

# Food supply chains: the long and short of it

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**Inaugural lecture, 28 April 2009**





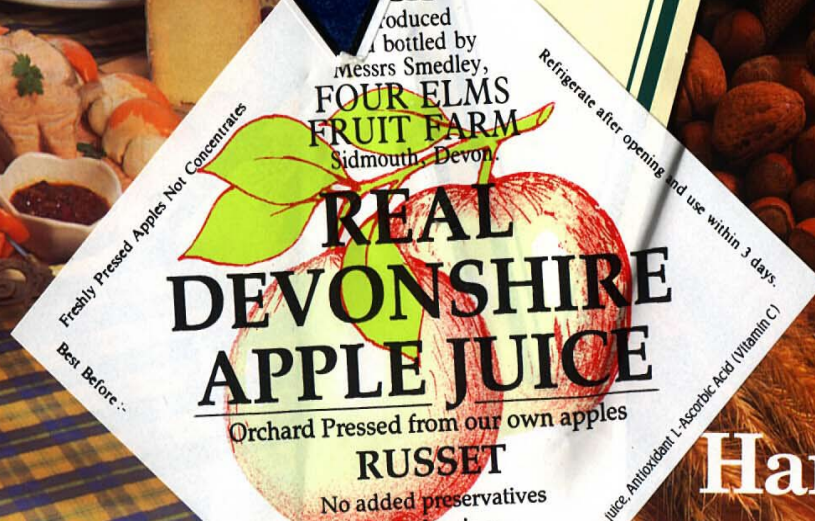
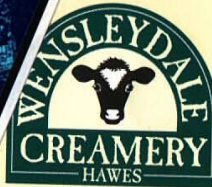




# The best of Welsh Food



Traditional Cheddar cheese has been produced at Sturminster Newton for over eighty years.



**Hand Baked in Devon**









**‘Could it be that lagging rural regions will concentrate on farming the environment and producing quality food products for niche markets, while the prosperous agricultural lowlands continue to produce food for the mass market using modern technology?’ (Ilbery, 1996 p. 25)**

## **Food supply chains: the long and short of it**

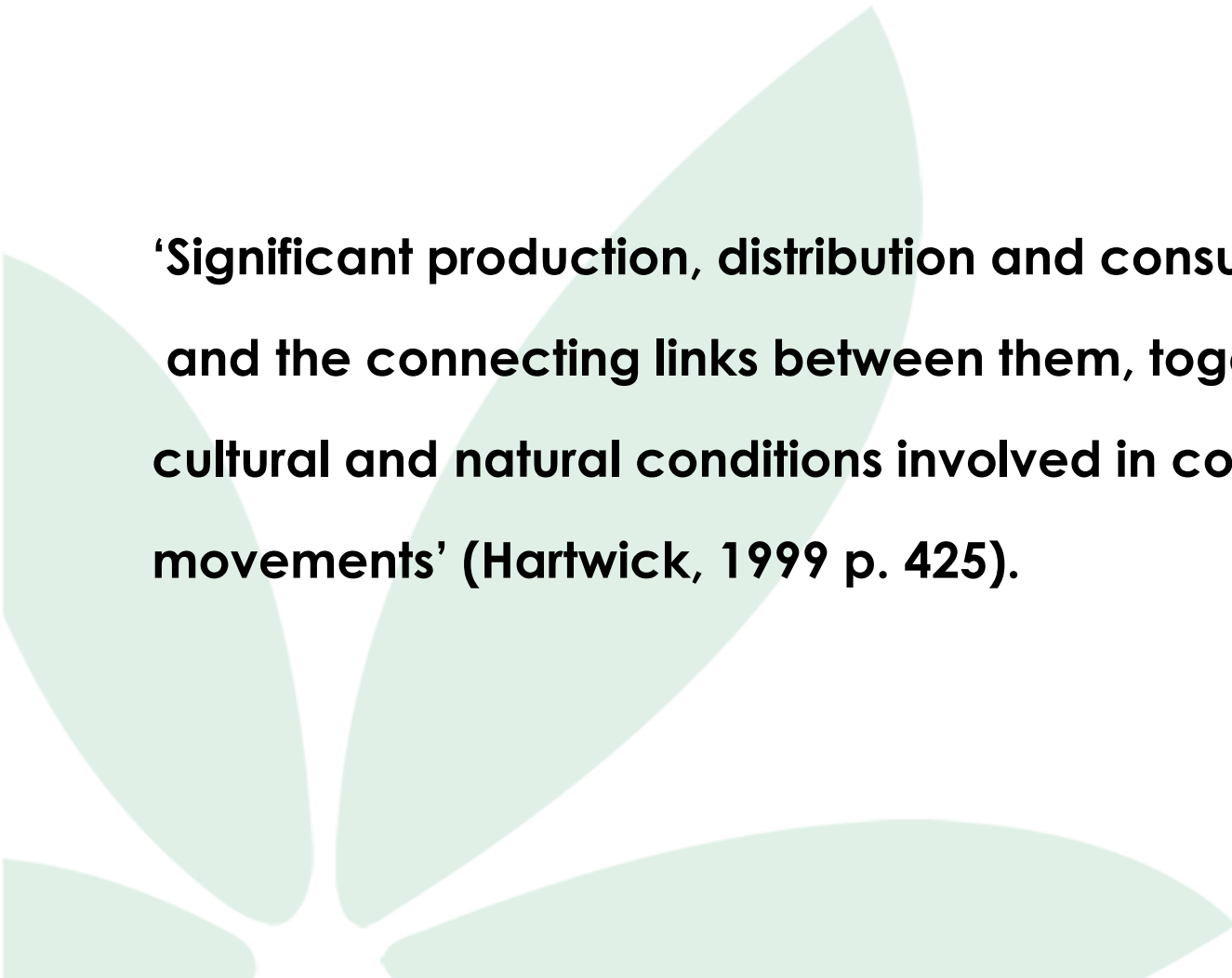
- **Introduction and aims**
- **The food supply chain concept**
- **Delocalisation & lengthening of food supply chains**
- **Relocalisation & shortening of food supply chains**
- **Food supply chains: long or short?**



