

Description of the Heim family farm in Oberwil im Simmental



The Heim family in traditional Bernese Oberland costume: Back from left Silvan, Michael, Patrick, front from left Ueli, Fabio and Cornelia.

Our family farm is located in Oberwil im Simmental at 900 meters above sea level on the shady side of the valley. The farm is largely owned by the family and is subject to the ÖLN production system. The federal ÖLN guidelines contain a number of basic requirements you have to fulfill as a farmer to receive direct payments:

<https://www.blw.admin.ch/blw/de/home/instrumente/direktzahlungen/oekologischer-leistungsnachweis.html> (german and french only).

Surface	33 hectares of agricultural land in mountain zone two.
Ownership	17 hectares are owned and the rest has been leased on long term contracts.
Cows	16 in summer and 26 in winter, mainly pure Simmental with horns, 2 Red Holsteins, 2 Brown Swiss, 30 heifers, 15 calves and 3 goats.
Climate	Annual precipitations 1100 mm/year, average temperature is around 10°C.

We have been summering our cows and calves in the valley since 2000. For this reason, the number of cows had to be greatly reduced in spring by selling a number of cows, as we have not enough space on the alp to summering all our cows. 30 heifers, 15 calves and 3 goats. Sometimes we take part in shows with our animals. The barn (tie-stall barn with pipe milking system) was built in 1994 and has 65 places. In 2007 we built a large garage with a carpentry workshop for our uncle and in 2023 a round arched tent where all machines and equipment are protected from all weathers. You won't find any non-family labour on our farm.

Machinery Schiltrac Swisstrans transporter, since 2019
AEBI TT280 Terratrac, since 2014
Reform Metrac 4004G terratrac, since 1996
Lüönd Swiss Elite 33 m³ mounted loading wagon, since 2018
Gafner Vario 4,5 m³ mounted manure spreader, since 1988
Kuratli 3600 lts mounted slurry spreader, since 1985
Marangon front mower 2.8 m, since 2013
Fella front merger 2.8 m, since 2011
Fella tedder 5.7 m, since 2011
Aebi CC66, mower 2.5 m, since 2015



Barn with garage on the left, house on the right.

Family

- Ueli Heim (54): farmer since 1987, took over his parents' farm in 1992 together with his brother Fritz. Sole owner since 2000 and works full-time on the farm.
- Cornelia Heim (45): Apprenticeship as a civil engineering draughtswoman in 1998, works full-time on the farm. In winter she also works in gastronomy.
- Michael Heim (22): Trained farmer since 2020, helps out at home and works approximately 60 % for a construction company.
- Patrick Heim (20) Apprenticeships as dairy technologist and farmer.
- Fabio Heim (17) Apprenticeship as retail specialist.
- Silvan Heim (14) Year 8 at school, training aspiration: dairy technologist.

We don't have a large direct sales operation. We only sell around 400 kg/year of milk to my two uncles. We deliver the milk we produce to Aaremilch AG, a large milktrader. There we have a monthly contract volume of 10'232 kg. Because we have a cooled milk tank, we can deliver the milk every 48 hours to the milk collection centre in the village. On average, we deliver 8324 kg of milk per month at a price of 63 cents (equal to 63 € cents).

We do not market meat directly either. The bull calves leave our farm with just under 80 kg. All female calves are reared on the farm. First calving age is about 30 months. There are a lot of cows for sale. We normally sell cows at the auction in Thun. Sometimes cattle dealers or private individuals come to the farm and want to buy one or several cows.



Cow Stefanie from the Heim family herd, she is the cow closest to the breeding goal.

Breeding aims for our Simmental cows

Milk yield 1st lactation 6000kg, 2nd lactation 7000kg, from 3rd lactation >7'500kg

Milk content Fat 4,00%, Protein 3,50%

Milkability Average milk per minute 2,40-2,80 l, milk share of front teats 45-50 %

Fitness traits Persistence >85%, Calving Interval 365 days, average > 6 lactations, Somatic cell count <100'000

Size of cows Height around 150 cm, weight 650-800kg

Body shape Good depth, width and muscularity, straight topline, pelvis slightly inclined, dry joints, correct position, much hoof set.

Udder Seat high, wide and long, good central and centre ligament, well veined.

Teats Functional shape and length, good placement, vertical position.

Written by Michael Heim, excerpts of a longer description of his farm for school purposes.