

Climate change's new target: fromage, farmers, and France.

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The logo, AOC seal, and casing for Camembert cheese from the French region of Normandy.

French farmers are feeling the brunt of climate change. Abnormally **high** temperatures, such as 27 degrees Celsius (81 Fahrenheit) in late September throughout the mountainous French commune of Vesc, pose challenges for an essential part of French cuisine and culture: cheese. French cheese-making is an integral part of France's culture and is highly regulated by local and national governments. Whether cheese can be officially named as a type depends on regulations such as where the grain used to feed the cattle or goats are grown, animal breeds, and the product's home region. Ultimately, it determines if it receives the official cheese brand seal - *Appellation d'Origine Protégée (AOP)* - allowing it to sell for more.

The **scale** of climate change, or the geographic extent at which it is examined, is often worldwide. However, climate change's effects are often best explained and felt on a regional scale. **Regions** are geographical entities grouped according to similar characteristics, such as geography, history, etc. French regions were established during the French Revolution and have remained semi-constant. The historical context has allowed cheese-making to undergo rigid rulemaking tied to regional characteristics. With warming climates, however, multiple problems have been

appearing. Some animals cannot graze until later in the year, some grain types cannot grow as well anymore due to the heat, and people cannot milk cows until later in the year because of the heat danger in barns.

These factors form a question for France: how does it maintain part of its **identity** while adjusting its rules to climate challenges? Some people are adamant about continuing tradition, while others are experimenting with government funding to see if alterations maintain the cheese's texture and flavor. France recorded its second hottest summer last year, which left some cows unable to graze in mountain pastures for seven months due to dead grass. The seven-month grazing requirement left farmers unable to produce specific types of cheeses, questioning their existence. The problem remains; France must adapt to changing temperatures or lose parts of its cheese culture.

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