

Swiss-Entrepreneurs:

A portrait of Jens Ohnemus.

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JENS OHNEMUS: A GENTLEMAN FARMER AND BANKER!



After an illustrious career in the banking world Jens Ohnemus founded Blue Harvest – a wealth-management company specialised in sourcing and acquiring farms in Denmark.

With pictures of cows and wheat fields decorating the walls and miniature tractors in the bookshelves, Jens Ohnemus' office clearly reflects his passion for the farming world, and evokes memories of his childhood in Denmark.

This farmer's son has an original background to say the least. While his heart pined for the plains of the north, it was in the banking world that he built his career. UBS in Zurich, Merrill Lynch and BNP Paribas in Geneva, a Director and Group Manager...

The future seemed all mapped out. Then in 2008, in the midst of the banking crisis, the urge to create something all his own pushed this Dane to leave everything behind. "I wanted to challenge myself, to start my own business. It was now or never," he fondly remembers. During the last weeks of 2009, at the age of forty, he founded Blue Harvest – initially working out of his home office with a colleague.

"I have a cross-cultural background. I experienced British culture when studying at Cambridge, worked the American way at Merrill Lynch, immersed myself in French culture at BNP Paribas and INSEAD, and of course absorbed Swiss culture by living here." Like the bridges that connect Denmark, Jens is a connector. He forges links between his cultures, and nurtures the idea of building a bridge between his banking background and his rural origins.

Jens is a Dane with a Swiss touch thanks to his Swiss-German ancestry. "Switzerland is my second homeland. In fact, Switzerland and Denmark are quite similar: small in size, large in economic performance, and the two flags are red and white with a cross. Two countries characterised by innovation and respect for the environment."

There is one difference, and not a small one either: Denmark is a flat country without secrets. "Yes, I have the open and balanced temperament so typical of Danes," comments Jens Ohnemus. "With us, hierarchy takes a back seat. We feel that everyone should have their say, to let their voice be heard. We are very transparent, that's for sure. I try to be the manager who listens. It is a system where decision-making and implementation are fast and efficient. What you see is what you get!"

Within four years the young Danish entrepreneur had assembled a likeminded team of five, and rented office space near rue du Rhône in Geneva. 2013 saw the launch of his idea of investing in Danish farmland. “We sell turnkey farm projects and manage the whole production chain from harvesting the grain to raising livestock, all in close cooperation with the local farmer. These are sustainable and long-term investments, thanks to a stable climate and political system.”

“The expected return on investments is 4 to 6% per annum depending on the case, notwithstanding the potential rise in the value of the land,” explains the company founder. Through Blue Harvest Jens Ohnemus has realised his dream of becoming an entrepreneur and a farmer. He recently acquired his own pork and livestock farm in the Jutland region of Denmark, and has assembled a team of local specialists to manage it. “This is our pilot farm – I’m on site at least every two months, often bringing potential clients to visit it with me.” Until recently, the laws restricted foreign ownership of farms. This is no longer the case. Jens Ohnemus took advantage of these legislation changes to launch his business. While keeping one foot in the banking world he also became a farmer.

Gentleman farmer! A dream with a price tag: the cost of admission for purchasing a Danish farm through Blue Harvest starts at two million euros...

*Translated by Carl Ankarcrona/sowrite.ch from the original article in French published in Bilan magazine, Switzerland 11.06.2014.