan. In U.S. particular case, the predicted volumes sold growth rates are 10% on year 2 (2022), 10% on year 3 (2023), 15% on year 4 (2024), and also 15% on the last year of the projections (2025). In Germany, given the smaller size of the cheese market and higher saturation of European cheese

Share; while **maximizing S4's and Strategic Partners' portfolio value** (S4's cheeses accounting for 5% of the partners' sales⁵⁴). The relationship fitness will be assessed through the speed and clarity of decision making, the effectiveness of problem-solving, communication and trust (i.e., partner – satisfaction surveys) as well as the operational performance by monitoring the time of delivery (on-time orders), stock-to-sales ratio, inventory turnover rate, backorder rate, sell through payment compliance, sales promotions and customer's service (Bamford and Ernst 2002; SkuNexus 2018). Yearly status reports will also be created to summarize the overall business performance and assess the effectiveness of the initiatives identifying strengths and weaknesses to improve and convert them into market opportunities (Hughes and Weiss 2007).

Moreover, the contractual agreement should outline the termination clauses with specific timeframes. During a first probation period, S4 will assess the value and interest of the foreign markets and appraise the quality of the partnership through the set KPIs as well as the compliance with the agreed terms. Accordingly, if any of the parties is not satisfied with the alliance or does not comply with the agreement an escape clause gives the possibility to terminate the partnership within 3 months written notice. If the relationship positively impacts both sides, in the long term it may be worth for S4 to evaluate a potential equity investment to gain more control over foreign operations.

Furthermore, to develop such detailed internationalization plan **key resources** will be needed, namely *financial* (all the costs implied in the expansion), *physical* (all the activities along the value chain), *intellectual* (involving the brand image development and regulatory requirements) and lastly, the necessary *human* resources for operational support require an adjustment in the organizational structure. One new collaborator is recommended to be hired, to be closely involved in the partnerships and take joint-decisions on Marketing, Sales and the

manufacturers, slightly lower rates were considered, particularly 5% for both 2022 and 2023 and 8% in the last two years. The increasing value in 2024 and 2025 is expected to be a consequence of the new partnership in each country with other allies alongside *Norseland* and *Heiderbeck*.
⁵⁴ Information discussed with *Norseland Inc.* former Business Developer.

overall supply-chain (e.g., volumes, shipping, containers and packaging). This full-time mid-level business developer is assumed having to go in loco at least four times a year to each country to facilitate, enhance and assess the relationship and overall alliance performance.

6.2.4. Economic Logic: Cost Structure & Revenue Streams

The economic logic is the fulcrum for-profit creation and culminates the general assessment of the viability and feasibility of the expansion plan. Despite the initial reduced market shares that S4 will potentially face, the selected entry mode and the focused differentiation strategy might bring high profits if the offer is well addressed to the niche consumers. Hence, it is essential to consider the positive return sources and the costs that the expansion requires. Given the abovementioned **premium value proposition**, the proposed **focused differentiation strategy** and the **key partners** for value creation, the entire internationalization project's **cost structure** will be value-driven, meaning that all the implied costs are oriented to accomplish the value proposition and create value⁵⁵. Alongside the **revenue streams** will come from the specialty cheeses' sales to the B2B segment, pondering that consumers will be willing to pay a price premium for the high-quality and distinctive products' attributes. The prices will be set at the average of the specialty cheeses category as this strategy will allow S4 to leverage competition concerning more popular European imported cheeses, guaranteeing that the consumers segments (B2B and B2C) will not completely stick to the most recognized products (Carpenter and Sanders 2014, 188-189).

Having defined the International Entry Strategy and BM framework the main marketing and financial decisions will be oriented accordingly, aiming to deliver the most viable and feasible internationalization plan for S4's entrance in both suggested foreign target markets.

⁵⁵ Namely all the Cost of Goods Sold, Transportation, Marketing and Personnel expenses (in particular the extra employee), Corporation Income Tax (21%) as well as the Shared Earnings to pay to the strategic partners *Norseland Inc.* and *Heiderbeck*, particularly 16% of the total revenues from the retailers (Damodaran 2020).

9. Conclusion & Final Recommendations

Given the mature stage the company is in the domestic market and in order to avoid a decline phase, S4 needs to effectively consolidate its international presence. In fact, despite being present in more than 15 countries it continues not being able to replicate its strong distinctive position in the Portuguese market and leveraging its key strengths abroad. In a global perspective, the United States and Germany represent the most attractive markets where S4 might successfully expand the business given the economic & commercial, political stability as well as the potential size of the cheese industry. A strategic alliance is the ideal entry mode to accomplish S4's goals, favouring a higher control and commitment over the international operations and activities, namely Distribution, Sales and Marketing, as well as a deeper understanding of the future dynamic environments and trends when compared to the current entry strategy it follows. In the execution of its global strategy, S4 will enter both markets with the most promising product line, namely the cured specialty cheeses, following a focused differentiation strategy which enables to emphasize the high-quality, expertise and Portuguese tradition of the brand, taking advantage of niche segments willing to pay more for a distinctive and exclusive eating experience. Together with the experienced strategic partners, S4 will have the necessary support to successfully enter in such competitive foreign markets, mitigate the potential degree of risk of the international expansion, drive sales, strengthen its premium position and transmit its value proposition as well as effectively build a close relationship with retailers and final consumers.

With detailed marketing initiatives focused mainly on the digital online channel and based on the financial projections, it was assessed that both internationalization plans are viable and feasible and should be followed, with United States being the country that can potentially add more value to S4 as concluded through the scenario analysis.

In order to mitigate the risk, to cope with workload as well as use resources more efficiently, some recommendations are provided. Having assessed the situation of the company and identified its liabilities' level, S4 should avoid being leveraged by debt in the overall internationalization expansion given the high level of indebtedness they currently have. In addition, it is crucial to maintain the current terms of payment to keep high profitability while internationalizing. As the company will be involved in a multiple growing expansion process throughout the years, it might be necessary after the 5-year plan to either invest in CAPEX or outsource part of the production in case S4 does not have the capacity to follow the expected growing demand for its products. Moreover, through the sensitivity analysis, the variables volume and average price were identified as being the most relevant indicators to impact the final NPV of each project, hence it is fundamental to monitor and control the evolution of the units sold as well as the marketing initiatives that highly influence the results. Given the high investment necessary and assumed by the Team in digital marketing, particularly in social media, it is recommended to actively measure the effectiveness of the initiatives and adapt accordingly based on emerging trends and consumers' receptivity. Furthermore, S4 might contact several organizations in the United States and Germany such as AICEP, Cheese Importer Association of America as well as Germany Trade & Investment that can provide useful information about trustworthy strategic partners and insights about the way of doing business in both countries. It is worthy for the company to guarantee that its values, mission, culture and products are aligned with the partners and monitor the overall effectiveness of the proposed international strategic allies and operations.

As long as the project provides positive results S4 should consider replicating the strategic alliance entry mode in other countries, evaluating the product-market fit and consumers' trends to develop the most appropriate Business Model. To assess potential future markets opportunities, S4 is recommended to follow an analytical framework, all while interacting with

national and international organizations. S4's brand identity should be leveraged regardless of the country, partners and entry strategy, being the fulcrum point around which the company's strategy should evolve. In the long term, after having established a steady growth rate and a well-consolidated position, the company can eventually increase its level of commitment with an equity-based entry strategy.

It is assumed that the recommended international expansion is aligned with the S4's goals and the organizational challenge was properly tackled. By using comprehensive frameworks and a critical strategic mindset the Team truly believes that the final result will positively impact the company's next steps and S4 will be able to effectively consolidate its global strategy.

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11. APPENDICES

Appendix 1: S4 Product Portfolio

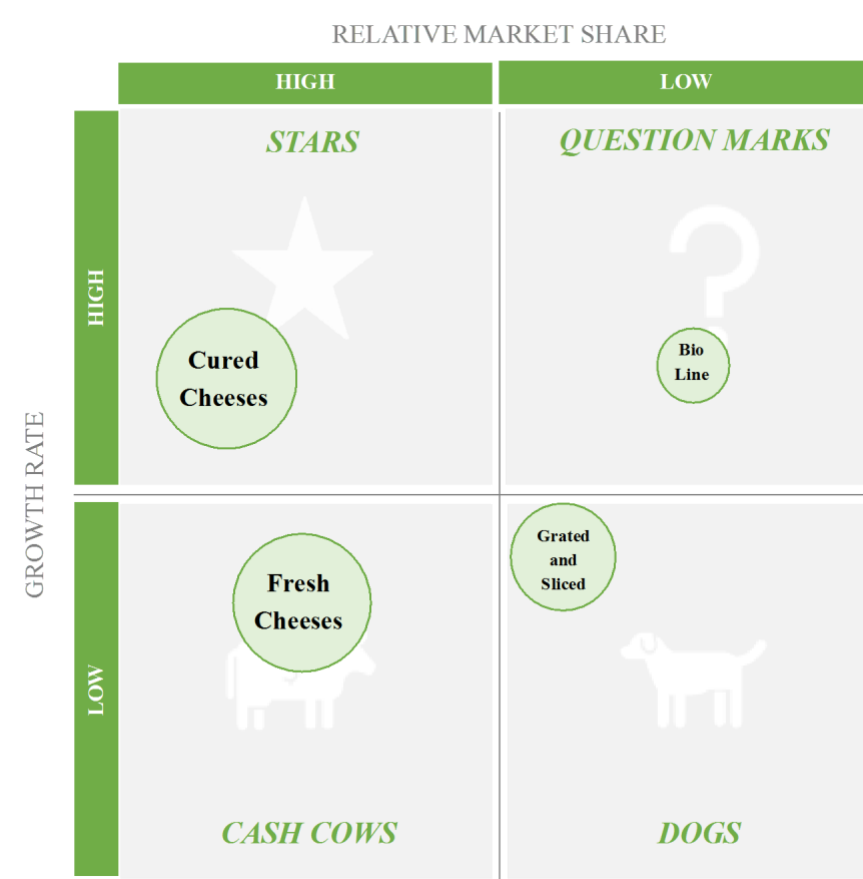
FRESH CHEESE			
Produced from selected cow, goat and sheep milk, with a wide variety of formats. All fresh cheeses are pasteurized, 100% natural and characterized with an unmistakable flavour. S4 is the market leader in this segment, multiple applications, having developed trendy fresh cheeses with nutritional benefits and lactose free, being many of these products consumed in very different occasions.			
<i>Regular fresh cheese</i>	<i>Fresh spread cheese</i>	<i>Quark cheese</i>	<i>Skyr cheese</i>
There are four different types of regular fresh cheese. These are the half fat, the lean, the goat, and the sheep fresh cheese , all of them suitable for all ages, all occasions, and a wide variety of culinary uses . Besides, these are a very healthy source of calcium.	Composed of the original, light, and goat products . These are the ideal option for a healthy and tasty snack or a quick recipe for the whole family.	With a creamy texture , it is ideal for a snack at any time of the day or for culinary purposes , from sweet recipes, through savory, to pasta. It has a high protein content , perfect for those who practice sports and a reduced content of fat (3%) and carbohydrates. Besides, it has no addition of sugar nor preservatives.	It is ideal for those who exercise, thanks to its high levels of protein . It is also a suitable choice for strict diets, since it does not have any fat.

SLICED AND GRATED CHEESE			
Broad diversity of formats, and flavours, it is quite successful in international markets, part because of the ease of packaging. In addition to this, sliced and grated cheeses are also the segment leader in Portugal. These are very nutritious cheeses, very adequate to entire families.			
<i>Flemish</i>	<i>Mozzarella</i>	<i>Flemish grated</i>	<i>Mozzarella cheese grated</i>
Based on selected cow's milk , it is quite rich in protein, calcium, and several vitamins . Its three different formats are all suited to short meals, such as breakfast, little snack or a picnic.	Unique Format		

COTTAGE CHEESE	
Product line characterized by their soft flavour, and the ability to guarantee a nutritional balance. It is produced through the serum of fresh cow's milk and is mainly consumed as a starter, appetizer or dessert.	
<i>Cow cottage</i>	<i>Azeitão cottage</i>
One format cheese, 100% natural that provides its nutritional balance.	Also, a one format cheese that has received one award .

CURED CHEESE		
Produced through the best national milk of cow, goat, sheep and blended. Raw and pasteurized milks based on traditional recipes and characterized by the high intensity of its smell and texture. Six months' aged cheeses with a high diversity of formats between 50g and 9kg. Usually have additional ingredients such as garlic, paprika, and herbs. These product lines have already received awards for its quality.		
<i>DOP (Protected Origin Denomination) & IGP (Protected geographic Designation)</i>	<i>Sheep</i>	<i>Goat</i>
One of the most recognized cheeses of S4 represented by three different types: Nisa, Azeitão e Mestiço Tolosa. Nisa cheese DOP is produced through a traditional process on a sheep's raw milk basis. All of its different formats are usually consumed as a starter or dessert on special occasions. It has won several different awards. Moreover, Azeitão one format cheese DOP is a reference within the sheep's cheese market. It is commonly served together with wine, and is more frequently present in short meals, such as starters, desserts, and snacks. It has also been awarded once. As for the Mestiço Tolosa IGP, it is a combination of sheep and goat's raw milk. A very intense acid and spicy flavour, normally served with red wine and dry fruits. Its single format has received one award.	The sheep segment of regional cured cheeses is divided in two subsegments: Cerrado do Vale and São Julião cured cheeses. The first subsegment, Cerrado do Vale, is composed by the buttery cheese, one of the Portuguese favourites for its buttery texture, soft smell and strong flavour, produced through sheep's milk, by the cured cheese, an excellent digestive whose target is people who enjoy intense flavours, by the reserve spread, a spicy, strong flavour and smell cheese, and by the creamy cheeses with its one format product with genuine and intense taste. São Julião cured cheeses are smooth and refined tasteful and smelly products, based on Alentejo traditions. It is a good complement to wine. Its single format has also been awarded once.	In the goat segment of cured cheeses, are observed three different subsegments: Quinta do Olival, Cancela Aberta, and Atabafado. Quinta do Olival includes its soft cured texture, medium intensity flavour cheese. Normally served with regional bread as a starter or dessert. Besides, it is composed of two formats: high-quality spread cured cheese, a spicy product with a strong flavour and smell, ideally as digestive. Cancela aberta is a slightly acid tasty cheese, with a typical smell, served along a white wine during desserts. Its one format has won one award. Finally, Atabafado has an intense flavour, marginally saltier than other cheeses, thus being excellent to use in salads and snacks.

