

Yard sales

"Horse Dream" case study

Martin, a construction technician, lives with his girlfriend Alice in a small, rented apartment in the countryside, they commute 50 km to the city by car to work. The village of Lomec is located in southwestern Bohemia, approximately 40 km from the state border with Germany. It is located at an altitude of 413 MASL, the administered area together with the local part of the settlement is 3.6 km² and 133 permanent residents live in this area. In the village there is a large-capacity cowshed built in the seventies of the last century, which is currently operated by a business partnership. In the past, the state agricultural enterprise operated a pig farm in the village, which became technologically obsolete, and the building was transferred to a private owner as part of a restitution. The building is also the subject of this case study.

Martin and Alice have solid savings and are considering buying a larger apartment. But they don't want to live in the city, so they were interested in a favorable offer from one of their relatives from the nearby area for the sale of an older farm with a huge garden, barns and several hectares of meadows and pastures. The relative is also the owner of a former older non-compliant pig farm. Neighbors would also lease or perhaps sell other surrounding farmland.

Alice is a trained zootechnician, but she works as a clerk, in her spare time she rides horses in an equestrian club and helps a non-profit organization with a hippotherapy course.

Both would probably enjoy raising a few horses, offering hippotherapy services and maybe setting up a farm of smaller farm animals, growing fruit and vegetables extensively. In the future, possible stables of several foreign horses and the establishment of simple accommodation for riders and their friends would also be considered.

1/ The partners face a key decision

Should they completely change their lifestyle, buy a homestead, adapt it for living and devote themselves to agriculture? Will they be able to get enough land to farm and feed them?

Or will they remain in their jobs with the certainty of a steady income, modify the property for housing and build a farm as a hobby with a possible prospect of future professionalization of some activities?

What other aspects should they consider?

List at least 5 other decision points:

a/

b/

c/

d/

e/

(Solution: any answers relevant to the usual situation in the relevant EU country)

2/ Management as a trial for the time being

The partners decided on the safer option - to have a permanent job, secure housing, stay in the countryside. They put all their savings into buying the real estate with the land. They took the advantageous opportunity to also acquire the old former pig farm.

They renovated their living space within a year, have 5 hens and 5 rabbits for their own use, bought 3 bee colonies, pruned the old fruit trees (plums, apples, pears) in the orchard and replaced half of them with new ones, planted a currant garden with 20 bushes.

The modification of the stables and negotiations on the lease of agricultural land will take some time. Two objects near the house can be easily modified and they can try out their skill as farmers in their spare time. In the pig breeding facility (500 meters from the house), they plan to breed hens in a free range with egg production. They could also expand the breeding of rabbits there, where they would at the same time test how much hay they can produce extensively and without mechanization. A neighbor, who has the necessary mechanization, helps them farm the land for a fee, part of the harvested hay and manual help.

They sold the surplus honey to the neighbors. Is this a yard sale?

(No in this situation, such a sale of honey is not a continuous activity, moreover, the amount of honey from three bee colonies is not so high that it exceeds the sales of CZK 6,000, this is the limit in the Czech Republic for non-taxable side income from the sale of various surpluses, the answer can differ in different EU states).

Can they sell some of the fruit from the orchard to customers who call and come pick it up?

(Yes, here too it would be the sale of grower surpluses, which would not have to be taxed up to a value of CZK 6,000, the answer may differ in different EU states).

3/ They start to dream their "Horse Dream"

They started with their own help to modify the building for the stables (the first 2 boxes) including a space for storing hay and bought 2 ten-year-old horses for recreational riding, which Alice carefully selected so that they would be calm and suitable for use in hippotherapy in the future. They adjusted part of the yard for the safe movement of the horses and their way to the riding stable and to the pastures. Alice gets her first clients interested in therapeutic riding.

They have expanded the flock of hens to 40 animals, they still have a small paddock in one modified barn next to the house. They expanded the number of bee colonies to 10.

Alice registered as a farmer.

