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A link between modernity and tradition: the case of several regional food products

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A link between modernity and tradition : the case of several regional food products

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Abstract

This article attempts to look into some of the links between modernity and tradition, the link to place and globalisation, using several "protected origin products" as the basis of the investigation. It is argued that the concept of protecting products, despite its ancient tradition, is a thoroughly modern occurrence with its emphasis on the local and the collective. Can consumption theory help provide part of the explanation for the (re)emergence of regional speciality foods in the UK ? The research naturally crosses boundaries between traditional disciplines and this work draws on a wide range of literature, especially that of post-modern theories of consumption. Consumption has become a major focus of research in the social sciences and humanities. It is increasingly perceived as central to understanding the historical development of modern industrial society and the social and cultural structure of post-modern societies. Focus on the supply chain brings to the debate a more holistic approach. Secondary information about the products under investigation, interviews with those in the supply chain and results from focus groups will be used to investigate the identified tensions. A final section will involve a discussion of PDO/PGI in its historical and current context in the UK, with a brief introduction to intellectual property law which questions the importance of Regulation 2081/92 in the UK, in comparison to many southern European countries. The authors believe that, although abstract, a link can be conceived between theory and practice, and that UK consumers, along with many producers, intermediaries, retailers and institutions, may understand the protection at a deeper level than previously thought. The Regulation was met with much scepticism, and many remain ambivalent, but it is shown that those in the supply chain have positive hopes for the future.

1. INTRODUCTION

"*Bordeaux* suggests wine, both in France and abroad ; *Cognac* suggests spirits ; *Roquefort*, cheese...." ascertained Bienaymé (1991 p 95). Montanari (1994) argues that "an indefinite number of authors could be cited" attesting to the fact that the place of origin was always a factor in the appreciation of food. The fourth century BC Gastronomic guide of Archestratus of Gela precisely lists the types of fish that could be caught in the Mediterranean and where they were best, for example. There are many products in Europe that, both domestically and internationally, are recognised as originating in certain areas. Many of these are food items. The list of Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) and Protected Geographical Indication (PGI) products officially registered by the European Commission, through Regulation 2081/92, is considerably less than the possible list of known products, yet the list will grow. Those presently covered are shown in Figure 1.

The majority of EU Reg. 2081/92 registrations (to date) concern France and the Mediterranean countries ; this is most probably due to the different approach to food and food quality between Northern and Southern countries of Europe (Segale et al 1997). In addition, the registered PDO/PGI products reflect the agricultural specialisation of the country concerned : i.e. Italy's registered products are mainly different cheeses, processed meats (salami, ham, sausages, etc.) and olives and olive oils, the majority of PDO beers are from Germany, cheese from France. Portugal, France, Spain and Greece have high numbers of PDO products.

This exploratory article attempts to place an abstract concept into grounded practice. As such, there are many omissions and several leaps which may leave the reader somewhat perplexed. This should not deter, as the paper will add to the debate about protecting regional products and will therefore be useful in that respect. The paper commences with an overview of the present state of consumption theory, which leads the reader to focus on the sociology of consumption and therefore post-modern theory. Two main ongoing discussions in the postmodernism debate are "globalisation" and the "search for novelty". Sociologists have noted that their corresponding opposites, a search for place/rootedness and tradition can also occur as a reaction to modern society. The article then moves from abstract theory to look at food choice and the emergence of a trend towards speciality foods. Does the foregoing theory help provide part of the explanation for this emergence ? Where do regional speciality foods fit into theory and reality ? It is argued that, although abstract, there could be a link, and that consumers may value local traditional products as a modern reaction to the globalising world. The paper then looks at the history of these types of products in the UK, arguing that although they have been protected, it is a different form of protection to the southern states of Europe. The northern states have concentrated on protecting consumers ; the southern states have protected their producers. The last section of the paper draws the various parts together by using interview data from 3 protected origin product supply chains (consumers, producers, intermediaries, retailers and institutions) to discuss the concept of PDO/PGI in the UK, why the idea was met with much scepticism, and what hopes those in the supply chain have for the future.

2. ACKNOWLEDGING CONSUMPTION THEORY

2.1. Consumption studies - Where are we ?

Consumption is studied by relatively few at present, and the areas for research are still considerable. In *"Acknowledging Consumption"* (1995) Dr. Colin Campbell and Prof. Ben Fine both noted the need for further, broader but more grounded, research into certain areas. One such area is identifying consumption as being more about private life experiences than "identity" confirmation to oneself and others (that is the importance of place, tradition, authenticity...). Fine stresses the importance of looking at the supply chains of commodities. The following paragraphs give a brief overview of the study of consumption at the present time.

