Endogenous Regional Development: 
Cottage Industries in Tasmanian Agriculture

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A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of 
Doctor of Philosophy

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Declaration of Authorship/Originality

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Anna Gralton
Abstract

This study explores a ‘culture industry’, that of the artisanal food industry in Tasmanian agriculture. Food production and consumption is a highly controversial, socio-political process, whereby diverse values and beliefs, levels of resources and interests struggle for survival. The resultant manifestation of this struggle – in the form of products, production methods and actions – stand testament to the diversity. This thesis demonstrates the politicised nature of food production by examining the paradox of enterprise expansion while retaining a number of identities/tags associated with small scale food businesses and their products (i.e. cottage industry, artisanality and quality food). The implications of these findings for the development of the artisanal food industry are also explored.

Two phases of data collection were involved in exploring these issues. A first phase was a scoping study involving document analysis, semi-structured interviews with local knowledgeable and a range of cottage industries, and initial fieldwork. The second phase involved a case study analysis with three small-scale agricultural cottage enterprises (SACEs) and three that had expanded (ESACEs). The case studies primarily involved in-depth, semi-structured interviews.

The research found that the cottage industry identity was meaningful as applied to the SACEs, but also that many of the defining characteristics of a cottage industry were also applicable to the ESACEs. Artisanality was found to be an appropriately assigned label in both the small-scale and expanded enterprises, with a set of specific characteristics, approaches and the principals’ role as ‘artisanal entrepreneur’ authenticating the ESACEs and their products as artisanal. It was found that the enterprises under study aligned with Ray’s (2003) notion of the cultural approach to Endogenous Regional Development (ERD) and particular place and space characteristics; whilst ‘the short food supply chain’, a ‘collective form of social action’, assisted in facilitating the preservation of these associated identities/tags. In examining the retention of food quality meanings upon expansion, the same set of characteristics and qualities that are potentially used and applicable to the SACEs in defining quality were also found to be relevant in the ESACEs.

In examining the cottage industry, artisanal and quality identities, this research demonstrated that there are more similarities than differences between the SACEs and
ESACEs, and that growth can occur without necessarily compromising values and actions; all of which enable identity preservation and value-adding potentialities. Moreover, the current use of the ‘short food supply chain’ holds significant promise for this industry as it assists in building relationships and trust between processors and consumers who share similar values and beliefs surrounding food production and consumption. In so doing, food products are heavily laden with eco-social information, which can assist in challenging unsustainable agrifood production and related practice.
In memory of my Grandad

John Austin Gralton

11.04.1919 - 21.01.2006

Their kids in turn proud of them
Because of lessons passed on to them
I love that dream – that real life dream
I know for certain they are at rest – I feel serene
For their world is wide and the grass is green
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Abbreviations

Acronyms

ABC - Australian Broadcasting Commission
ABS - Australian Bureau of Statistics
AFFA - Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry – Australia
AIP - Artisanal Identity Preservation
BRS - Bureau of Rural Services
ERD - Endogenous Regional Development
ESACE - Expanded Small-scale Agricultural Cottage Enterprise
DARDNI - Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, Northern Ireland
DED - Tasmanian Department of Economic Development
DFAT - Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
DPIWE - Tasmanian Department of Primary Industries, Water and Environment
EPAT - Environmental and Natural Resources Policy and Training Project
FICT - Food Industry Council of Tasmania
ITC - International Trade Centre
PYO - Pick Your Own Operation
RIRDC - Rural Industries Research & Development Corporation
SACE - Small-scale Agricultural Cottage Enterprise
SFSC - Short Food Supply Chain
SSIC - Sindh Small Industries Corporation
TQA - Tasmania Quality Assured Inc
UNESCO - United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
WBI - World Bank Institute

Conversions

1 acre = 0.405 hectares