Appendix 2: S4 Product Portfolio BCG Matrix⁵⁸



External attributes of the brand

STARS	Cured Cheeses (Specialties and PDOs) - Leverage investments and strategy to convert into a cash cow consolidating its positioning in the domestic and international market; - Strategic choices: market development.
CASH COWS	Fresh and cottage Cheeses - S4's leading position in the Portuguese fresh cheese segment; - Core line giving the highest gross margin, allowing to constant revenues streams; - Strategic choices: product development, diversification.
DOGS	Grated and Sliced Cheeses - Highly saturated segment, with private labels strong position; - Strategic choices: Possible Retrenchment.
QUESTION MARKS	Bio line - quark and fresh cheese - Requires a closer consideration since they are the most recent brand in a growing market. It has potential to gain market share and turn into a star; - Strategic choices: to be tested in the domestic market in terms of consumers' receptivity and market share gains, and invest in market penetration and product development.

⁵⁸ Created based on gross margins and market trends, given the unavailability of specific information for each product line.

Appendix 3: External attributes of the brand



Cured Cheese



Fresh Cheese



Grated Cheese



DOP's

Appendix 4.1: S4 Financial Statements – Income Statement

Income Statement					
€	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Revenues	26519464	29385078	43519792	48166460	51552811
Cost of revenues	17348711	18170943	29591002	35217090	38614454
Production variation	1209040	907136	855374	39139	294405
Profit margin	10379793	12121271	13073416	12988509	13232762
Operating subsidies	24316	11184	1249	1249	0
Other income	22675	17725	114149	494843	215188
SGA	6672611	8421411	8010662	7498442	7194673
Personnel costs	1876130	2038902	2809362	3406720	3528975
Other expenses	324433	386351	398637	568928	558846
Value adjustments	0	0	2878	3560	5940
Impairments - inventory	346879	2931		0	0
Impairments - receivable	0	64680	1583	5500	39501
EBITDA	1206731	1241767	1974614	2012451	2131895
Amortization and Depreciation	830764	1356602	1387949	1101075	1102397
Operational results	375967	-114835	586665	911376	1029498
Finance income	0	34	0	0	0
Finance expense	279947	270084	280118	343036	397278
Profit before tax	96020	-384885	306547	568340	632220
Tax expense	55229	51829	73700	19485	24946
Net profit	40791	-436714	232847	548855	607274
Minority interests	7838	13011	0	0	0
Profit of the year	32953	-423703	232847	548855	607274

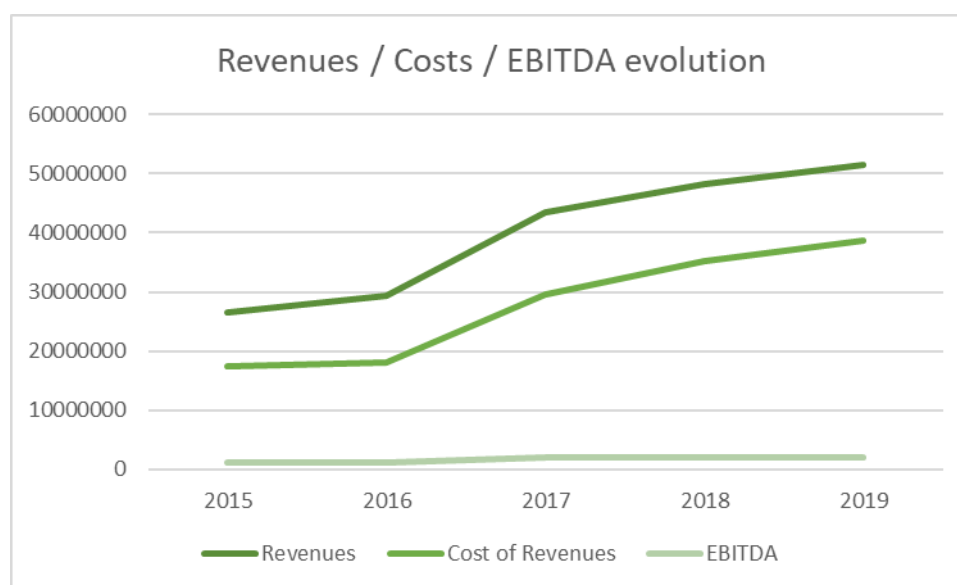
(Company information 2020)

Appendix 4.2: S4 Financial Statements – Balance Sheet

Balance Sheet					
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Assets					
Noncurrent assets	13711019	16498464	18865502	17456717	20859554
Fixed tangible assets	7242311	10803073	12983513	11748542	15191768
Goodwill	5190173	4671157	4644499	4439854	4235208
Intangible assets	995000	978000	1160875	1153000	1253625
Financial holdings	0	37930	37930	37930	50930
Other financial assets	4110	8304	15934	25805	31478
Deferred tax assets	0	0	22751	51586	96545
Accounts receivable	279425	0	0	0	0
Current assets	8705221	11252347	14271807	14211547	16800405
Inventories	2904893	4401120	4110607	3120397	4716274
Accounts receivable	4813585	5073685	7250568	8026882	8882310
Prepaid expenses	189928	252539	2098983	2124813	2029225
State and other public entities	512959	484810	364099	309047	525831
Assets held for negotiation	59725	49447	53688	50399	56340
Defferals	28619	35029	23037	51735	72216
Assets held for sale	0	10610	26610	14810	10610
Cash and cash equivalents	195512	945107	344215	513464	507599
Total assets	44832480	11252347	47409116	45879811	37659959
Liabilities					
Non current liabilities	5318945	8360569	7809395	8818684	12658653
Loans and borrowings	5316569	8162278	7411208	7953619	11517977
Deferred tax liability	0	198291	398187	421633	417178
Other accounts payable	2376	0	0	443432	723498
Current liabilities	15648144	16573803	16227253	13066621	14029805
Accounts payable	13843305	12015458	11307639	7218715	8061771
State and other public entities	72265	80756	146143	195672	173020
Loans and borrowings	1728468	4475091	4772222	5652234	5795014
Defferals	4106	2498	1249	0	0
Total liabilities	20967089	24934372	24036648	21885305	26688458
Minority interests	1136521	1790384	0	0	0
Shareholder's equity	1449151	2816439	11366883	9782959	10971501
Total liabilities and shareholder's equity	22416240	27750811	35403531	31668264	37659959

(Company information 2020)

Appendix 5: S4 Profitability Analysis – revenues and costs evolution



(Company information 2020)

Appendix 6: S4 Historical of M&A activities and investment in production capacity

	YEAR	DESCRIPTION
Lidador company	2000	S4 acquire Lidador, whose portfolio includes PDOs' cheeses.
Headquarters	2001	The current Headquarters of the company was built.
Montemuro factory	2001	In the same year that S4 built its HQs, it also invested in the main factory. Both produce 150.000 fresh cheese and 20.000 cured cheese in a daily basis.
Lacticínios Campainha	2007	One of S4 main competitors, with a strong presence in the fresh cheese segment, was acquired.
Monforqueijo	2013	A specialist manufacturer of PDO/IGP from Alentejo cheese joins the group.
Azeitão PDO factory	2015	One of the factories of one of main specialty cheese producers in the Portuguese market is acquired.
Queijo Saloio	2016	A large competitor in the market, whose portfolio range covers all cheese segments, was acquired.
Montemuro new factory	2017	New production site starts to operate.
Alentejo new factory	2018	New factory was built.

(Company information 2020)

Appendix 7: S4 Liquidity Analysis

Liquidity analysis					
(€)	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Current assets	8 705 221	11 252 347	14 271 807	14 211 547	16 800 405
Current liabilities	15 648 144	16 573 803	16 227 253	13 066 621	14 029 805
Inventories	2 904 893	4 401 120	4,110,607	3,120,397	4 716 274
Cash and Equivalents	195 512	945 107	344 215	513 464	507 599
Current ratio	0,56	0,68	0,88	1,09	1,2
Quick ratio	0,37	0,41	0,63	0,85	0,86
Cash ratio	0,01	0,06	0,02	0,04	0,04
Net Working Capital	-6 942 923	-5 321 456	-1 955 446	1 144 926	2 770 600

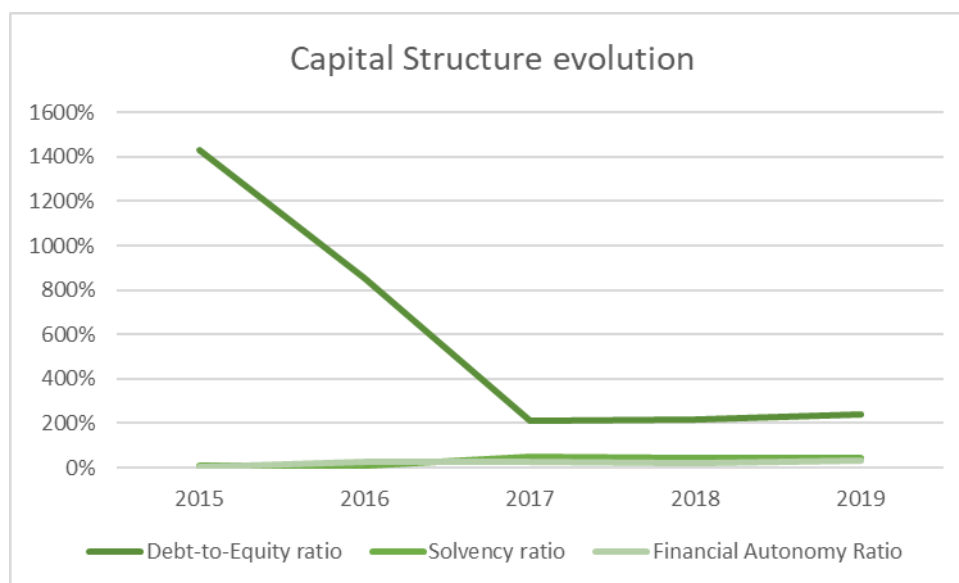
(Company information 2020)

Appendix 8: S4 Cash-Flow Management Analysis

Cash-Flow Management analysis					
(€)	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Revenues	26 519 464	29 385 078	43 519 792	48 166 460	51 552 811
Cost of revenues	17 348 711	18 170 943	29 591 002	35 217 090	38 614 454
Inventories	2 904 893	4 401 120	4 110 607	3 120 397	4 716 274
Accounts Receivable	1 012 731	454 629	915 148	1 120 217	1 595 413
Accounts Payable	9 348 040	8 615 145	4 552 923	2 001 418	1 997 711
# days of the year	365	365	365	365	365
Average holding period	61	88	51	32	45
Average collection period	14	6	8	8	11
Average payable period	197	173	56	21	19
Cash conversion cycle	-122	-79	2	20	37

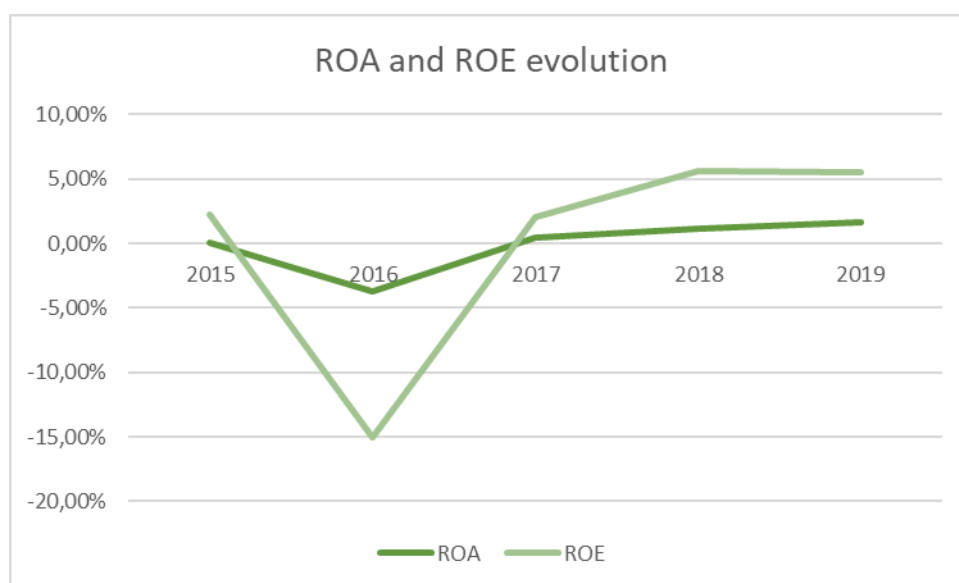
(Company information 2020)

Appendix 9: S4 Capital Structure



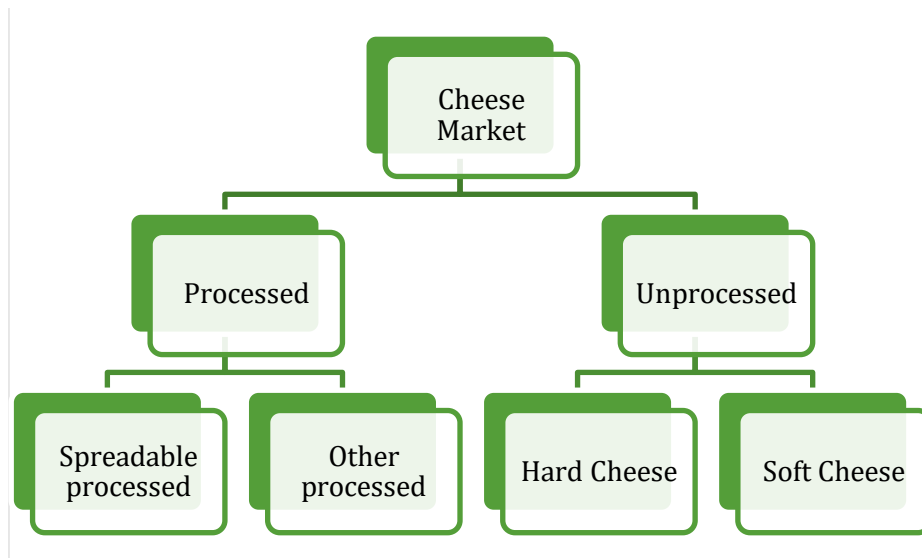
(Company information 2020)

Appendix 10: S4 ROA and ROE evolution



(Company information 2020)