Political economists, such as Fine (1995), have argued that consumption is dependent on continuing and shifting relationships between the physical and social properties of commodities. It is therefore important to look at this relationship ; i.e. the whole supply chain. Fine argues that the creation of the exchange value of the commodity is quite distinct from the social creation of its use value[1]. The meaning of consumption involves a relationship between the physical and the social. Geographers too have transcended the boundaries between the economic and the cultural, and are distinctly cross-disciplinary. Much research centres on how the length of supply chains and the pace of activity have increased and become more complex, especially the internationalisation of the food industry (Jackson and Thrift 1995).

Research into consumption by sociologists has, until recently, been predominately empiricist and generally related by a concern with social welfare and the unequal distribution of nutrition (Mennell et al 1994). These studies aside, there has been no dominant orientation to be discerned until very recently. The theoretical phases in the field, it is suggested, have followed those in anthropology and sociology. This was, firstly, functionalism, then structuralism and now emphasis is from a developmental post-modernist perspective. It is to this area that we now turn.

2.2. The age of anxiety[2] and postmodernism

Interestingly, Campbell (1995) argues that topics that were considered frivolous, and trivial (fashion, advertising and shopping) are now considered critical to understanding contemporary post-modern society. The present premise is that the economy is structured around the selling and promoting of goods, rather than their production (prevalent in economic and social theory previously). Society's members treat high levels of consumption as indicative of social success and personal happiness (Campbell 1995). This view is widespread, whether or not this is an accurate description of contemporary (British) society. The current postmodernity[3] debate focuses on two major aspects :

1. Globalisation
2. The search for novelty

Both of these have their counter forces, and, as such, globalising, and modernising forces often result in a search for place and tradition, i.e. rootedness. One reaction to rapid cultural change is to reaffirm the value of tradition. In the face of the cult of the new, some seek out authentic or shared sets of customs that can be protected, defended or reproduced. This, we argue, is at the abstract heart of regional speciality foods and Regulation 2081/92.

2.2.1. The global Vs the local

In order that psychologically rooted existential needs for identity and security can be realised, we have to develop a sense of place (Sack 1988, Giddens 1990a). Such integration is becoming increasingly problematic to achieve, as place is "compromised" in the globalising world (Thrift 1994 p 222). The individual attempts to re-place himself in the world and regain a sense of perspective (Giddens 1990a) while accepting that the whole will never be known. As a result many consumers form an attachment to their current residence or where they were raised (Giddens 1990b). The more globally interrelated the world is, the more individuals cling to place and neighbourhoods, region and ethnicity, tradition and heritage. However cosmopolitan people are "there is still an insistent urge for roots,... who are we and to what space/place do we belong ?" (Harvey 1990 p 427). Ralph (1976 p 31) argues that this is mainly about the feeling that "this place has endured and will persist as a distinctive entity even though the world around may change". Martin (1981 p 16) argues that in the last few decades the new phase of development has given "affluence and a new possibility of freedom and individuality ; what it takes away is a natural rootedness and automatic structures of belonging".

2.2.2. Novelty Vs tradition

It is argued by consumption sociologists that this dichotomy between the local and the global may for many result in the post-modern paradox of felt anxiety and personal choice. Baudrillard (1988 p 48) argues that individuals aim to experience pleasure by consuming new items with "a universal curiosity...in the areas of cuisine, culture, science, religion, sexuality etc.". However, not only are many interested in the new, many are simultaneously needing the security of the familiar. One possible result is an urge for tradition, the reinvention of traditions and the attempt to imagine community where none exists. The literature based on the tourist experience also argues that individuals seek novelty but are, at the same time, deeply rooted to place and tradition. MacCannell (1973, 1989) and Urry (1990a and b) have written extensively on this subject.

