Chrystalla, 71, Cheese maker, Akaki

1. **Can you tell me a few things about yourself? Where/when were you born? Did you study? Did you live abroad?**

*I am 71 years old, will be 72 this year. I was born in Akaki but my husband is from Zodia. I went to school until the 3rd class (total 6 classes). I came out of school to help my parents in the farm, this is how it was done back then. A mistake if you ask me, a person needs to be educated. This is why I insisted my children finish school, then they could do what they liked. When I got married, I became a housewife…occasionally I’d help my mother make cheese. My father had sheep and my mother made halloumi cheese (traditional Cypriot cheese) and sell together with sheep milk to other people in the village. I continue to do that when my mother became too old to do it herself. My husband became a farmer when we got married, growing crops, which he’d sell to the market. This is what we know…farm life.*

2. **Where you an owner of other businesses in the past? For how long have you been an entrepreneur?**

*I converted a space next to my house into a shop. There I put a kazani (big pot) and I use the milk from our own sheep to make the halloumi and anari (traditional unsalted cheese). Sometimes I make pittes tis satzis (traditional pies) or I bake bread and I sell to people in Akaki, those that know that Mrs Chrystalla does this job. I don’t know what you mean by business…I am making halloumi and sell it in my shop. Everyone knows where I am, I don’t have a sign outside.*

1. **Can you tell me the background of the business you have now? When and why did you open the business? Are you the only owner? Is the company registered?**

*I don’t have a registered company but my husband did until recently when he sold vegetables to the market. We go together. We had the sheep from my father, of course through the years we didn’t manage to keep the same amount of sheep. We have a few sheep, some hens and rabbits. As I know how to make homemade halloumi and anari, people were asking and continue to ask me to make and sell to them. It is not the same as the store-bought halloumi. Try and you’ll see.*

1. **How many employees does the business have at the moment? How were they hired, based on which criteria?**

*I don’t have any employees at the shop but a few years ago I had a problem with my back. I wasn’t feeling well so we got someone to help out with milking the sheep, he is a good boy…my husband had him in the fields together with other boys from Sri Lanka.*

1. **Would you say the business is successful? Which factors in your opinion contribute to its success/failure?**

*The shop doesn’t cost me anything, it is next to my house…I am in the house and if someone wants to buy and yell at me and I hear them. Maybe some electricity from when I am making the cheese but it doesn’t have many costs so I am making money. Sometimes, people come late and I have already sold the cheese and I tell them come again next week. I am telling you, like my halloumi you’ll fine nowhere! If you do something good with meraki (Greek word similar to passion) you will make a good name for yourself. Remember that!*

1. **Can you tell me what are the main factors that led you to become an entrepreneur?**

*An entrepreneur [sighs]… if my daughters heard you right now they would tease me. I knew how to make halloumi, we had the milk from the sheep so I know it is good, we don’t buy from others. I feed my family healthy homemade cheese and I also sell to good people who know about good cheese.*

1. **What problems would you say you encountered in keeping your business in operation?**

*One day I went to my daughter’s, she just had a baby so she needed help. I left my mum … bless her soul… in charge of watching the heat of the pot. There needs to be a steady temperature when the milk boils. She was old, she forgot and we nearly got fire! I am telling you, I was so scared that day. First, for my mother and second for my house which is next door!*

1. **Thinking about the experience you’ve gained and the experience you continue to gain as a business entrepreneur, would you say you are suitable and capable in maintaining a business even if it has internal or external problems?**

*If I am not suitable who is? If you ask here in the village whose halloumi is the best, they’ll say my name. Maybe I am a woman of few knowledge but I know how to make good halloumi. Not like this so-called halloumi young people buy from the supermarket. Halloumi light with less calories and silly things like that. The village halloumi is full fat, needs to be salty and full of flavour…not rubbery like the Kristies (local brand) one. But young people who live in the city, they don’t understand. I often think...when women my age die who will continue to make the halloumi the way it should be? With the way we are going, the original taste will be forgotten.*