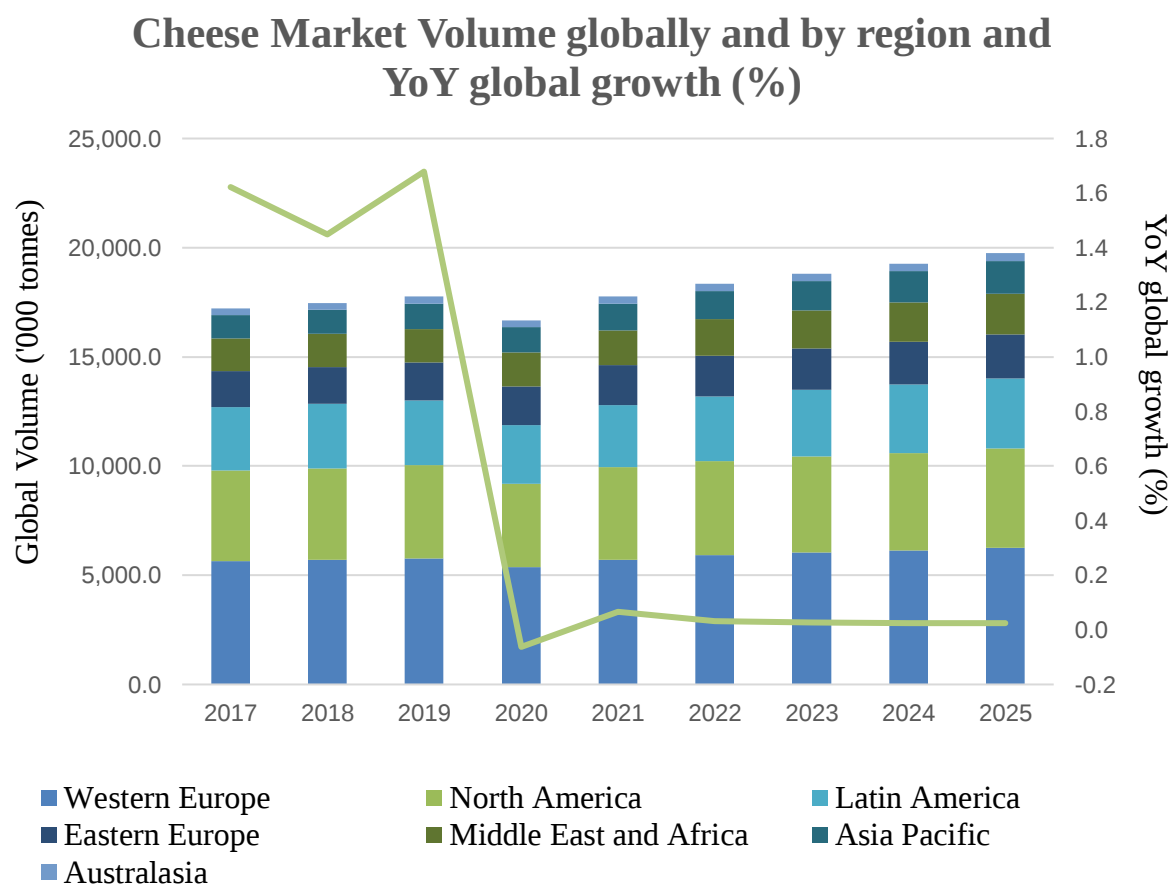
Appendix 11: Cheese Market Structure



S4's Product lines

Product Line	General Market Definition
Fresh Cheese	Unprocessed Soft Cheese and Spreadable processed <i>(namely the cream cheese)</i>
Cured Cheese	Processed and Unprocessed Cheeses <i>(depending on the cheese reference)</i>
Goat	
Sheep	
Cow	
Mixed	
PDO's	
Sliced and grated	Unprocessed Hard Cheese
Cottage cheese	Unprocessed Soft Cheese

Appendix 12: Global Cheese Market Volume in thousand tonnes from 2017 to 2025 (and YoY growth) ⁵⁹



(Euromonitor International 2020)

⁵⁹**Asia Pacific:** Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Japan, Kazakhstan, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Pakistan Philippines, Singapore, South Korea, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, Thailand, Uzbekistan, Vietnam.

Australasia: Australia and New Zealand.

Eastern Europe: Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Georgia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, North Macedonia, Poland, Romania, Russia, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Ukraine.

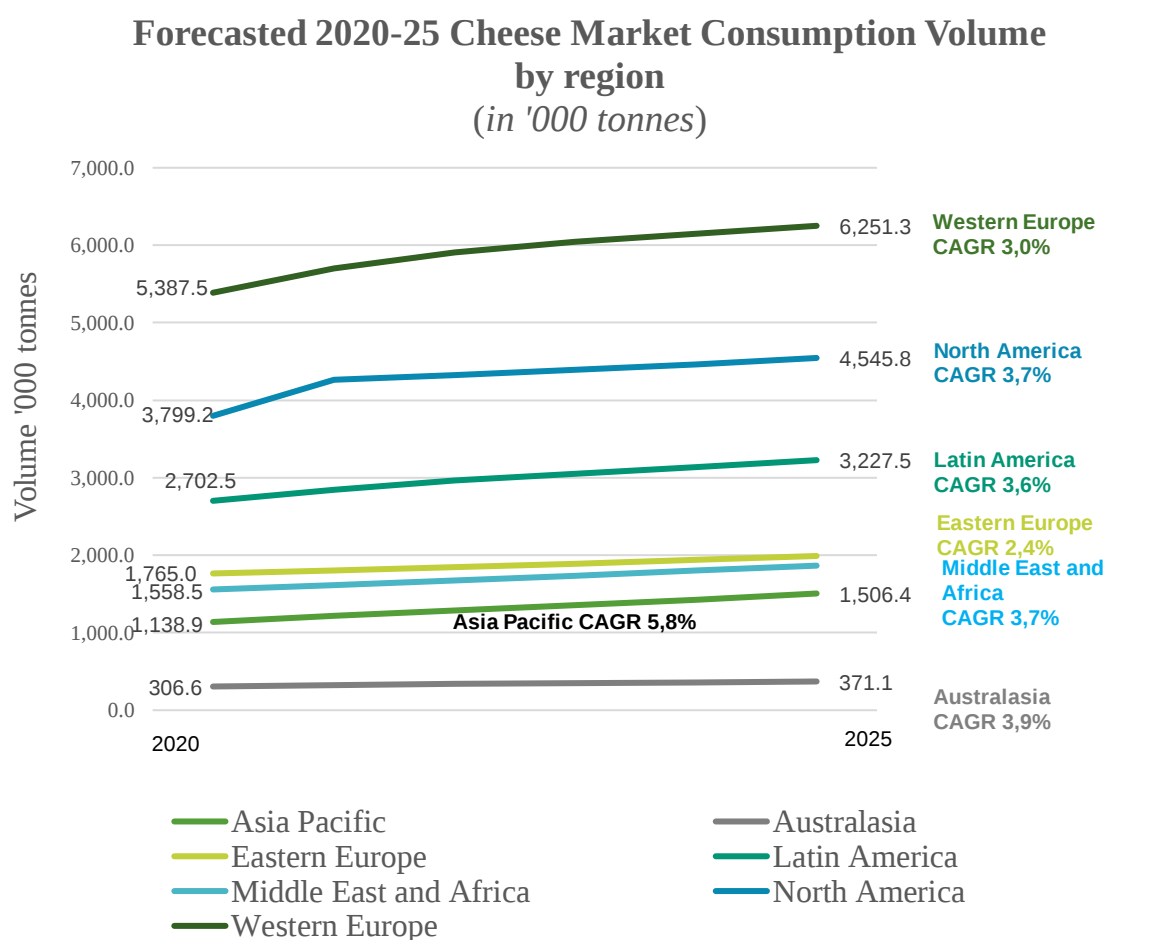
Latin America: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, Venezuela.

Middle East and Africa: Algeria, Angola, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Egypt, Ethiopia, Ghana, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kenya, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco, Nigeria, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Tanzania, Tunisia, Uganda and United Arab Emirates.

North America: Canada and The United States.

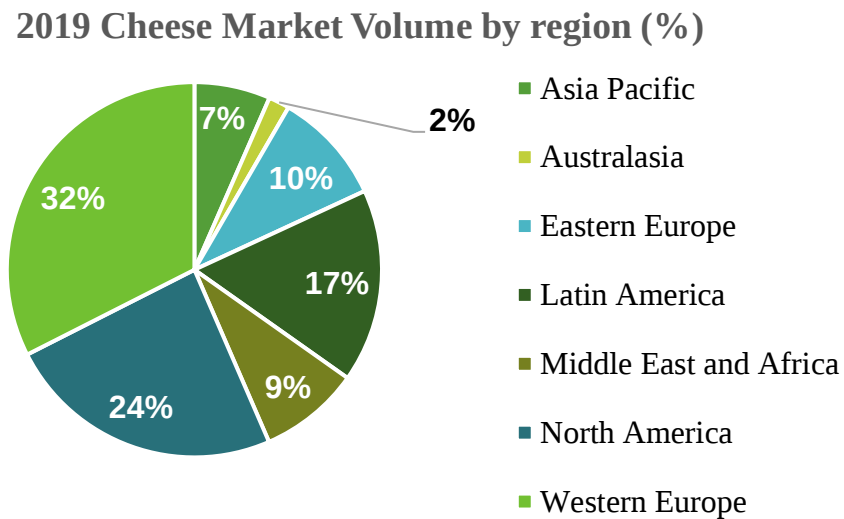
Western Europe: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, and United Kingdom.

Appendix 13: Forecasted 2020- 25 Cheese Market Consumption Volume by region (in thousand tonnes)



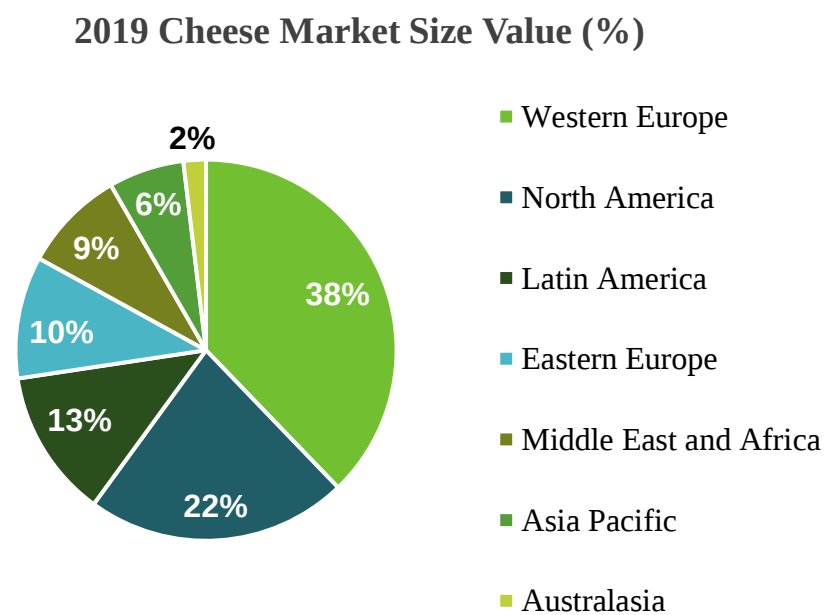
(Euromonitor International 2020)

Appendix 14: 2019 Cheese Market Volume by region (%)



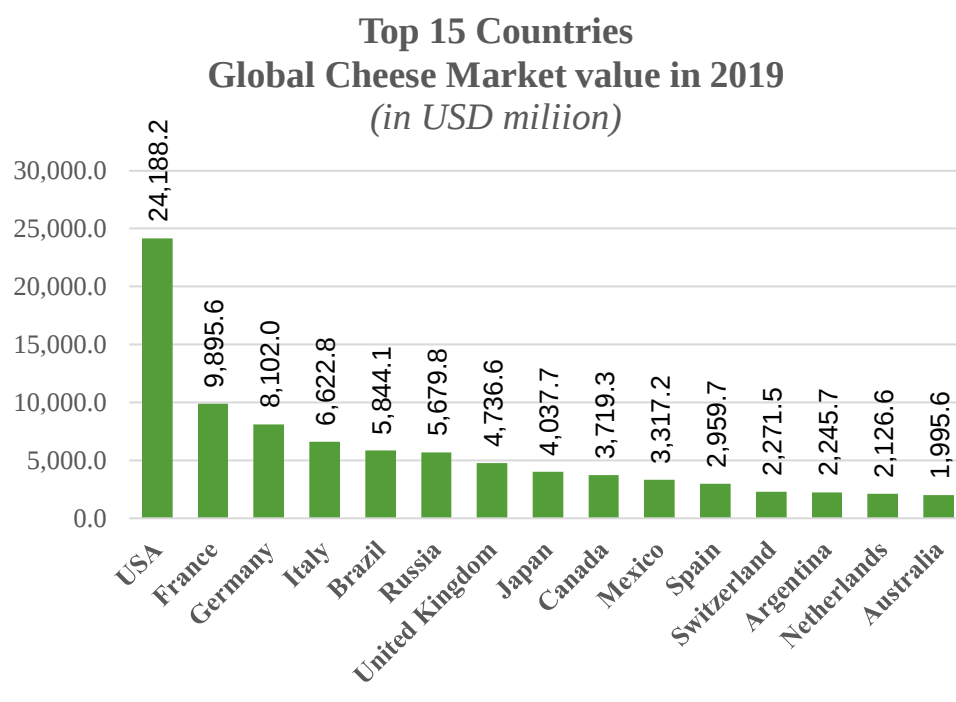
(Euromonitor International 2020)

Appendix 15: 2019 Cheese Market Value by region (%)