Can they also sell eggs in the shop in the neighboring town? (In the winter they just consume them, in the summer they also sell them).

(Such sales are allowed, a maximum of 600 eggs can be delivered to the store per week, the store can sell a maximum of 60 eggs to an individual end customer, there may be differences in the quantity for individual EU countries).

How much honey can they sell for it to still be a yard sale?

(The limit in the Czech Republic is 2000 kg for consumption in the households of end consumers, the value may differ for individual EU states).

4/ The mini farm is becoming professional

Afternoon riding is fully booked and can barely accommodate all the interest from the clients, Alice has quit her job and will focus on the "Horse Dream" mini farm. Apart from the afternoons, the riding has been extended to 3 mornings per week. She is modifying part of the "horse complex" building into a clubhouse - a common room with a small kitchenette (tea, coffee, heating snacks) for clients. She is also renovating the bathroom and adding a shower.

She uses her own marmalades, honey, eggs, and freshly squeezed fruit juices for snacks offered as part of the ride. She will buy a dryer (in the future she is also thinking about a freeze dryer) so that she doesn't have to just can the surplus fruit from the orchard. Every Friday afternoon she sells from the yard - a dispensary window from the clubhouse - fresh fruit, packaged dried fruit, honey and eggs. After an agreement with friends - farmers from the region - they prepared a space (strengthening the base, roof, electricity connection) for a vending machine to dispense products from their dairy farm - kefir, white yogurt, cottage cheese and fresh cow's cheese.

Customers are interested in rabbit meat. Alice increases the number of breeding females to 10.

How many rabbits can they sell in a week?

(The limit in the Czech Republic is 35 pieces).

Can they deliver rabbits also to a nearby restaurant in yard sale mode?

(No, fresh rabbits are intended only for end consumer households).

5/ Finally a hen farm

It was possible to complete the reconstruction of the former pig house for breeding hens with egg production. Part of the building was rebuilt for the needs of laying hens, and in a smaller part, facilities were built for handling the breeding, a feed storage, and an egg storage. At the same time, an outdoor grassy enclosure was built - fenced - into which the hens can move freely from the covered areas for most of the time. They chose the leghorn breed for laying hens. This breed was bred in America, but the country of origin is Italy, which is reflected in the name of the breed, which is an English corruption of the city of Livorno. Hens produce eggs with a white shell, which is why they are also used for breeding industrial carrier hybrids, where this color of eggs is required. The breed matures quickly and is not suitable for meat production, according to the Czech Poultry Standard, a hen up to one year old should weigh 1.8-2.2 kg. The average laying of eggs per year is 180 pieces, but in good conditions it can be 200-220 pieces. The owners decided on this breed also because, in small-scale breeding compared to the unchanging conditions of poultry halls, purebred Leghorns support their usefulness with a stronger body structure, which is reflected in their health and longer laying ability, which, however, as with all hens, decreases every year. For this reason, but also for other zoo-veterinary measures in particular, the hens will be raised on the farm for only one year. During the summer, the poultry house is empty. The hens will be sold and all the equipment of the hall, such as nests, perches, drinkers, feeders, and other technologies, will be cleaned and disinfected. Autumn always starts with a new flock.

The flock will initially have 250 hens and roosters, but the hall can have up to double the capacity.

The amount of eggs produced is already too high to sell only in their home village, how many eggs, where and to whom can be sold as part of yard sales?

(These fresh eggs must not be put into circulation. They can be sold directly to the final consumer - on the farm or at the market or marketplace - a maximum of 60 eggs per final consumer. A maximum of 600 eggs/week is considered a small quantity of fresh eggs that can be the subject of one delivery by the breeder to a nearby retail store; the conditions for individual EU states are similar, but the absolute numbers may differ).

6/ What will the farm and the services offered look like in five years?

Over the next five years, the partners gradually realized their original ideas.

How do you think they developed their "Horse Dream" idea? To what extent do they cooperate with nearby farmers or agricultural services? Do they still sell from the yard? What do they produce?

And you yourself, would you act on such an idea?