## Introduction and aims

- **Changing nature of food supply chains:**
  - localisation
  - delocalisation
  - relocalisation
- **Food supply chain as a spatial concept**
  - product, process and place
- **Impacts on the changing geography of agriculture and food**
  - focus on delocalisation and relocalisation
- **Essentially a developed world/production perspective**
  - little consideration of consumer dimensions

## **The food supply chain concept**



**‘Significant production, distribution and consumption nodes, and the connecting links between them, together with social, cultural and natural conditions involved in commodity movements’ (Hartwick, 1999 p. 425).**



## The food supply chain concept

- **Movement of foodstuffs from farm to fork**
- **BUT, need to consider 'upstream' as well as 'downstream' dimensions**
- **A network rather than a chain e.g. R&D, flow of information, government regulation**
- **Power, control and added value**
  - 'downstream' nodes in long food chains
  - return to the producer in short food supply chains

# THE AGRI-FOOD SYSTEM

## Agri-technology Industries

Machinery  
Chemical (fertilizers, pesticides)  
Biological (breeding, GMOs)



## Factors of Production

Capital, credit, financial services  
labour market  
Information, training  
Supply of seeds, chemicals, equipment



## Farming Industry

Landed/property interests  
Farm businesses  
Farm/property servicing agencies



## Intermediate

Wholesale assembly  
Imports/exports  
Storage and transport industries  
Cooperative/state collective marketing  
Policy and intervention arrangements



## Food Industries

Processing, manufacturing, packaging  
Wholesale distribution  
Catering  
Retailing



## Regulation

State health and nutrition policy  
State food quality and safety monitoring  
Food security measures