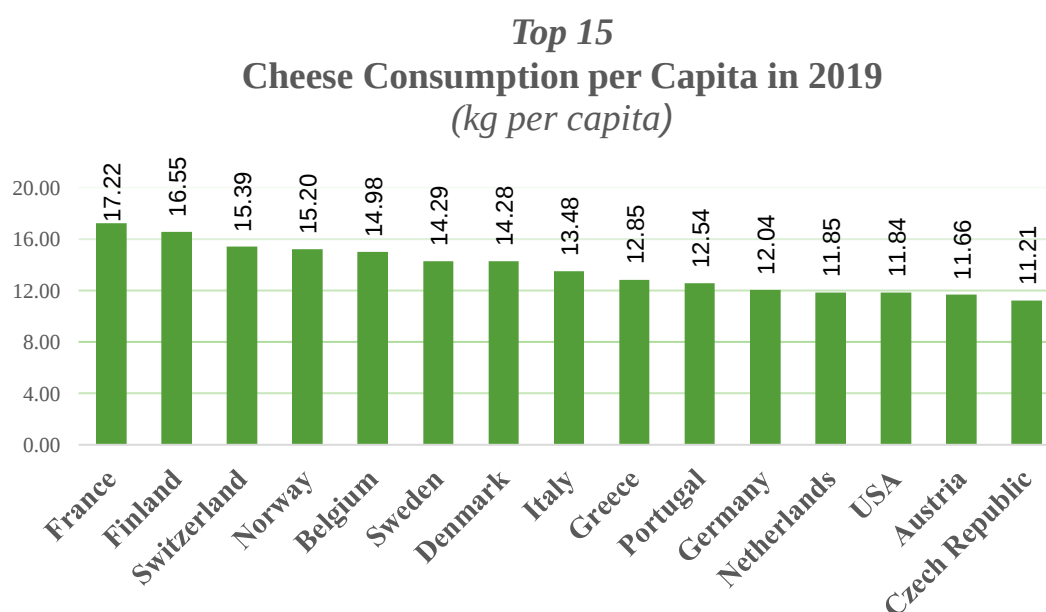
(Euromonitor International 2020)

Appendix 16: Top 15 countries Cheese Market Value in 2019 (in USD Million)



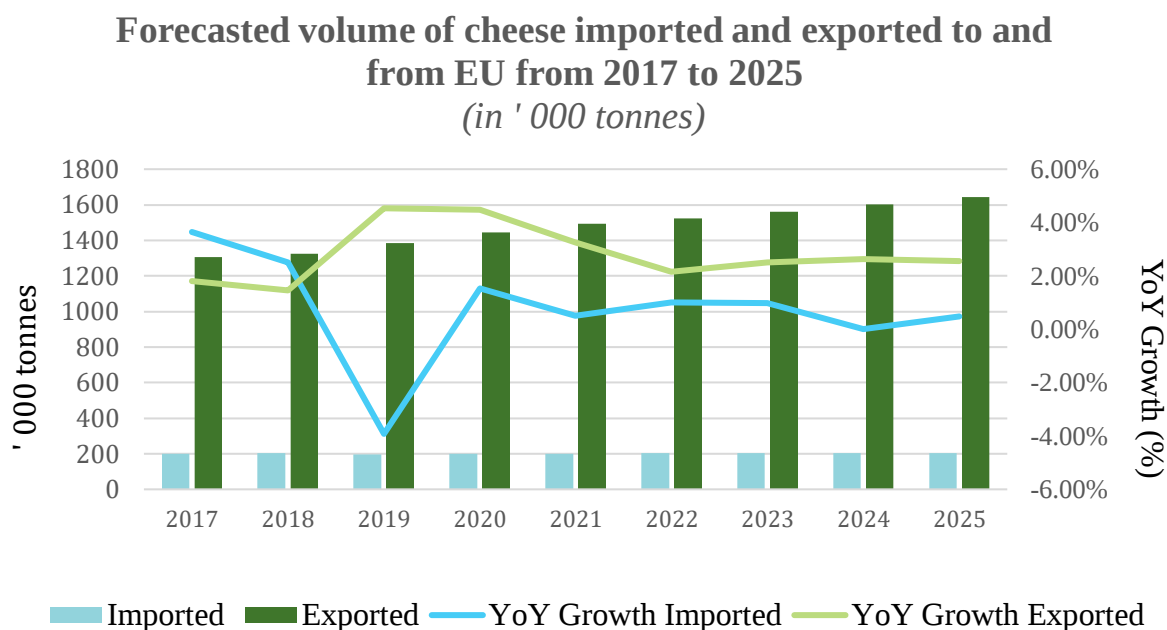
(Euromonitor International 2020)

Appendix 17: Top 15 countries Cheese Consumption per capita in 2019 (in kg per capita)



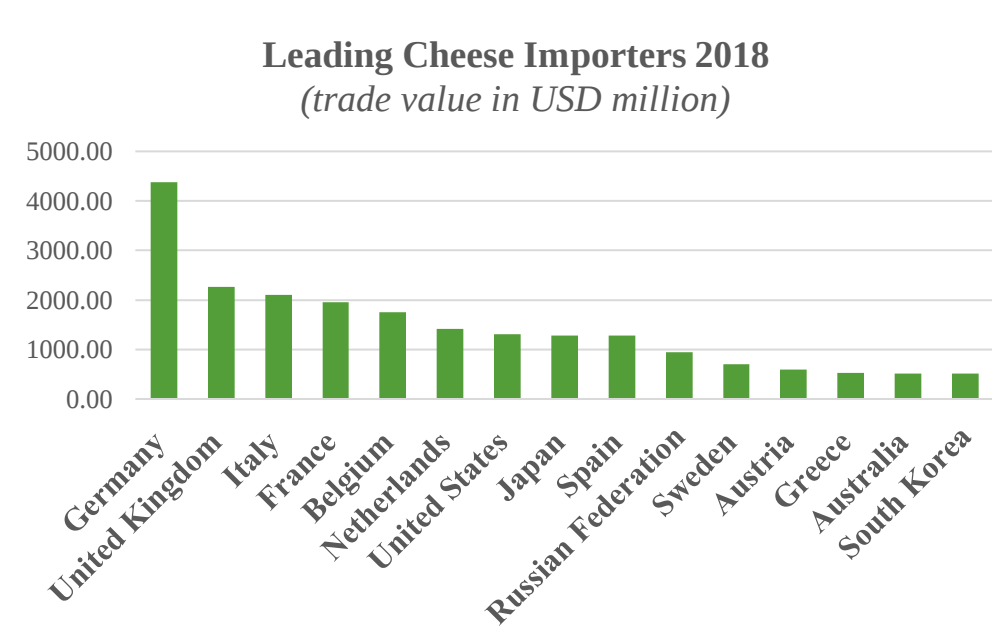
(Euromonitor International 2020)

Appendix 18: Forecasted volume of cheese imported and exported to and from EU from 2015 to 2025 (in thousand tonnes)



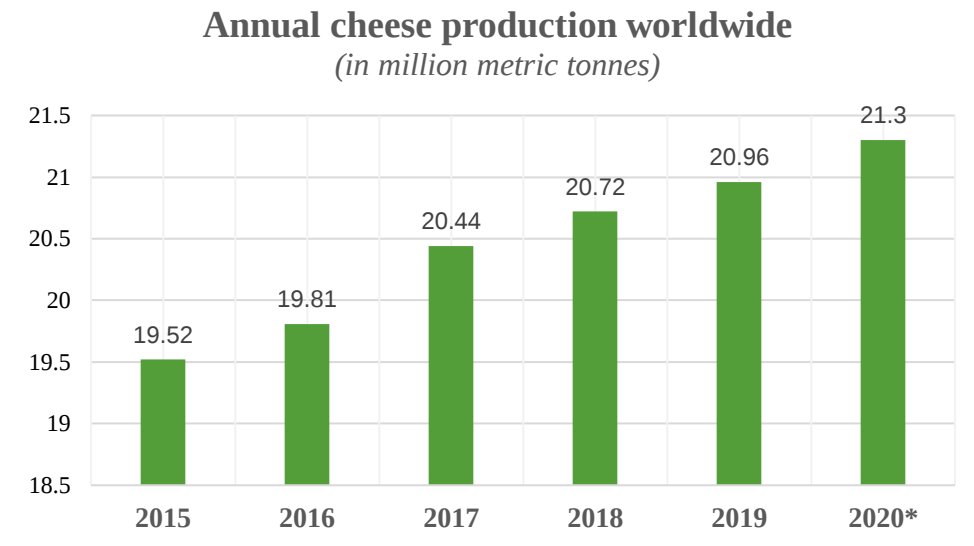
(Statista 2020)

Appendix 19: Top 15 Cheese Importers worldwide (trade value in USD million)



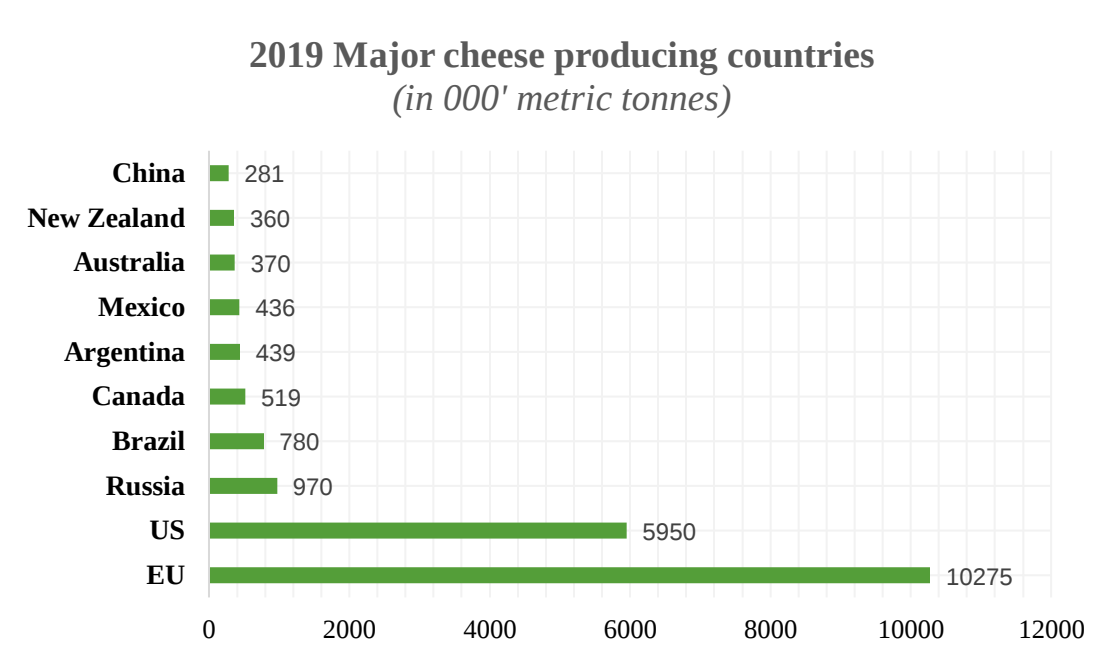
(OEC 2018)

Appendix 20: Global cheese production



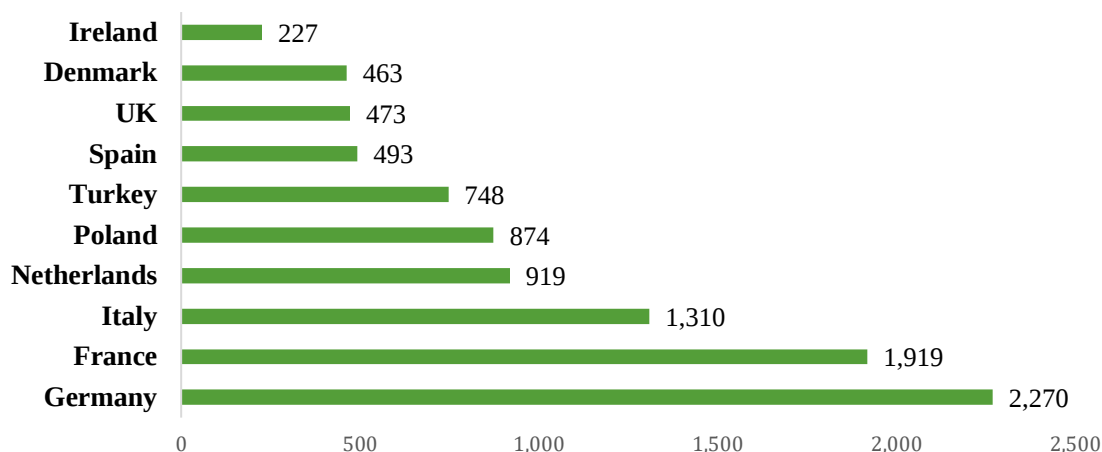
(Statista 2020)

Major Cheese producing countries



(Statista 2020)

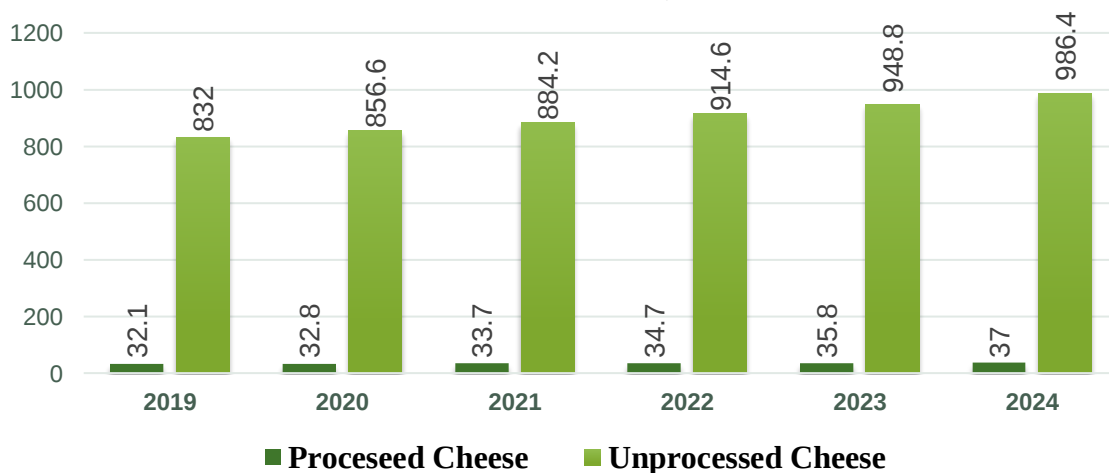
2019 Production volume of cheese in EU by leading countries
(in 1,000 metric tonnes)



(Statista 2020)

