

# SUCCESS STORY: Ukrainian Family Dairy Farms Grow their Businesses with Credit Union Financing Despite the Ongoing War

**April 2023** - Young and motivated, Mariya and Bohdan Zabrodotski are raising three kids while running a 15-cow dairy farm in Volyn Oblast that produces 200 liters of milk per day. “I received a cow as a gift from my parents when I married Bohdan. That’s how we started,” says Mariya with a smile. Despite Russia’s war against Ukraine, the young farmers wished to continue with their plans to grow their business. However, to buy more cows and agricultural equipment to produce feed, Mariya and Bohdan needed financing. They were able to gain access to loans from credit union Vygodra that cooperates with the USAID-funded Credit for Agriculture Producers (CAP) Project in Ukraine as participants of the Family Dairy Farms Project and local Natural Milk dairy cluster.



*Maria and Bohdan Zabrodotski at their dairy farm, Volyn Oblast, Ukraine*

The partnership between the credit union and the dairy cluster began after CAP provided extensive training to partner credit unions around agricultural development. CAP encouraged credit unions to scale-up their role in their communities by collaborating with local cooperatives and agricultural clusters. CAP first trained credit unions on the benefits of collaboration with agricultural cooperatives back in 2019. After Russia’s full-scale invasion, CAP deepened partner credit unions’ knowledge of agriculture during a critical time. CAP has helped credit unions learn how to conduct market analyses and build long-term partnerships with local agriculture-related businesses. This led directly to CAP partner credit union Vygodra signing a memorandum of understanding with the Family Dairy Farms Project. To date, Vygodra has disbursed three loans to members of the Natural Milk cluster totaling UAH 660,000 (approximately USD 18,000).



*Cheese produced by Maria Zabrodotska, Volyn Oblast, Ukraine*

Mariya and Bohdan received a loan of UAH 250,000 (approximately USD 7,000) from Vygodra. This allowed them to purchase maize chopping equipment as well as five more cows. With a 30 percent increase in daily milk production, Mariya started a cheese line. She now produces different types of cheese, including caciotta, haloumi, suluguni, and chechil, selling them in the local food market and shipping throughout Ukraine by post.

“We need to develop what is ours. We don’t want to move abroad,” says Mariya, explaining their choice to stay in Ukraine and continue to run their dairy farm, despite Russia’s ongoing war against Ukraine.

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