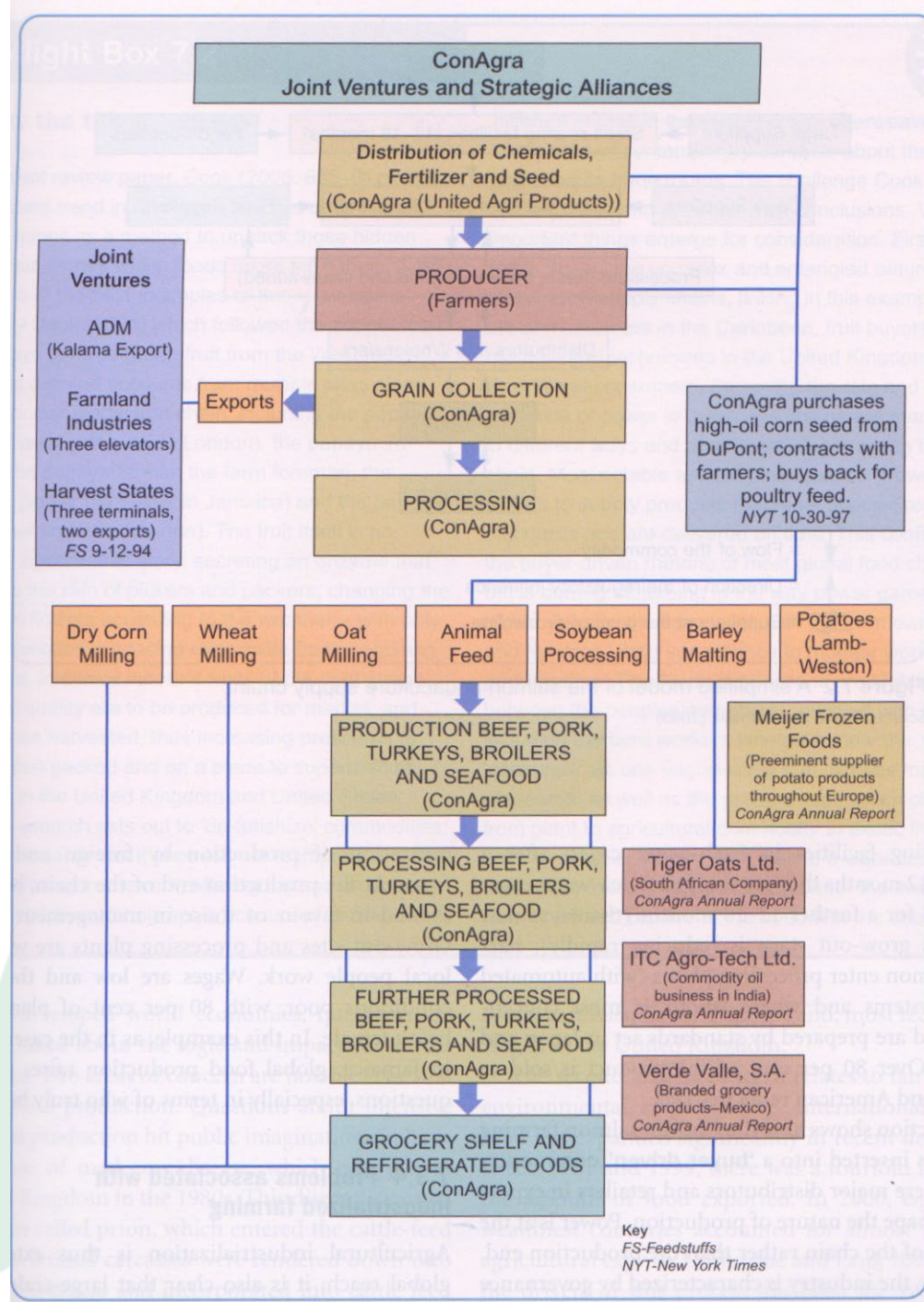
## Food Consumption

Household labour in food preparation  
Purchasing power  
Food habits, culture



## **Delocalisation & lengthening of food supply chains**

- **Modernisation of farming**
  - intensification
  - specialisation
  - concentration
- **Industrialisation of farming**
  - integration of farming into the food chain
  - appropriationism
  - substitutionism
- **Continued obliteration of farming base**