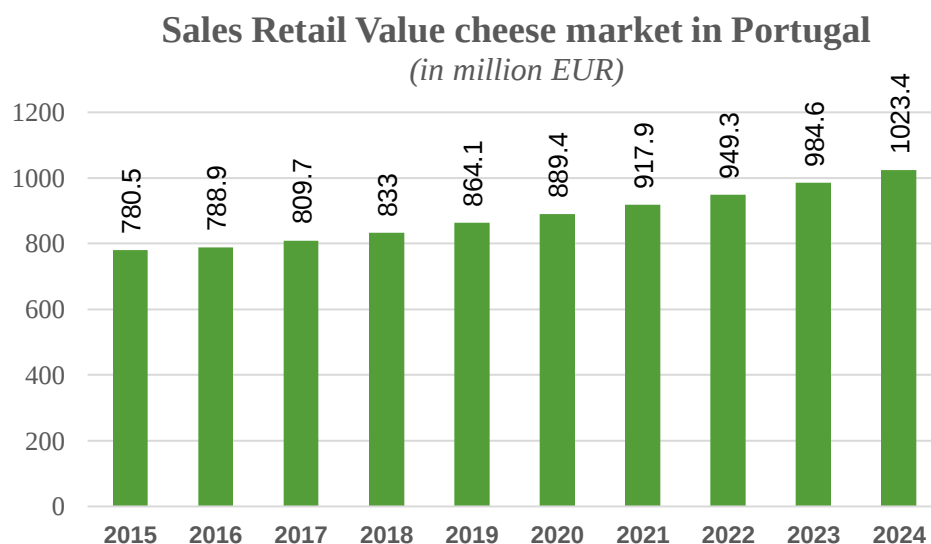
Appendix 21: Sales of cheese in Portugal, by category (in million EUR)

Sales of cheese in Portugal, by category
(in million euros)

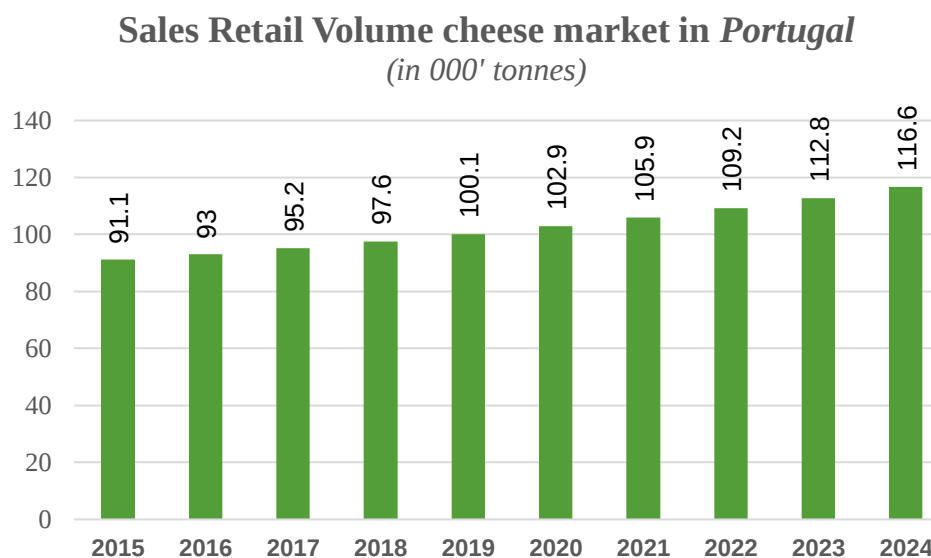


(Euromonitor international 2020)

Appendix 22: Retail value and Sales volume cheese market in Portugal (in million EUR and thousand tonnes)

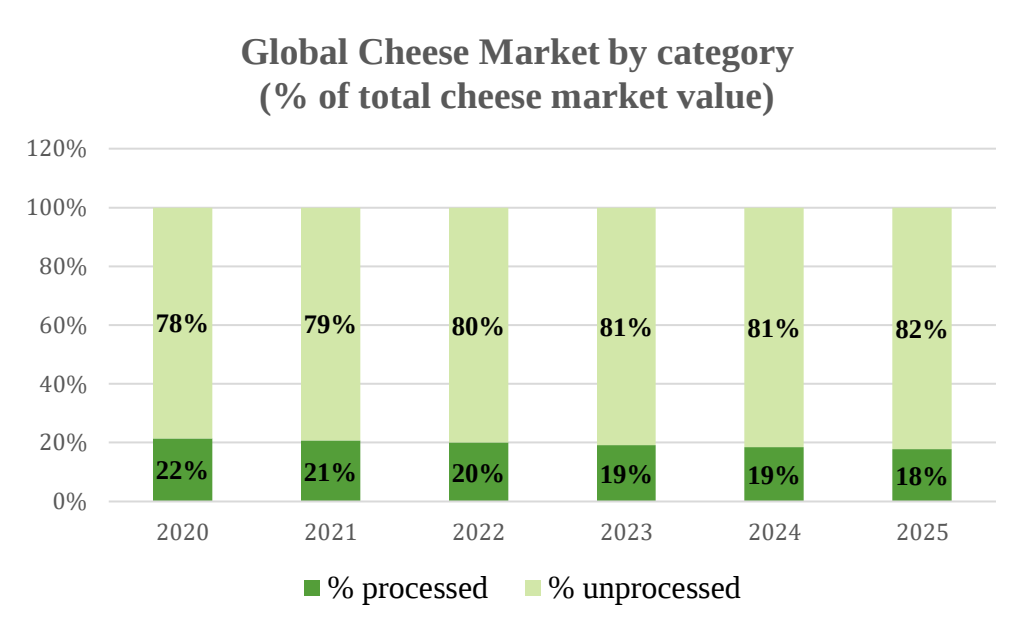


(Euromonitor International 2020)



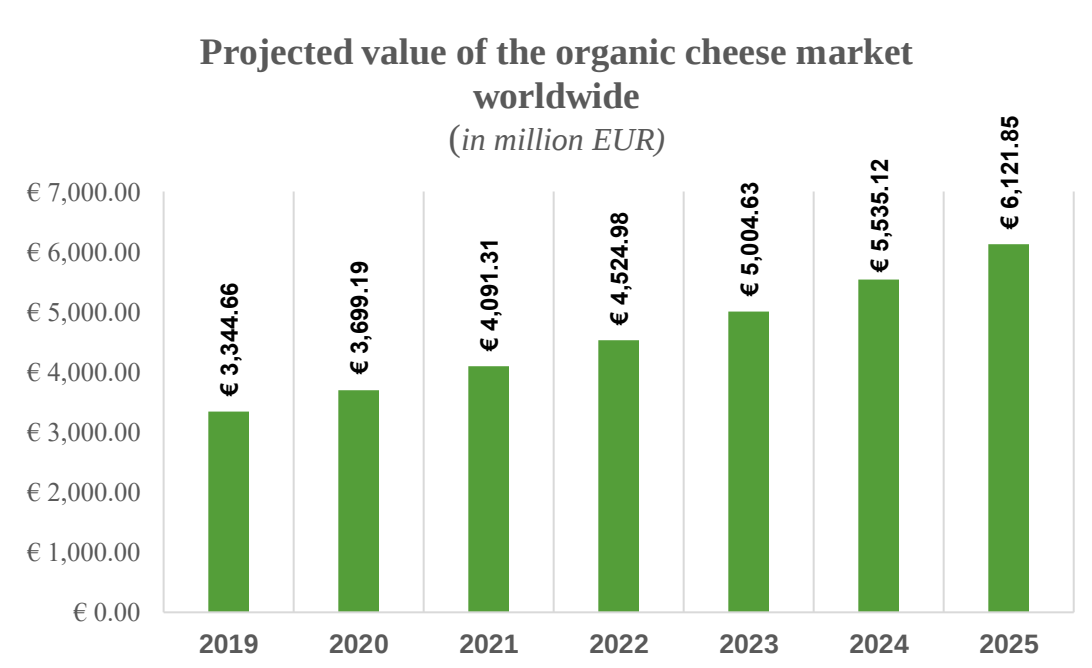
(Euromonitor International 2020)

Appendix 23: Processed and Unprocessed cheese categories from 2020 to 2025 (% of total cheese market value)



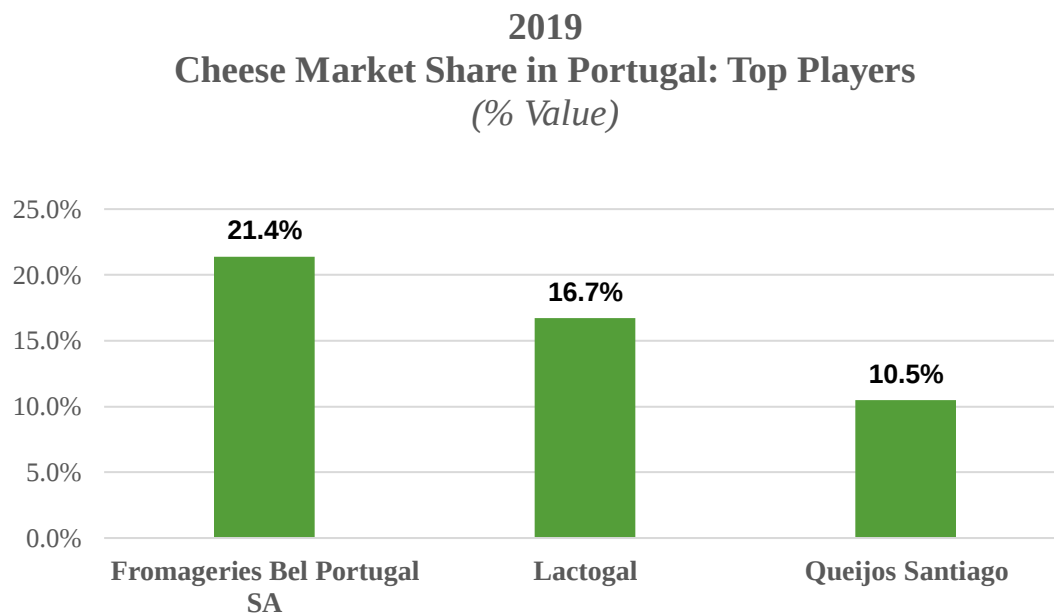
(Euromonitor International 2020)

Appendix 24: Projected value of the Organic cheese market worldwide (in million EUR)



(Euromonitor international 2020)

Appendix 25: Cheese Market share in Portugal: Top Players (% value)



(Company information 2020)

Appendix 26: Competitive landscape analysis

	Name	Size	Market expertise & Geographic Presence	Business overview
PORTUGAL	Fromageries Bel Portugal	> Turnover: 175 million USD > 597 employees	> Lacto Ibérica was acquired in 2004 by Bel Group. It involved acquisition of a company established in 1996 by another with more than 100 years of experience > Wide international presence: 130 countries across the 5 continents > 85 companies in the corporate group (Bel Groupe) > Production process developed in 30 different factories, with 3 different R&D centres and 33 subsidiaries	> It is a French conglomerate that has acquired several different dairy products companies > Operating in the Dairy Industry with: Milk, Butter and Cheese > Offers also Fruit in small pouches: GoGo squeeZ as a healthy convenient snack (100% fruit) > In the Cheese Industry offers: Fresh, Creamy, Sliced, Grated, Semi-hard cured, Snack-size options (BabyBel and Laughing Cow), Bio cheese (100% organic Bio Babybel) and cheese buidles (Babybel Cheese & Crackers and Pick and Croq Laughing Cow) > Cheese portfolio extends across 5 brands, where 2 of them (Limiano and Terra Nostra) are the leading manufacturer's brands in the portuguese cheese market > Brands communicated as a "source of pleasure", being the base of the brand identity > High focus on consumers health and nutritional demands (e.g.: Terra Nostra brand partnership with the Portuguese) > Quality control at every stage: 24 GFSI⁵⁵ Certified Sites > Bel's packaging provides the nutritional information required by European regulations, even in countries where it is not mandatory
	Lactogal	> Turnover: 702 million USD > 1485 employees	> 24 years expertise in the market > 130 countries across the 5 continents > 11 facilities including 7 industrial units in the Iberian Peninsula)	> Product diversity across its 13 brands as its leading factor, 5 of them in the cheese industry > In the Dairy industry is present with: Milk, Yogurths, Cream, Butter and Cheese > Beverages industry: water, tea infusions, juices > In the Cheese Industry offers: Fresh, Sliced, Semi-hard cured cheese, specialties (some for HORECA channel) > Brands with history, enhanced in their communication to consumers and contributing to strengthening their brand identity > Quality Management System with quality certifications (ISO 9001 and IFS -International Food Standard)

GLOBALLY	Name	Size	Market expertise & Geographic Presence	Business overview
	Kraft Heinz	> Turnover: 25 billion USD > 37000 employees	> With around 150 years of experience in the food and beverages market Broad worldwide present across 29 countries	> 5th bigger worldwide company of Foods and Beverages with 26 brands > In the Dairy industry offers: Butter, Cream, Cheese (Proceessed, Natural, Sliced and Garted,snack.size options, Bundles with crackers) > Worwide leading cheese - the processed Kraft cheese >In 2020 announced na agreement to sell its Natural Cheese Business to Lactalis Groupe
	Lactalis Groupe	> 2019 turnover: 3, 19 billion USD > Strong workdforce with employees around the world spread across the 169 subsidiaries and 522 companies in the corporate group	> 80 years of experience in the dairy market >Across the 5 continents : The Président brand is sold in 160 countries and Galbani is the leader in Italian cheeses, sold in 140 countries > 250 production sites, in 50 countries, from where it produces for around 145 countries due to a wide distribution network	> French multinational, a leader in dairy products worldwide > Development strategy based on acquisitions of dairy companies with shared values , and to help them grow, through industrial investment, marketing and human resources > Internationalization strategy based on expanding the global presence of three key brands , Président, Galbani and Parmalat. The Président brand is sold in 160 countries and Galbani is the leader in Italian cheeses, sold in 140 countries > Focus on the Dairy Industry offering: Milk, Chilled dairy, Yogurths, Cream, Butter, Cheese and dairy ingredients > Represents local cheesemaking traditions, investing continuously in local brands > In the cheese industry offers from the most traditional PDO's and other specialties to regular cheeses > A growing player in nutrition , as much for infant as clinical and sports nutrition, which contributes to promoting brand responsibility with health and wellness
	Savencia Fromage & Dairy	> Turnover: 6,16 billion USD > More than 20 thousand collaborators	> Wide and strong international presence , with a constinuous investement on consolidating existing markets and discover news > Facilities established in the best regions according to the products region in order to keep their authenticity and heritage	> Focus on cheese specialties and high value added dairy ingredients > Offers a wide variety of high quality cheeses, butter and cream, Sbeing the world #1 for cheese specialties > Products' offer designed for specific-country demands , backed by premium brands ussually part of the country national heritage > Development strategy focus on truly undersatnd local preferences and habits, cheese-manufacturing know-how , building an extensive mastery of cheese-making and investing in dairy technologies and milk constituents reserach > Strong brands, continuous innovation and a strong international presence and focus on consolidation and development > Several PDO* cheeses , genuinely authentic and prospects of broadering this high-quality premium line