This is not to say that tradition is a major part of people's lives. There has been a secular decline of both old tradition and custom as society finds the past increasingly less relevant as a model or precedent for human behaviour. In the private lives of people, traditions now occupy a much smaller place than the old traditions in agrarian societies. However, the central tenet of tradition is the tension between "the wish for security" and the "wish for new experience" (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983). Hewison (1987) believes that the impulse to preserve the past is part of the impulse to preserve the self. Without knowing where we have been, it is difficult to know where we are going. The past is the foundation of the individual and collective identity, objects from the past are the source of significance as cultural symbols. Continuity between past and present creates a sense of sequence out of chaos and since change is inevitable, a stable system of ordered meaning which enables us to cope with both innovation and decay. The nostalgic impulse is an important agency in adjustment to crisis. It is a social emollient and reinforces national identity, especially when confidence is weakened or threatened.

However, most authors are unanimous in suggesting that consumers want a certain "re-presentation" of the past - a cleaned up heritage, which is safe and sterile, unconsciously distorted. Lowenthal (1985) argues that this is inevitable as "every act of recognition alters what survives. We can use the past fruitfully only when we realise that to inherit is also to transform... we must concede the ancients their place (p 412).

2.3. Food choice and speciality foods

Warde (1997) argues that the pattern of food choice in modern societies is shaped by :

- The constraints of custom ;
- The demand for novelty ;
- Concern for health.

The first two have been discussed in more theoretical terms, above. Custom provides a powerful break on change and habits are passed on and are relatively resistant to change whether that is associated with cycles of fashion or with deliberate attempts at modification made by the state, professional bodies, pressure groups or commercial interests. The demand for novelty is an inherent feature of modern consumerism. It acts as a force for change, constantly pushing against the limits and by customary belief and practice. Thirdly, health concerns can produce pressure for change towards a healthier lifestyle. These three are in competition since they offer contradictory images of what it is that constitutes acceptable dietary practice. Custom has proved resilient though nutritional advice and health education campaigns have made their mark.

2.3.1. Regional food products

The UK speciality food and drink sector has an estimated turnover of £3 billion, and employs about 20,000 people (The Grocer 1997). Most importantly, this market is growing. Food From Britain defines a speciality product as "unique, regional in character or simply traditional, handmade, or targeted at a niche market" (The Grocer 1997). The common characteristic is the producer's "single minded dedication to excellence achieved through care, craftsmanship, quality of ingredients and attention to detail". Businesses involved in the speciality food and drink sector can vary in size from the small supplier running a delivery service around delicatessens, farm shops, speciality food shops and catering outlets, to those selling to manufacturers and wholesalers. What the future brings for these speciality and local food products is heavily debated. There are two major opposing views. The "price theorists" are generally pessimistic. They argue that the consumer buys mainly on price and speciality foods cannot compete with big brand rivals. The "quality theorists" respond that customers are prepared to pay more for good food providing they have a clearly defined reason, quality. They are keen to buy British whenever possible, but admittedly not at any price.

"In direct and apparent contrast to the pattern of food preferences, which would seem to suggest a waning of British food, another trend can be seen emerging... that points in the opposite direction... food nostalgia" (James, 1997 p79). This could be merely part of a stable element to British eating habits (Warde 1997) relating to the familiar, the well tried and the traditional. Many of the traditional articles of the English diet have been lost (i.e. suet pudding) or become less popular (according to Burnett [1966] since W.W.II the British consumer has eaten less beef, mutton and bacon, less sugar, bread and potatoes, less butter and jam, less fish and fewer eggs). However, the number of British beers, breads, farmhouse cheese and apples available have sharply increased in the last 20 years.

Tregear, Kuznesof and Moxey (1997) studied consumer perceptions of regional speciality foods in Northern England (including one PDO product, specifically, Newcastle Brown Ale). They examined the "meaning" of place in relation to food (i.e. the extent to which the consumer recognises and values place). Undertaking a series of focus groups, they found that regional foods are not only defined by place and human related factors, but also implicit factors such as perceived authenticity. Revell and François (1997) listed the benefits of such products as perceived by UK customers : taste and flavour, traditional and craftsman-like quality, health and safety. Traditional products are, arguably, about nostalgia, heritage, authenticity which consumers buy because of the "appeal of the past" (Lash and Urry 1995). Is there more to it than this ?

Hughes (1998), Fuat, Firat and Shultz (1997), Brown (1993 and 1995) and Mennell (1985) have argued that there is a range of phenomena which interact and contribute to the interest in these food products. These can be broadly classified into two groups, from the consumer and the trade angles.