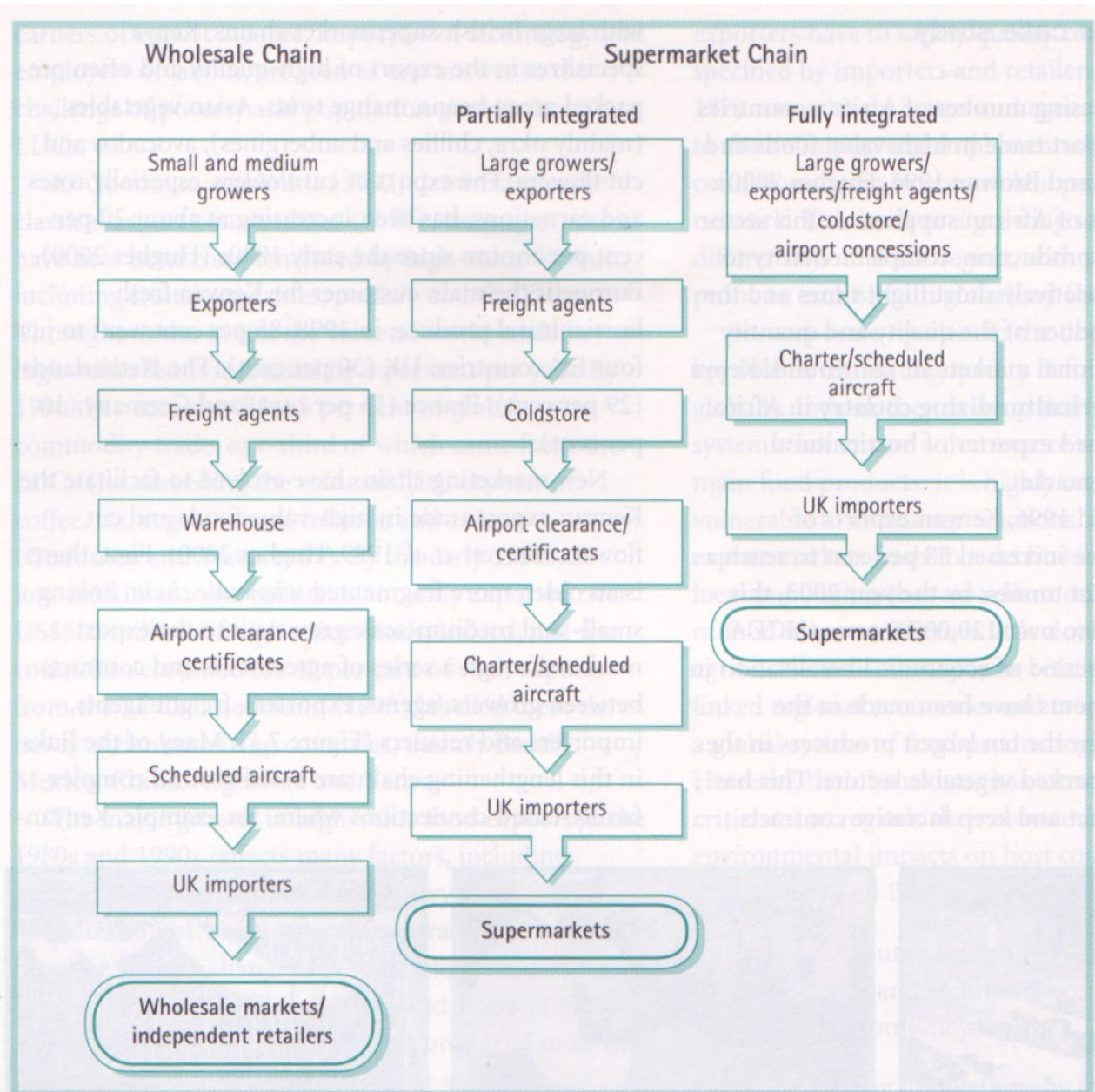


## **Delocalisation & lengthening of food supply chains**

- **Key actors**
  - agribusiness
  - TNCs
  - corporate retailers
- **Processes increasingly global = longer chains**
- **Place of production 'distanced' from point of consumption**
- **Relocation of production function to NACs e.g. Kenya, Brazil**

## Kenyan case study

- **Why Kenya?**
  - SAPs
  - trade liberalisation
  - low labour costs
  - good physical conditions (7 crops per year)
  - good communication links
  - consumer lifestyles in 'north'
- **Two main types of chain**
  - *Wholesale chain*: smaller growers, Asian exporters/importers, sold loose. About 20%
  - *Supermarket chains*: partially (25%) & fully-integrated (55%)











TESCO  
RUNNER BEANS  
450g e

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SAVE  
**£1**  
~~£4.99~~

FRESH FLOWERS  
10 KENYAN  
ROSES

SAVE  
**£1**  
~~£4.99~~

FRESH FLOWERS  
10 KENYAN  
ROSES

SAVE  
**£1**  
~~£4.99~~

FRESH FLOWERS  
10 KENYAN  
ROSES





## **Disbenefits of industrialised farming**

- **Inequalities in production, technology & incomes in NACs**
- **Increasing marginalisation of farming in 'lagging' regions in EU**
  - technological treadmill
- **Health and food safety**
- **Unfair trade/food miles**
- **Hedgerow removal/soil erosion/water & air pollution**

**BUT, globalisation is**

- partial and contested
- mediated by local/regional relationships



## **Relocalisation & shortening of food supply chains**

- **Increasing interest in foods of local/regional provenance**
- **Short food chains to 'reconnect' product & place**
- **Alternative food chains/geographies e.g. farmers' markets, box schemes, farm shops – in more marginal farming areas**
- **Enable farmers to add/retain value & regain some power/ control**
- **Local food as**
  - instrument of rural development e.g. Europe
  - social movement against industrialised farming e.g. USA