Appendix 27: S4 Resources and Capabilities Evaluation on VRINE Model

VRINE Model Criteria				
Resources and Capabilities valuable and rare , can constitute a temporary competitive advantage and contribute to earn above-normal profits until the advantage is matched by other firms. If it is also difficult to imitate or substitute are considered to be a sustained competitive advantage. If it fulfils the overall VRINE criteria but cannot be exploit it is not a competitive advantage				
	Valuable*	Rare**	Inimitable and/or non-substitutable***	Exploitable
Brand image	YES	YES	YES	NO (the lack of branding efforts is impacting negatively the brand image)
Market Expertise	YES	YES	YES	YES (it is being applied in the production of several product lines, and innovation in new segments)
Portfolio Diversity	YES	YES	YES	NO (it is exploitable, but the company is not leveraging it the proper way, resulting in lower financial performance and brand awareness, image and recognition)
Specialty cheeses offer (particularly, PDOs)	YES	YES	YES	YES (it is a sign of their market expertise and high-quality concerns)
Special bonds with Portuguese communities abroad (“mercado da saudade”)	YES	YES	NO	Temporary competitive advantage only leverage until a new competitor enters and create this bond within the communities
Entire operation process control in the domestic market	YES	YES	YES	YES (in Portugal it does not rely in other firms, keeping its independency)
Financial Resources	YES	YES	NO	It can contribute to a temporary competitive advantage , meaning S4 has to take advantage of its positive financial position and do conscious investment, since these financial resources can change depending on market share, competitors’ rivalry and overall sales
Wide Network	YES	YES	NO	Temporary competitive advantage mainly due to the market expertise and international presence
Quality Standards	YES	YES	YES	YES
	*YES –the resource or capability enables to meet market demands, trends and expectations and/or protecting it from market uncertainties. Valuable resources & capabilities can contribute to normal profits (profits that cover the costs off all inputs including capital)	**YES – If the resource & capability is valuable, it is scare compared to demand and not highly possessed by other players	***YES – Assuming it is valuable and rare it is hard to imitate or substitute for other resources & capabilities that fulfils the same benefit	

Appendix 28: SWOT Analysis

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
• Diversified Product Portfolio: wide variety of products, textures, flavours, that suit several occasions and segments; • National leader in Fresh Cheese segment and goat; • Only supplier selling cheese in all cheese segments; • Quality production and artisanal processes (in some cheeses) that guarantee traditional and genuine flavour; • Portuguese Tradition; • PDOs certified; • Investment in innovation; • Special bond with Portuguese communities abroad; • Significant presence abroad with prospects of increasing international presence; • Domestic control of primary and support activities.	• S4 does not leverage its wide portfolio; • Exporting strategy limits the company's active involvement in international markets – lacks on consolidation efforts; • Weak credibility of product portfolio; • Unconsolidated Brand Awareness and Image: not widely noticeable; • The wide international presence makes difficult to accompany all local animal-based regulations and legislations; • Low control over international operations since they are highly dependent on each local client's performance; • S4's products' difficult recognition: weak communication, inconsistent branding.
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
• Growing demand over plant-based products; • Growing concept of cheese as a healthy snack – increases demand for healthy and natural cheeses; • Previous successful expansion plans in some countries might suggest the need for a deeper commitment to some of them (other kind of business relationships, such as possible alliances); • Growth opportunity in Portugal since the market is not completely saturated; • Global Cheese Market ongoing growth; • European cheese brands are the leader exporters of cheese; • Growth expansion in premium-niche segments.	• Reduced shelf-life of fresh cheese limits international exports; • Private Label penetration globally, as they start presenting more quality products; • Might be difficult to sustain the leading position in the fresh line; • High competition internationally and domestically; • Governments may tighten regulations and restrictions regarding animal-based products; • Growing number of vegan consumers; • Differences in consumption between the various regions require a strong organization and explanation's policy; • Bureaucratic restrictions: registration of production and labelling and packaging is costly and time consuming; • Fragmented market might make difficult to protect the brand.

Appendix 29: S4 International presence



Appendix 30: Current International Product Portfolio

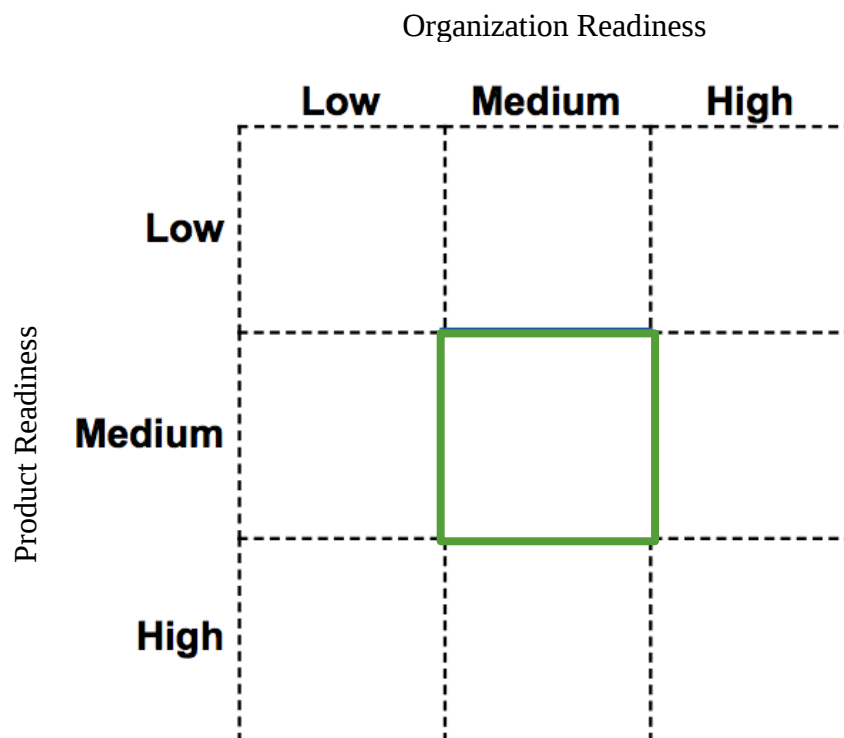
Product Line	Milk-based type	Shelf-life	International Presence
Fresh Cheese	Cow and Goat	short (11 days)	Belgium, France, Germany, Netherlands, Luxembourg, United Kingdom, Switzerland
Cured- Specialty Cheese	Goat	medium to long (180 - 270 days)	Angola, Mozambique, South Africa, Canada, USA, Timor, Macau, Australia, Germany, Andorra, Belgium, Spain, France, Netherlands, Luxembourg, Poland, United Kingdom, Switzerland
	Sheep	medium to long (90 - 180 days)	Angola, South Africa, USA, Timor, Macau, Andorra, Belgium, Spain, Spain, France, Netherlands, Luxembourg, United Kingdom, Switzerland
	Cow	long (270 days)	Angola, South Africa, USA, Timor, Macau, Germany, Andorra, Belgium, Spain, France, Netherlands, Luxembourg, United Kingdom
	Blended	long (270 days)	Angola, Mozambique, South Africa, Canada, USA, Timor, Macau, Australia, Germany, Andorra, Belgium, Spain, France, Netherlands, Luxembourg, United Kingdom
PDO'S	Raw Sheep	medium to long (90 - 180 days)	Angola, Mozambique, South Africa, USA, Timor, Macau, Germany, Andorra, Belgium, Spain, France, Netherlands, Luxembourg, United Kingdom, Switzerland
Sliced and Grated	Goat, Sheep, Cow, Blended	medium (90 days)	Angola, USA, Switzerland
Cottage Cheese	Cow, Sheep, Goat, Blended	short (30 days)	Angola, Mozambique, Angola, Belgium, France, Netherlands, Luxembourg, United Kingdom

Appendix 31: Ansoff Matrix



(Strategic Marketing: an introduction 2008)

Appendix 32: CORE Readiness Test detailed results



Dimension	Score	Rating
Competitive Capabilities in Domestic Market	78	Moderate
Motivation for Going International	64	Moderate
Commitment of Owners and Top Management	61	Moderate
Product Readiness for Foreign Markets	53	Moderate
Skill, Knowledge and Resources	61	Moderate
Experience and Training	58	Moderate
CORE	63	Moderate

(GlobalEdge 2020)

Feedback

Dimension: CORE

Score: 63 - Moderate

The overall assessment of your company's readiness to export is MODERATE. Thus, your company and/or product has several strengths and also some weaknesses. The general areas are described below. In addition, specific strengths and weaknesses of your organization and product can be found by reviewing the list of questions and answers.

Dimension: Competitive Capabilities in Domestic Market

Score: 78 - Moderate

Your assessment shows that you are moderately competitive in your domestic market. Thus, your chances of success in foreign markets are marginally enhanced, although you must take care to address any specific weaknesses in the domestic market, as shown in the list of your questions and answers.

Dimension: Motivation for Going International

Score: 64 - Moderate

The motivations that you listed for going international are generally acceptable, but also exhibit some possible problems for your firm. The motivation for successful companies tends to include such factors as: desire for significant long-term presence in foreign markets, exploitation of the company's unique technologies, and improving company's return on investment. Unsuccessful companies seek short-term, incremental sales and/or are motivated by desires to dispose of excess inventory. They are reactive rather than proactive. You should examine and improve upon the specific weaknesses, as shown in the list of questions provided with this evaluation, and work to maintain the specific strengths, also listed in the questions and answers.

Dimension: Commitment of Owners and Top Management

Score: 61 - Moderate

Your top management and owners display lukewarm commitment to the international expansion of your company. This is the most important single factor in determining your likelihood of success in foreign markets. Successful companies in international markets are those that pour significant personnel and financial resources into the effort, and exhibit patience in obtaining a return on their international investment. On the other hand, unsuccessful firms are those who put very little investment in the international efforts and/or expect immediate returns. Your top management seems to straddle the midpoint between these two extremes. To enhance your chances of success, your top management and owners should increase their level of commitment to the international development effort by addressing any specific weaknesses as shown in the list of questions and answers.

Dimension: Product Readiness for Foreign Markets

Score: 53 - Moderate

Your product appears to be adequately, but not outstandingly, equipped for foreign market penetration. Factors influencing in this assessment include: training and after-sales support needs and capabilities, willingness to modify product and packaging, ability to meet standards and regulations in the foreign market(s), and comparisons with leading competitive products in foreign markets. Your product may have shortcomings in some of these areas. The specific weaknesses can be seen by reviewing the Product Readiness questions and answers. Your company should work to improve on any of these weaknesses, and should capitalize on its strengths in this area in order to enhance your chance of success in foreign markets.

Dimension: Skill, Knowledge and Resources

Score: 61 - Moderate

Your company rated adequately in its Skills, Resources, and Knowledge as related to international marketing. Factors involved here include exporting and international transaction experience, knowledge of tariff, regulations, and other barriers to entry in foreign markets, and access to resources such as capital. Although you perform moderately well in this area, you should improve on your weaknesses prior entry into international markets.

Dimension: Experience and Training

Score: 58 - Moderate

Your company performed moderately in the Experience and Training criterion for international marketing. Factors included in this criterion refer mainly to management experience abroad, and company participation in trade fairs and other internationalization efforts. While you have some experience and training, you should improve in this area in order to enhance your chance of success in internationalization.

Appendix 42: United States - Market Sales Potential Analysis

UNITED STATES	2019	2025
Population size (in million)	327,35	336,80
Cheese Market value per capita (USD)	73,70	74,70
Total Market Sales potential (USD million)	24125,00	25158,00

Appendix 43: German Retailers positioning map (based on price level and #chains)



(AICEP Portugal Global CN Berlim 2018)

Appendix 44: Germany - Market Sales Potential Analysis

GERMANY	2019	2025
Population size (in million)	82,90	83,40
Cheese Market value per capita (USD)	97,60	98,80
Total Market Sales potential (USD million)	8091,00	8240,00

Appendix 45: Canada - Market Sales Potential Analysis

CANADA	2019	2025
Population size (in million)	36,99	39,45
Cheese Market value per capita (USD)	98,90	110,30
Total Market Sales potential (USD million)	3658,31	4351,33