2.3.1.1. Consumer Viewpoint

Several authors argue similarly to the discussions forgoing. Increasing market fragmentation and diversification characterises modern marketing (Brown 1995). The fragmentation of consumption has led to increasing consumer demand for specialised and customised products (Kinsey 1994). Consumers are increasingly affected by global events outside their control. As a result they seek comfort in national/regional/local heritage and traditions, including food. People still make strong associations between certain foods and geographical locations (Yudkin 1956). In the mind of the consumer are specific names, production methods or particular foods associated with the geographic areas from which they originate (Brown 1993 and 1995). Modern marketing is being channelled away from the concept of generalisation and a mass marketing approach to one oriented towards the individual i.e. the niche character of speciality food markets (i.e. product and consumer uniqueness). Contemporary consumers of speciality foods seek premium quality, uniqueness and superiority in their food (Kupiec and Revell 1998). In addition, there is seen to be an ageing population backlash – consumers yearn for seasonal and traditional fare (Hughes 1998).

A second argument is that the resurgence of traditional foodstuffs is a conscious marketing attempt to persuade the upper middle class into a new niche market. "Traditional" British food is not "on the whole, the provenance of mass consumerism, family food purchasing or of large-scale supermarket shopping" (James 1997 p 80-81). Time is required to seek out, purchase and prepare the necessary specialised ingredients. To patronise restaurants starred for particular regional cuisines can be extremely expensive. Speciality foods reinforce a strict stratification of society as their price excludes certain strata from sampling them (Odone 1996). Consumers distinguish also between drudge versus leisure shopping. Local products are invariably in the "nice to buy" leisure category (Hughes 1998) and therefore remain in the niche market.

Food is considered to be much more than merely fuel for the body (Hughes 1998). It is used by consumers to make statements about themselves e.g.

1. The "Green" credential (consumers are worried about "food miles").
2. Compassion (support for the "small trader" and "fair trade' issues).
3. Consideration for animal welfare.
4. Concern for the disintegration of local community.

Consumers are increasingly concerned about food safety. There is a resulting desire to make association with the food producer through traceability. While "local" engenders trust, small can also mean sloppy and a reduction in quality (Hughes 1998). Consumers are now primarily interested in buying quality food (Mintel 1998) and are increasingly enjoying experimentation and adventure in the eating "experience" (Brown 1993 and 1995).

2.3.1.2. The supply chain and technology-led viewpoint

Multiples are desperate to differentiate and focus on "nice-to-buy" fresh and prepared foodstuffs because of the present mature status of grocery markets. In addition, retailers are increasingly emphasising the importance of speciality food segments. Information technology developments have become accessible to small firms and allow supermarkets to deal with smaller-scale suppliers. There are also emerging high value supply chain opportunities (e.g. farmer shops/markets, home delivery, petrol mini-marts) and pressure from other retail competition, and lobbyists, which are changing supermarket purchasing polices/practices. The food service sector is in growth mode and restaurants are keen to have local offers that are not available in mainstream supermarkets. In addition, the power of passion is an important factor - owner-operators of local speciality food products "live" their businesses and impart this excitement to the customer (Hughes 1998).

2.4. Where do regional speciality foods fit in ?

2.4.1. Theory

The article commenced with abstract theory which attempts to help provide part of the explanation for the emergence of regional speciality foods. It is argued that, although abstract, there could be a link, and that consumers may value local traditional products as a modern reaction to the globalising world. Protected origin products are intimately related to place, both in terms of consumers' own region and from others (i.e. knowledge of other places). Consumers become familiar with (and attached to) certain products, especially if their knowledge and experience of the place is closely affiliated with that product. Their satisfaction and confidence is higher if they are surrounded by items that have importance to them. Although consumption is not necessarily specific to the area, the idea that they can be tied to a place is very important. Very much related to this is the French idea of *terroir*. This is the belief that specific regions or places can comprise essential characteristics which are due to a particular geographical environment with its inherent natural and human components. Products produced in these unique areas are thought to be special and distinct. Scheffer and Sylvander, (1997) define *terroir* as "an homogeneous geographical entity founded on natural and human factors (where) particular natural conditions conjugate with an original and ancient know how". *Terroir*, in physical terms, includes the plant, subsoil, siting, drainage, and microclimate. Beyond the measurable ecosystem, there is an additional dimension – the "spiritual aspect that recognises the joys, the heartbreaks, the pride, the sweat, and the frustrations of its history" (Wilson 1998 p 55). Traditionally the concept was used for French wine (1998) but it has broadened in its use and is at the heart of Regulation 2081/92.