## **Policy Commission on the Future of Farming and Food**

**Curry Report (2002), following FMD outbreak in 2001:**

**Described UK farming as ‘*unsustainable* in every sense of the term’**

**And ‘*detached* from the rest of the rural economy and environment’**

**Emphasised the need to:**

**‘*reconnect* our farming and food industries, to *reconnect* farming with its market and the rest of the food chain, to *reconnect* the food chain with the rest of the countryside, and to *reconnect* consumers with what they eat and how it is produced’**

Conventional	Alternative
Modern	Post-modern
Manufactured/processed	Natural/fresh
Mass (large-scale) production	Craft/artisanal (small-scale) production
Long food supply chains	Short food supply chains
Costs externalized	Costs internalized
Rationalized	Traditional
Standardized	Difference/diversity
Intensification	Extensification
Monoculture	Biodiversity
Homogenization of foods	Regional palates
Hypermarkets	Local markets
Agrochemicals	Organic/sustainable farming
Non-renewable energy	Reusable energy
Fast food	Slow food
Quantity	Quality
Disembedded	Embedded



## Relocalisation: key concepts

- **Short food supply chains (SFSCs), of three types:**
  - face-to-face
  - spatially proximate
  - spatially extended
- **Social embeddedness:** importance of social relations e.g. trust, loyalty, respect, regard, acknowledgement
- **Turn to quality:** link between quality (product) and locality (place) e.g. AOC. BUT, are different indicators of quality
- **Defensive localism:** 'local' more important than 'quality', even if produced conventionally