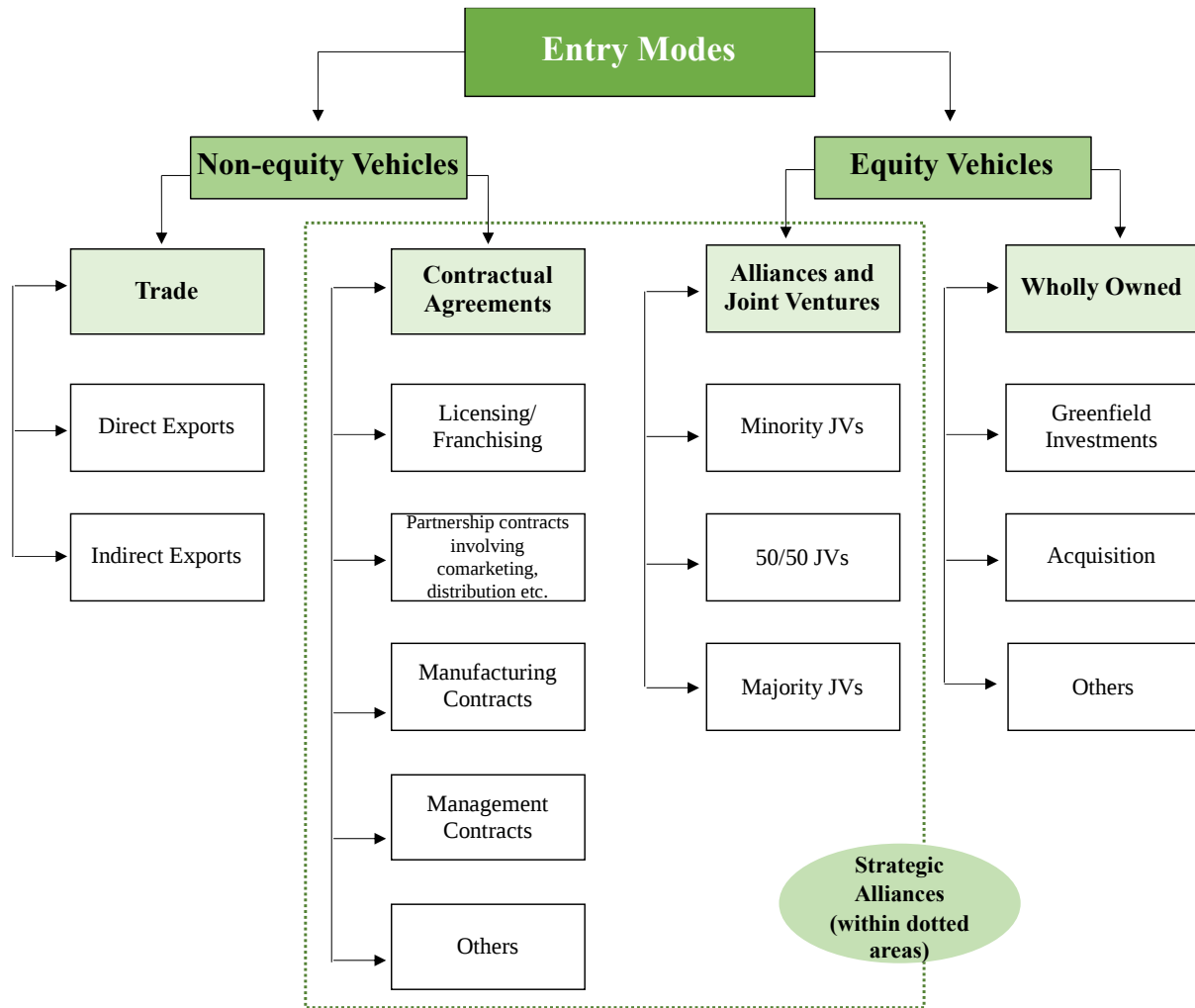
Appendix 46: Japan - Market Sales Potential Analysis

JAPAN	2019	2025
Population size (in million)	126,20	123,30
Cheese Market value per capita (USD)	32,00	40,10
Total Market Sales potential (USD million)	4037,00	4945,00

Appendix 47: Regulations and Requirements United States and Germany

	PORTUGAL - UNITED STATES	PORTUGAL - GERMANY
Tariff Policies	> 35% (depending on the type of milk a percentage of the value of the import permit can be added)	VAT- 5%
Specific Restrictions	> Items must be properly reported to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration prior to arrival > 1year-valid Import permit for milk obtained from FDA > Mandatory FDA Prior Notice fillment before the arrival of the products > Most cheeses, made from raw milk, will have to be aged more than 60 days > Dairy products must have never been in regions where Foot-and-Mouth Disease or Bovine Plague occurred, except when passing through sealed means of transport as described in the "Code of Federal Regulations" > A verterinary certificate is mandatory to be present > Production units need to present a valid FDA > Certification of the facility where the food is manufactured, processed and stored to be registered with FDA. > FDA's permit with the authorisation regarding goods and operations to be implemented. > Document certifying that certain imported agricultural goods were inspected by the USDA when they arrive to the U.S. and complied with the national regulations.	> All foods of animal origin must comply with the requirements of Animal Health legislation as well as with Food Legislation > DNA test on goat cheeses is needed for it to be imported to the market.
Certification requisites	> The responsible entity of Portugal - the Directorate-General for Food and Veterinary (DGAV) – has to certify the producing entity. > Veterinary certificate confirming that products of animal provenance was assessed based on comprehensive measurements	> Certification, labelling and packaging must meet EU requirements > In order to sell PDO or PGI a certification is needed
Packaging and Labelling Requirements	> Food made in part from cheese must accurately describe the name of the product on the label, such as "processed", "pasteurized", "mixed" and "spread". > Food names on labels that are required by standard must be placed with the same prominence as all other ingredients, so same font, size, color and background. > Optional ingredients must be listed with the word "contains" > Name and complete address of the manufacturer, packer or distributor as well as Country of origin must be listed on the label > If the labelling is a foreign language, the mandatory statements should be changed to English	> The label (packaging, document, sign, ring or band) that accompanies cheeses made from raw milk must clearly indicate "made with raw milk".
Other requirements	> Grade A milk goods from Europe should be approved and listed by the Inter-State Conference of Milk Shipments (IMS) , with specific requirements in regards to pasteurisation.	> The German law forbids the advertising of cheese on TV before 9pm.

Appendix 48.1.: Entry Mode Assessment



(Carpenter and Sanders 2014; Gomes et al. 2011)

Appendix 48.2.: Advantages and Disadvantages of each Entry Mode

	Entry Mode	Advantages	Disadvantages
TRADE	Exporting	Quick entry, High ownership, Low risk and resource commitment, More Flexibility	Low control, market knowledge
	Licensing and Franchising	Quick and easier entry, low risk and cost, high support and security	Little control, low returns, licensee can become a competitor, dependency upon the licensor/franchisor, can ruin the reputation, rely on franchisee/licensee performance, payment of royalty fee, difficulty in controlling financial reporting
CONTRACTING	Other non-equity Strategic Alliance	Knowledge & capabilities sharing, no equity sharing, less financial commitment, local ally's high market know-how, increase brand awareness	Moderate control, potential dependency upon the ally, misrepresentation and misappropriation of the alliance, poor contract development
	Equity Strategic Alliance (i.e. JVs)	Shared costs and investment, reduced risk, local partner's high market know-how, easier adaptation and penetration	Higher costs than the method above, cultural integration problems, potential different expectations, not an equal distribution of work and resources
INVESTMENT	Acquisition	Quick access to new markets, access to capital and knowledge, market power, reduced entry barriers	High cost, integration problems with the acquired firm, problems of merging with domestic operations, complex negotiations
	Greenfield Investment	Acquisition of local market knowledge, maximum control, achievable economies of scale and scope, bypassing of trade restrictions, potential above-average returns	High cost and risk, low set up time slows down the entrance, time consuming, potential government restrictions against FDI

(Carpenter and Sanders 2014; Gomes et al. 2011; Hitt et al. 2009)

Appendix 49: Business Model Canvas

VALUE CREATION		VALUE PROPOSITION	CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIPS	VALUE DELIVER
KEY PARTNERS	KEY ACTIVITIES	> Final Customers S4's high-quality cured cheeses that stand for market expertise, regional Portuguese tradition and exclusive and exceptional eating experience provided > Retailers Added value to their portfolio offer (S4 is a manufacturer with more than 100 years of expertise), deliver quality products to market, distinctive flavours and textures, tradition, compliance with time of deliver and a pricing strategy tailored to the industry average and demands	> Final Customer Building brand loyalty through quality, value for tradition and eating experience > Retailers Active and personalized relationship management to gain market feedback, analysis and build loyalty	> Final Customer Value quality products, willing to pay more for quality and distinction > Retailers More high-end retailers operating in the gourmet food and cheese category
		KEY RESOURCES	CHANNELS	
> Milk Suppliers (Raw Material) > Transport/Freight Companies (Products' shipment) > Importers/Wholesalers/Distributors (Strategic Alliance Partners) > Retailers/HORECA (specialized retailers in gourmet food, traditional groceries, Hotels, Restaurants, Cafes)		> Physical - Cheese production facilities, labelling&packaging, storage, distribution network > Intellectual - Brand IP, regulatory requirements, strategic partners' know-how > Financial - Own Assets to invest in the expansion > Human - Key Partners + S4's employees (namely New Business Developer to manage the alliance and expansion)	> Strategic Allies' channels (as wholesalers) > HORECA + Specialized gourmet Retailers > Online channels (Alliance partners, S4's and retailers' website and social media)	
COST STRUCTURE		REVENUES STREAM		
Cost of Goods Sold Corporation Income tax Personnel expenses Transportation Costs Shared Earnings with Strategic Partners Marketing budget (promotion activities online and offline)		Price Premiums to final customers (focused differentiation strategy) Sales Revenues		
		CAPTURE VALUE		

Appendix 50: U.S. Potential Partners presentation

Partner	Type	Description	Size	Product Range	Geographical Presence
A & B Distributors	Importer/ Wholesaler	> 40 years of expertise; > Focus on warehousing, distribution and resell to restaurants and other businesses across HORECA channel in the East and Middle Tennessee region; > Gourmet food leader in Tennessee; > High-quality service recognition; > Experience with imported cheeses.	> 2018 Turnover: 21 million USD.	> Large food portfolio including beverages, vegetables and cheese; > Within cheeses includes both domestic and imported references; > Imported cheeses from Europe: Spain, Italy, Denmark, UK and Netherlands.	> Limited reach to Tennessee state; Downside: Geographic limitation might harm S4's future growth prospects in the U.S. market .
Deco Food Service	Wholesaler	> 40 years of expertise; > Family-owned business, recognized as premium food distributor; > Shows ability to innovate and expand its products offer; > Sells to several companies across the HORECA channel and final consumer.	> 2018 Turnover: 1,82 million USD;	> Wide product range with 112 thousand products from 830 different worldwide suppliers; > Within Cheese category it distributes 93 different options, both domestic and international references; > International cheeses' range relying mainly on Italian references.	> Based in California with a large presence in that region; > Opportunity for S4 since one of the largest portuguese communities is there; > Relevant player also in Arizona and Nevada.
Forever Cheese	Importer/ Wholesaler	> For more than 20 years specialized in imports of artisan cheese and unique products from the Mediterranean region; > High attention to traditional origin and authenticity; > Carefully selects specialties from trusted European producers; > Close relationship with customers; > Cumulative experience in the cheese market and within European partners.	> 2019 Turnover: 2 million USD;	> Large product portfolio composed by cheeses and specialty accompaniments such as dry fruits, chocolate etc; > Within Cheese category it represents exclusively specialty imported references including PDOs; > Cheese offer from Portugal, Spain, Italy and Croatia;	> Based in New York City; > Its distribution network covers most of the country; > A significant number of clients are located in the East Cost region; > Might potentially reach Portuguese communities.

(A&B Distributors 2020; Deco Food Service 2020; Forever Cheese 2020; ORBIS 2020)

Partner	Type	Description	Size	Product Range	Geographical Presence
Gourmet Foods International	Importer/ Wholesaler	> 50 years experience; > Full-service wholesaler; > Large set of capabilities: logistics, warehousing, direct importing and merchandising; > Focus on specialty foods (cheese and other food products); > Large network among U.S. retailers and worldwide.	> 2019 Turnover: 40,2 million USD.	> Large products' offer with around 1180 cheeses references; > Offers both American and imported cheeses; > European cheeses offer: Specialty cured cheeses from Italy (<i>Vivaldi</i>) and Netherlands and other types from Ireland; > Own brand <i>La bonne Vie</i> for fresh, chevrè and brie cheeses.	> Broad reach in U.S. being present with 8 facilities in California, Colorado, Texas, Wisconsin, Florida, Georgia, North Carolina and New Jersey; > Opportunity for S4 due to the proximity to portuguese communities namely California, New Jersey and Florida.
Gourmet Imports	Importer	> Focus on cheese and other gourmet premium food products; > Responsible for distributing high-end products mainly to the HORECA channel (Chefs and culinary professionals) but also specialized retailers; > Quality and Integrity are key values.	> 2019 Turnover: 4 million USD.	> Large offer including 2000 different culinary products such as caviar, charcuterie, pâtés, etc and more than 300 cheeses' references; > Wide and diversified cheese portfolio, with distinctive flavours and textures; > Imports several specialty cheeses from Europe: Italy, France, Spain, Germany, Netherlands, Belgium, Portugal, England and Switzerland.	> Established in Los Angeles and highly concentrated there; > To deliver food outside LA, the company needs the support from distribution partners; > Downside for S4: potential lower retailers' reach and increasing costs due to distribution outsourcing.

(Gourmet Foods International 2020; Gourmet Imports 2020; ORBIS 2020)

Partner	Type	Description	Size	Product Range	Geographical Presence
Norseland Inc.	Importer/ Wholesaler/ Producer	> Specialty cheese specialist for over 40 years; > Wholly-owned subsidiary of TINE SA (Norwegian largest co-operative of dairy farmers); > Key Capabilities: Distribution of both domestic and international cheeses, Logistics, Sales and Marketing support, Customer Service; > Initially expanded to U.S. to sell the Norwegian Jarlsberg cheese but rapidly expanded its offer to other brands; > Large experience with imported cheeses.	> 2018 Turnover: 63 million USD.	> Large portfolio of cheeses from international partners; > 6 different owned brands: the signature brand <i>Jarlsberg</i>, <i>Snøfrisk</i> and <i>Brunost</i> (Norwegian), <i>Lotito Foods</i> and <i>Folios</i> (American) and <i>Ilchester</i> (Finest British cheeses); > Specialty imports' partners: French cheeses under <i>Couturier</i> and <i>Soignon</i> brands, Italian cheeses namely <i>Parmigiano</i> and <i>Igor</i>, Spanish brand <i>Garcia Baquero</i> and gouda cheese from the Dutch <i>Old Amsterdam</i>.	> Large reach in the East Cost region; > Based near New York City, being close to Massachusetts, Rhode Island and New Jersey, which represent some of the states with the largest Portuguese Communities.
Shuman Cheese	Producer/ Wholesaler	> 75 years of cheese experts; > Experienced in Specialty Cheese making, exporting, processing and product innovation; > Other services: Packaging and distribution; > 4 producing facilities; Downside: Its main objective: learn from experienced European manufacturers to develop its own cheeses which may represent a risk for S4.	> 2019 Turnover: 163 million USD; Downside: May lead to unequal forces in the alliance agreement.	> Wide portfolio of domestic cheeses; > Strong variety of european cheeses' references; > Works with Italian, Greek, Swiss, Belgium and Spanish brands; > Attention to maintain regional tradition in the production methods; > Acquires European knowledge to produce its own award-winning cheeses.	> Provides cheeses to retail partners, clubs, convenience stores, independent food services and restaurants; > It has a global export business for food service, food manufacturing, clubs and retail clients around the world.