Theoretically and practically then, while PDO and PGI production finds itself in tension

- Producers tend to be "production" orientated, having little recourse to changing the product if they wish to remain traditional, hand crafted, artisanal producers, remaining within the bounds of their specifications, to comply with the Regulation.
- Many are attempting to sell into modern supply chains which need "market oriented" products. Powerful retailers attempt to improve products to attract more consumption. Consumers are seen at the apex, no longer producers according to the marketing and socio-political literature

There is much hope for the products relating to the localisation and tradition "backlash" to society. Globalising and modernising forces result in a search for place and tradition, i.e. rootedness. This can be tied (somewhat tenuously maybe) to the environmental debate, rural idylls, golden age ideas, the "tourist gaze" etc. A reaction to rapid cultural change is the reaffirmation of the value of tradition. In the face of the cult of the new, some seek out authentic or shared sets of customs that can be protected, defended or reproduced. The relationship of product to place could be of fundamental importance to the (alienated) educated consumers of today who at certain times search for authentic, traditional products for security. Another factor, not discussed here is the prevailing ethnocentrism of many in Britain today.

The authors argue, that on a somewhat abstract level, the concept of PDO and PGI, or rather regional speciality foods, has some relevance to the British consumer. We now turn to the history of place related traditional products in the UK, arguing that although they have been protected, it is a different form of protection to the southern States of Europe. The northern states have concentrated on protecting consumers, the southern states have protected their producers.

2.4.2. Origin marks in the UK

Appellation of origin marks have covered a wide range of products and geographical regions since the twelfth century, even in England (Firth 1997). Clothiers in England adopted marks which designated fabrics of superior quality at this time and wines especially have borne denominations of origin. "Made in" labels have identified product origins for at least 100 years and are now part of corporate strategy and compulsory under law. Until the late 1800s production in the UK was localised and trade limited to goods from those regions which had a resource-based comparative advantage. Origin information was only relevant on a regional level. From the turn of the century origin stereotypes became national or international (Phillips and Firth 1996). This began with the new concept of the "nation-state", advances in transport and communication. Stereotyping enabled people to help understand the new products found on the market. The period after the 2nd World War saw the influx of foreign products into the country. International trade had, by then, exploded. Foreign (i.e. American, Japanese, Italian) goods became commonplace. East European products were shunned because of ideological differences, those from developing countries were generally considered poorly made while those from industrialised "Western" countries were sought after. From the 1970s to the early 1980s, the protectionist sentiment engendered by the global recession led to national governments paying more attention to "rules of origin" legislation, to protect domestic producers. Native industry was protected by government and producer groups, an example of which is the "Buy British" campaign. Companies became discriminating in the use of identities of origin. These were emphasised for regions or countries with unique characteristics (e.g. Jersey Royal potatoes, Scotch beef and lamb), and suppressed when reactions might be negative.

Since that time there has been an ever-growing use of origin identities by companies marketing their products. The UK Government, in addition, has become more proactive and systematic in promoting Britain's image abroad (Blair's *Cool Britannia* for example). Origins and their images have come under intense scrutiny in the context of trade blocs (i.e. at what point does an *originally* Japanese value added product *become* British and so gain free access to the EC ?). The globalisation of business has fuelled an intense debate about the merits and continuing relevance of national origin identifiers (Papadopoulos and Heslop 1993).

Regulation 2081/92 was, however, seen by many in the UK (the Netherlands, Denmark and Germany can also be included, in what can be called "the northern approach") to be somewhat superfluous because of trademark, passing off and trade description legislation already in existence. The British have traditionally had obvious recourse in law for producers protecting their products against "copy cat" products. Producers can trademark their products, and benefit considerably from the added value that this brings to their products or they can instigate a passing off action. Most importantly the main aim of "protection" is to protect the consumer against unfair and misleading practices, and to avoid distortion of competition due to misleading information, reflecting the legal ramifications of the system and the maturity of the consumer markets in these northern countries. Customers should be in a position to base their decisions on the criteria that they regard as important and should be protected from attempts to mislead. The protection of the geographical names and of the interests of producers are of secondary importance in the UK approach. The protection of geographical indications is a by-product of legislation intended to protect the consumer against fraudulent claims concerning the origin of products. The UK has traditionally had no registration, and no official list, of protected geographical names. The only references are the lists of products appearing in bilateral agreements. There is no UK equivalent of the INAO (i.e. a body to lay down conditions of production that would entitle producers to use a specific name).