Doddington Dairy

Doddington Dairy

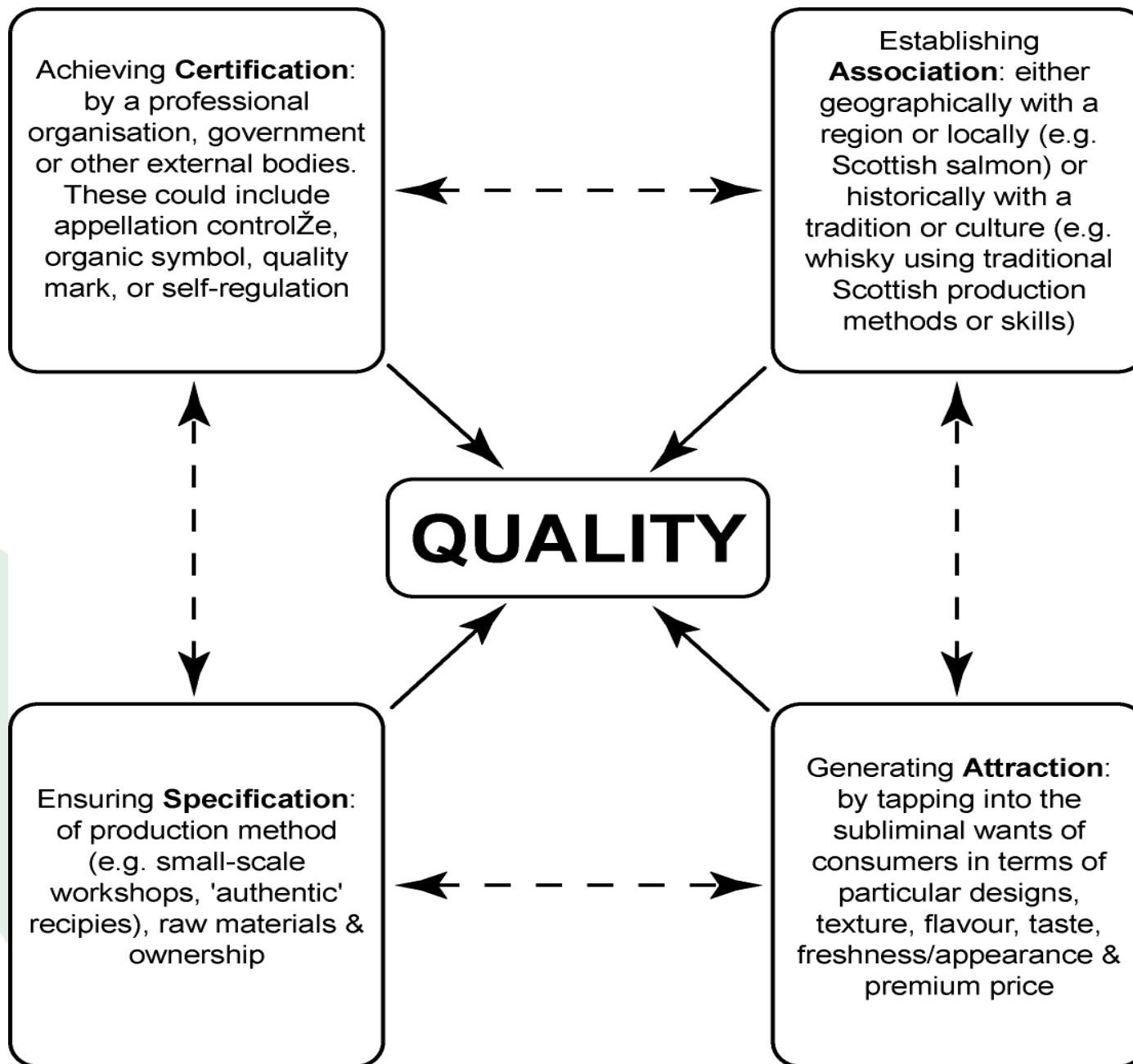
Northumberland Cheese Co

01264-811000

TOOLS

ANOT  
GR  
ACK  
ATLI  
DAE

Doddington Dairy  
Dairy Eat Cream  
Sausages  
Ice Cream





## Locality or local foods?

### Locality:

- Produced/processed in specific place, but retailed widely
- Focus on *food networks*: quality, labelling. A 'weaker' alternative e.g. PDO/PGI designations
- Favoured by RDAs/Regional Food Groups: economic development

### Local:

- Produced/processed/retailed in defined geographical area
- Focus on *food networks*: embedded chains, nature of relations. A 'stronger' alternative
- Higher potential for local economic development/sustainable

**'Process labels'**



**'Product labels'**



**'Place labels'**



PDO




PGI





## **Food relocation: a critique**

- **Is there an 'alternative' or local food economy?**
  - **How local are some of these short food supply chains?**
  - **How sustainable are they?**
  - **How is the downturn impacting on producers of local/ locality foods?**
- 

## **An 'alternative' food economy?**

- **'Dipping in and out' of conventional chains e.g. to purchase inputs, use abattoirs, distribution/retailing outlets**
- **'Alternative' is not just local: international fair trade/organic movements**
- **In danger of becoming mainstreamed or conventionalised e.g. domination by bigger/intensive production units & conventional marketing channels**
- **Appropriated by supermarkets: 'local food for local people'**

## How local?

**Use of box schemes, farm shops, farmers' markets etc. BUT:**

- **Where do 'upstream' inputs come from?**
- **The case of Craster kippers: upstream and downstream**
- **Organic farming in Sussex**
  - Specialist inputs (seed & feed) from outside the area
  - Henry's organic store cattle





## How sustainable?

- **Sustain's 'idealist' sustainable food criteria**
- **SUPPLIERS: 6 case study businesses in Scottish/English borders**
- **5 out of 6 not really sustainable**
- **The one exception: Steve**
- **Problems of 'lagging' region, poor infrastructure, low population/demand. Any 'added value' easily lost**

## **SUSTAIN: Sustainable Food Chains (2003)**

- **‘Sustainable food’ criteria:**
  1. Proximate
  2. Healthy
  3. Fairly/co-operatively traded
  4. Non-exploiting
  5. Environmentally beneficial
  6. Accessible
  7. High animal welfare standards
  8. Socially inclusive
  9. Encouraging knowledge and understanding



# Assessing food system sustainability

	Organic Hill Meat	Cheese / Ice Cream	Berwick Honey	Galashiels Bakery	Craster Kippers	Borders Shellfish
Proximate	✓	×	×	×	×	×
Healthy	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Fairly Traded	✓	✓	×	×	×	×
Local Employment	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Environmentally Beneficial	✓	×	✓	×	✓	×
Accessible	×	×	×	×	×	×
High Animal Welfare	✓	×	✓	na	×	×
Socially Inclusive	×	×	×	✓	×	×
Knowledge of food culture	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Total (out of 9)	7	4	5	4	4	3





Naturally Reared - Naturally Good



TRACEABILITY  
GUARANTEED

## Organic Hill Bred Beef

The cattle used by Northumbrian Quality Meats in the production of their Organic Hill Bred Beef, are of breeds whose ancestors may well have grazed these high Northumbrian hills generations ago.

Breeds such as Aberdeen Angus and Galloway cross cows, famed for their hardiness and quality of meat, are grazed extensively and naturally on the wild open hills.



Organic Hill Bred Beef from Northumbrian Quality Meats is processed the old fashioned way, by maturing for a full 21 days before jointing to enhance flavour and tenderness. Bringing back beef the way it used to taste; Natural, Healthy and Delicious.