(ORBIS 2020; Norseland Inc. 2020; Schuman Cheese 2020)

Appendix 51: U.S. Potential Partners Screening Criteria

U.S. CRITERIA	
Size	Turnover (in million USD)
Product Range	Breadth (food with general cheese – 1; food with specialties – 2; exclusively specialty cheeses - 3 points) Depth (few options -1; medium - 2; many - 3 points) European extension (Yes - 1; No - 0)
Geographic presence	Retail landscape (small - 1; medium - 2; large - 3 points)* Proximity to Portuguese communities (Yes - 1; No - 0)**

* retailers and/or services the companies can reach (retailers, specialized stores, HORECA);

for unclear information on the #facilities or presence in chains, the points were attributed based on the companies' turnover (higher turnover meaning higher reach)

** for unclear information the proximity to Portuguese communities was assessed based on the retail landscape (higher retail landscape meaning the company reaches Portuguese communities)

CRITERIA		Gourmet Foods International	A&B Distributors	DecoFood Services	Schuman Cheese	Norseland	Gourmet Imports	Forever Cheese
X axis - Size (turnover in million USD)		40,20	19,60	33,00	163,00	64,60	4,06	3,76
Yaxis - Product Range	Breadth	2	2	2	3	3	2	2
	Depth	3	2	2	3	3	3	3
	European extension	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
	Sum	6	5	5	7	7	6	6
Geographic presence	Retail landscape	3	1	2	3	3	2	3
	Proximity to Portuguese communities	1	0	1	1	1	1	1
	Sum	4	1	3	4	4	3	4

Appendix 52: U.S. Potential Partners Positioning Map



Appendix 53: Detailed comparison of Top 3 U.S. Partners

Partners	Strenghts	Value-Chain Coordination points	Opportunities for S4
Forever Cheese	> Leading importer of fine artisan cheese and accompaniments from the Mediterranean; > 20 years experience and based in New York; > Only sells cheeses and accompainments from Italy, Spain, Portugal and Croatia; > Rigorous selection of the imported cheeses: quality standards, flavor profile and authenticity; > Attention to PDO's, some among product portfolio; > Blog page were they present the main attributes of the products, producers' profile and news, events, press, etc.	Distribution Marketing Sales	> Opportunity to reach Portuguese communities (such as New Jersey); > Exclusive opportunity to truly enhance the Portuguese origin; > Quality standards fit with S4 values; > The attention it gives to tradition, by communicating it to consumers is important to keep the most added value of PDO'S cheeses and other cured specialties.
Gourmet Foods International	> Large span of services: warehousing, distribution, logistics, marketing, merchandising; > Wide geographic presence, with many facilities across the country; > Large portflio reaching different segments, not only cheese; > Specialty cheese from Italy and Netherlands; <u>Downside</u>: by being present in so many food segments, the cheese category is less highlighted.	Distribution Marketing Merchandising Sales	> Extend capabilities of the firm enable to optimize processes; > The vast presence enables to reach Portuguese communities; > Brand image and Communication Strategy tailored to the american target consumers.
Norseland Inc.	> Strong capabilities: distribution, logistics, sales, innovation, marketing and customer service; > 40 years specialty cheese expert; > Large and diversified portfolio of only European brands-partners; > High sales landscape, reaching food services and retailers; > Based in New York	Distribution Marketing Sales Customer Service	> Optimization of logistics' activities due to Norseland know-how on the american market; > Strong brand image and Communication Strategy tailored to the american target consumers, might enhance S4's brand; > Meets the current requirements of S4, and will not compromise the brand competitive advantage > Proximity to New Jersey were there is one of the biggest Portuguese communities.

(Forever Cheese 2020; Gourmet Foods International 2020; Norseland Inc. 2020)

Appendix 54: German Potential Partners presentation

Partner	Type	Description	Size	Product Range	Geographical Presence
Frisch Konzept Service	Trader	> Multi-service specialist in the cheese category; > Services offered: Procurement, Cheese Cutting & Packaging , Logistics, Sales and Marketing support, with high focus on support to retailers; > Expertise of an advisor and supplier to marketing cheese in the food retail service and fresh prepacked segment with tailor-made solutions for stores.	> 2018 Turnover: 38 million USD.	> Extensive range of diversified cheeses; > Offers different types of freshly cut pre-packed cheese; > Diverse cheese selection in the groups of hard and semi-hard cheese; > In the hard and semi-hard cheese area, they have a targeted selection of organic cheeses; > Specialty cheese from first-class cheese regions in Europe, namely Spain, Italy and Switzerland.	> Based in Germany with a significant reach due to the services it provides; > Supports food retailers in being able to offer the full range of products; > Strong supply-chain & logistics capacities to guarantee an effective delivery
Fritz Bendel	Wholesaler	> 85 years well-known cheese expert; > Acts as sales representative of many European companies; > Well-positioned among European customers and suppliers; > Delivers products and adapts packaging and size depending on clients demands;	> 2019 Turnover: 20,7 million USD; > Annual sales volume: 12.000 tons	> Solid cheeses' portfolio range, from the most classic to distinctive and original ones both german and imported references; > Offers grated and cream cheeses as well as Specialty varieties of goat and sheep (mainly from Italy); > Also presents processed cheese and flavoured processed cheese for the industry.	> Based in Kempten in the southern region of Germany close to one of the biggest cities Munich; > Distributes to other European markets; > Downside: Not so significant reach
Heiderbeck	Wholesaler	> 80 years expertise in the cheese industry reaching a market leading position; > Specialized in the distribution of high-quality specialty cheeses and refrigerated gourmet food; > High-quality standards and close attention to the regional, authenticity and unique attributes of the products' offer, valuing innovative cheese makers and fine producers.	> 2019 Turnover: 30 million USD.	> Products from European leading cheese & gourmet food producers, namely with a focus on Italy, Austria, Switzerland and France; > Supplied by around 200 manufacturers (From artisanal dairy farms to large producers); > It guarantees a large range of specialities in stock and a varied offered of pre-ordered cheeses.	> Situated close to Munich reach the biggest cities; > Flexible and wide distribution network: its offer encompasses the areas of cheese and gourmet foods for deli counters, fast food and self-service counters, food services, private label products for the food retail trade and a coordinated product range for wholesale distribution.

(Frisch Konzept Service 2020; Fritz Bendel 2020; Heiderbeck 2020; ORBIS 2020)

Partner	Type	Description	Size	Product Range	Geographical Presence
Ruswisch & Zuck	Wholesaler/ Trader	> Leading company in the cheese wholesale business for more than 100 years; > Owner-managed family business with a focus in the cheese specialties trade; > Key capabilities: Storage, Logistics, Sales, Marketing (i.e., counter service) and Advisory services (product range advice to its partners); > Provides seminars, training courses and certificates to its partners among the specialty cheeses category; > Exclusive offer to wholesalers and retailers with valuable cheese counters; > Fast delivery (max 48 h) to guarantee freshness (high products' turnover).	>2018 Turnover : 129 million USD.	> More than 2000 national and international cheese references; > Cheeses' portfolio: Speciality, cured, mozzarella and other types; > Diverse cheese selection from all Europe (19 different countries' offer, including several references from Portugal namely Azores and Alentejo region); > Continuous change in its products' offer to accompany market trends and stay updated with new innovative cheese tastes and textures.	> All-around service guarantees one of the largest selection of cheeses for German retailers; > Cheese center in Hannover (4800m2 warehouse with 2300 items ready to deliver); > Strong reach in the south of Germany after the partnership with another company in this region; > Guarantee of a fast and efficient delivery service to German retailers and food industrials.
Tiho (Tiedemann & Homanner GmbH & Co KG)	Producer and Wholesaler	> Over 70 years of market expertise; > Specialized wholesaler of dairy products with a focus on cheese specialties; > Expert advice and training to partners as a cheese specialist; > Support in products' marketing and sales (pricing and promotion namely at POS); > On-time distribution service and high-quality concerns; > Philosophy: Optimal performance oriented towards the business partners' needs.	> 2019 Turnover: 31,5 million USD.	> Strong competences among cheese specialties; > International assortment with over 2000 cheese specialties from the Mediterranean regions to the North Cape; > Specialty trade brands with excellent added value for customers; > Noticeable European offer (Italy, France, etc); > High products turnover rate.	> Wide presence in the German market - its warehouse is supplied by up to 30 manufacturers and suppliers every day; > Own truck fleet for transporting goods to customers; > On-time and flexible delivery due to Tiho fresh logistics (i.e., it is possible to provide 2 deliveries to each customer per week).

(ORBIS 2020; Ruswisch & Zuck 2020; Tiho 2020)

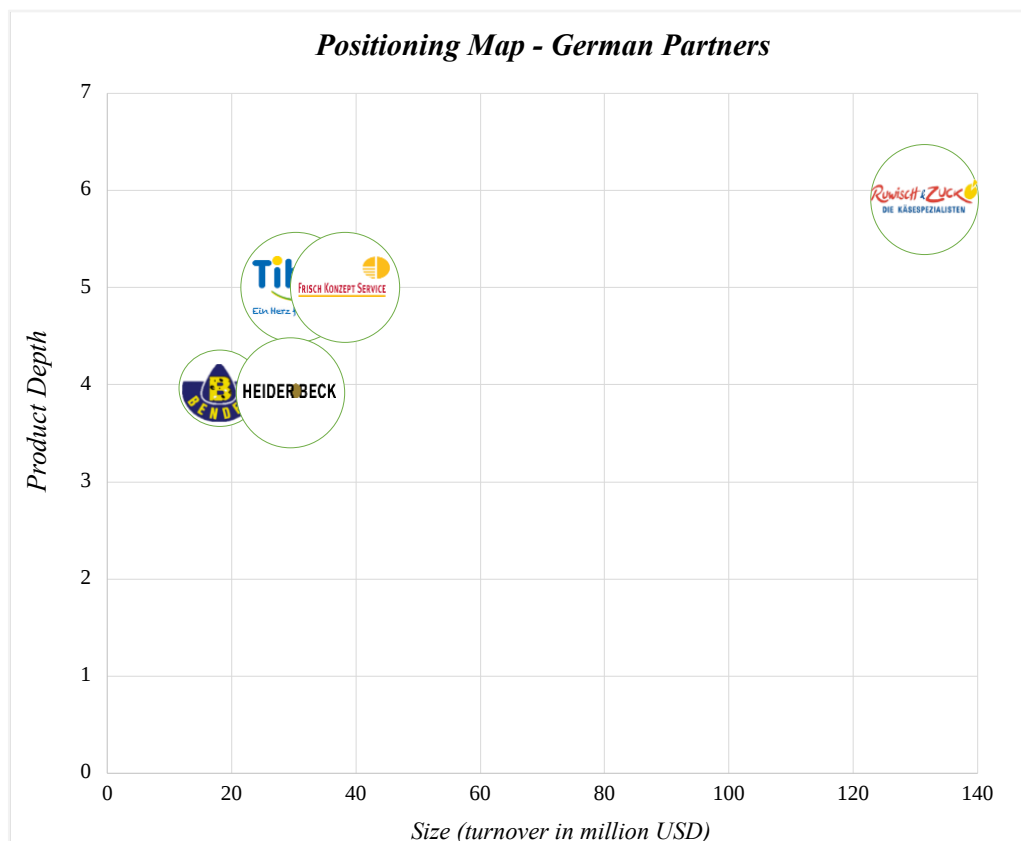
Appendix 55: German Potential Partners Screening Criteria

GERMANY CRITERIA	
Size	Turnover (in million USD)
Product Range	Depth (few options of specialty cheeses -1; medium - 2; many - 3 points) European extension (small - 1; medium-2; high - 3 points)
Geographic presence	Retail landscape (small - 1; medium - 2points; large - 3 points)*

* retailers and/or services the companies can reach (retailers, specialized stores, HORECA);
for unclear information on the #facilities or presence in chains, the points were attributed based on the turnover
(higher turnover meaning higher reach)

CRITERIA		Heiderbeck	Ruwisch & Zuck	Fritz Bendel	Tiho	Frisch Konzept
X axis - Size (turnover in million USD)		30,00	129,00	20,70	31,50	38,00
Y axis - Product Range	Depth	2	3	1	3	3
	European extension	2	3	3	2	2
	Sum	4	6	4	5	5
Geographic presence	Retail landscape	3	3	2	3	3

Appendix 56: German Potential Partners Positioning Map



Appendix 57: Detailed comparison of Top 2 German Partners

Partners	Strengths	Value-Chain Coordination points	Opportunities for S4
<i>Heiderbeck</i>	> Several capabilities: sales, marketing, training, field services, customer care with high level specialists; > 80years of market experience, with attention to highest quality standards;		> Extend capabilities and market expertise of the firm enable to optimize processes;
	> Reaches the best sellers with high resell rates through specialities or gourmet cheeses from small dairy firms;	Distribution	> Key Account management, logistics, marketing and other added value services to the partner can help Santiago efficiently penetrate several channels and have a quick "time to market";
	> Partnerships with more than 10 European countries and 200 manufactures;	Field Services Management	
	> Promotion, dessimination and preservation of the local cheese cultures;	Marketing	> Products act as specific-country ambassadors, hence is an opportunity to enhance Portuguese origin without compromising the brand identy rather enhancing it;
	> Wide retail landscape: deli counters, fast food counters, self-service counters, food services, etc;	Sales	
	> High and solid support for partners in key activities;	Customer Care	> The constant efforts and support looking for trend products to match demand constitutes an opportunity to push Santiago on developing new products.
	> Extensive and qualified range of cheeses from European selected reliable cheese manufacturers; > Has a training Academy and collaborates with partners to develop new products tailored to the German consumers; > Communication on website of relevat partners' news; Newsletter and <i>Heiderbeck TV</i>.		
<i>Tiho</i>	> Large span of services: distribution, logistics, training, marketing and sales;		> Wide and efficient distribution network and overall logistics;
	> On-time deliver with a large geographic reach;		
	> Quality tradition with Certification according to DIN EN ISO 9001;	Distribution	> Quality requirements and emphasis, matches S4's competitive advantage;
	> Large and diversified portfolio of European brands-partners, namely from the Mediterranean regions to the North Cape;	Marketing	> The support and training guarenteed, in regards to the german market, may be an opportunity for the partnership development;
	> Online commodity training and practice-oriented day seminars	Sales	
	> Constantly changing country-specific focus offers with advertising support		
	> Consistent and relevant information provided about each partners-product portfolio, with clear history and origin of the product, nutritional information, etc > Tasting advertising using trained and expert advertising promoters		> The consistent and strong marketing, sales promotion and communication allows to consolidate individual brands' awareness and image, without compromising the specific-country origin.

(Heiderbeck 2020; Tiho 2020)