Like all products from Northumbrian Quality Meats, Organic Hill Bred Beef comes with our unconditional guarantee of traceability - Allowing the consumer absolute peace of mind regarding welfare and the integrity of the product.

Available from September onwards from selected quality butchers or delivered to your door from:

Northumbrian Quality Meats

Telephone: 01434 270184  
[www.northumbrian-organic-meat.co.uk](http://www.northumbrian-organic-meat.co.uk)

From Mountain Top to Table Top



TRACEABILITY  
GUARANTEED

## Organic Blackface Lamb

Reared in the clean, natural environment of the Northumbrian heather-clad hills by farmers with years of experience and tradition in animal husbandry

These farmers select and rear this hardy breed in the time honoured way, symbolising the very purity and goodness of the land.

The animals graze upon an entirely natural organic diet consisting of over 100 species of wild grasses, mosses, heathers and herbs in a landscape that has changed little since the days of the Border Reivers.

And it is this tradition, together with today's improved production methods which gives the lamb its unmatched tenderness and sweet flavour.



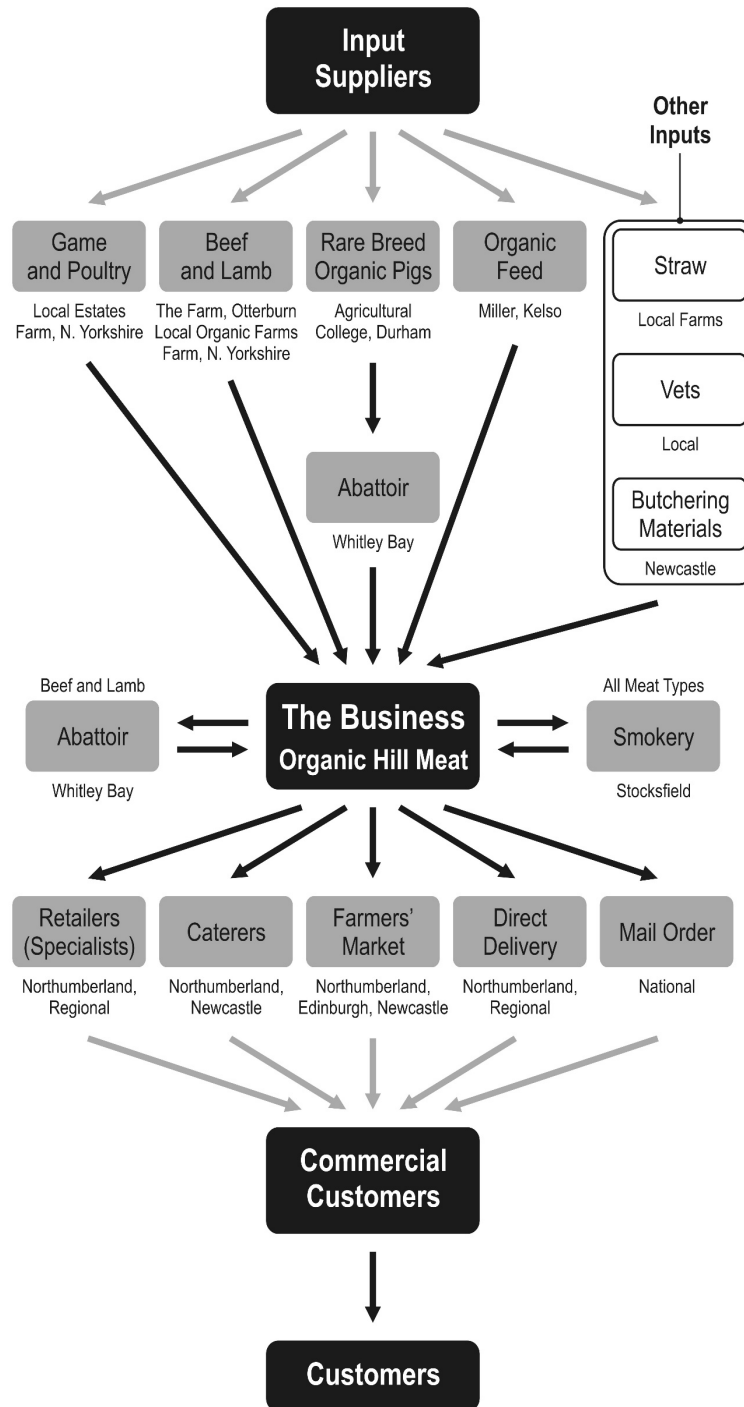
Blackface Lamb is a naturally lean meat, nutritious, versatile and very easy to cook - In fact the ideal meat for today's busy lifestyle.

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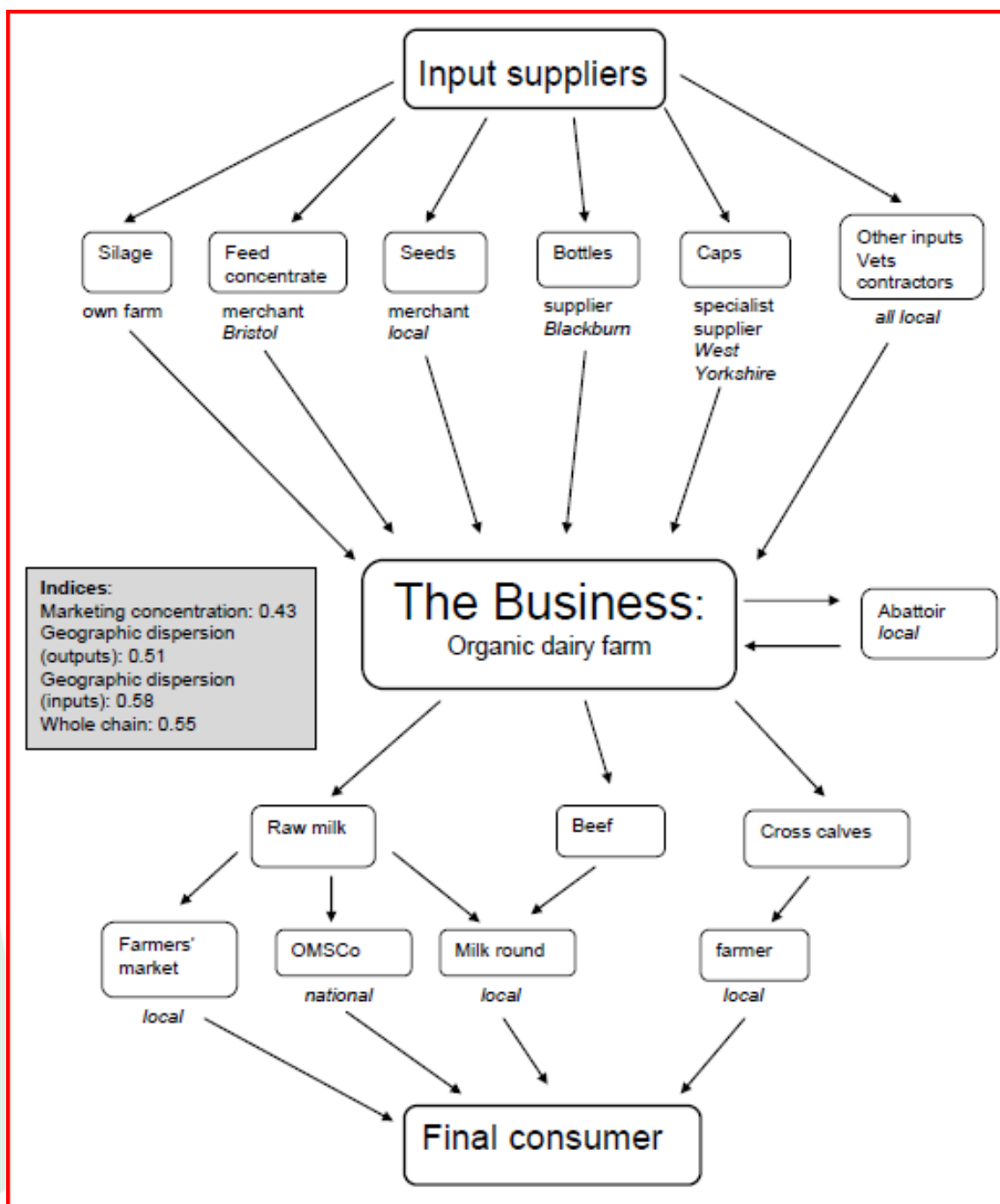




## **Impact of downturn?**

### **Organic farming in Sussex**

- **Direct marketing/adding value struggling**
- **Competition from national box schemes/supermarkets**
- **Adding value: hard work; lack of time/capacity/marketing skills/labour/profit**
- **Development of hybridised chains: national & local**





Organic milk for life



## **Food supply chains: long or short?**

- **Changing relationship between the three 'Ps'**
- **Geography matters: prosperous/lagging regions**
- **Consumer 'biting back': food provenance**
- **'Stronger' and 'weaker' alternatives**
- **Hybridised chains: long and short**
- **Food security: recent calls for increasing food production in the UK**