The northern approach is totally independent of product "quality". There is no need for the product to exhibit special qualities or for its qualities to be due primarily to its origin or source. The requirement is for consumers to think, at a particular time, that a product bearing a regional name actually comes from the region. There is no need for any evidence of a specific method of manufacture, or of specific features due to the origin of the product, or of its authenticity.

The very concept of designations of origin in Britain (and in other northern countries, like the Netherlands and Germany) is therefore totally different from that in France and the Mediterranean countries. Southern European countries traditionally built up systems of protection for geographical names instead of trademarks because of the importance of agricultural and rural concerns. The food and agriculture sector in Southern Europe is characterised by small-scale production. Protection provides small firms with a means of promoting their products without having to make substantial investments which are needed to promote an individual trademark.

Until 1992 the systems differed radically, both in terms of the concept and the practical application. The Regulations attempted to bring together various existing national systems and enable each Member State to apply the most convenient means of protection. The overall framework cleverly enabled freedom within the Regulation especially in relation to defining the features of products. The rules establish voluntary systems where scope is left for individual initiative and for continuing co-operation between producers. Most importantly, it is understood that the Regulation is not about "quality labels", in that a PDO product does not need to have a higher quality than other substitutes products, but has be specific, and different from substitutes and it must be somehow linked to the area. This "uniqueness" is therefore a "quality"[4]. However, there is much debate between countries about this meaning. There are still considerable problems in interpretation but as long as the individual countries are allowed their freedom of intellectualising and interpreting the Regulation all should be relatively harmonious.

Brouwer (1991 p 645) maintains that, for the UK, "the introduction of a Community system for the protection of geographical indications of foodstuffs can be welcomed". Primarily, it provides a useful way of advertising certain regional products in the UK. Brouwer argues that "the protection of origin is in the first place used as a marketing tool, rather than as a means of enhancing the quality of products". Is this the way forward for the UK ?

3. PDO AND PGI PRODUCTS : MARKET, SUPPLY CHAINS AND INSTITUTIONS

"PDO and PGI products : market, supply chains and institutions" is an EU funded research project undertaken by institutions from 6 European countries[5]. The objective is to analyse the economic and institutional conditions for the development of PDO and PGI products in the EU and to provide recommendations for the EC and other involved institutions. This hopes to contribute to an appropriate degree of harmonisation in decision making between the local, regional, national and community levels. In all 21 PDO and PGI supply chains have been analysed and compared.

The two UK researchers looked at three very different products which were chosen for a number of reasons. Firstly, because there is a comparison between countries of the various supply chains, it was imperative that the UK researchers study one "cheese", one "lamb" and one "fruit or vegetable" product. The Jersey Royal was the easiest to identify, as it is the only fresh produce PDO product in the UK. Scotch lamb was chosen because it is an interesting case, covering the whole of Scotland (the other lambs are actually included within this designation i.e. Orkney and Shetland lamb, both from Scotland), and it also has a PGI designation. It is important to study the differences between the two designations. West Country Farmhouse Cheddar was chosen as "Cheddar" is a generic product and it was thought this might add a further dimension to the debate. These three products will be briefly introduced in section 3.3, in terms of their value, their relation to place and tradition and how consumers perceive them.

3.1. Methodology

Focus groups allow participants to express their underlying thoughts and feeling about products. Information obtained is qualitative rather than quantitative[6], and the outcome is more impressionistic than definitive (Sampson 1986). The aim of research was to find out how traditional regional foods and the concept of PDO and PGI are perceived by UK consumers. For each product, one group of respondents was recruited from the region to which the product is linked ; one group was recruited from a medium sized town outside the region and a third from a large city outside the region. The survey included nine focus groups, each one consisting of eight women, aged between 25 and 55 in BC1 socio-economic groups. The participants were asked to the discussion knowing they were to be discussing "cheese", "lamb" or "potatoes", but had had no mention of the words "PDO" or "PGI" when recruited. The group discussions were semi-structured interviews and the interviewers tried not to lead the questions. The focus groups lasted on average one to one and a half-hour.

The material for the supply chain analysis was based on empirical research. This took the form of semi-structured in-depth interviews with representatives from the actors within : a) the supply chain itself ; and b) the social, economic and political system within which the supply chain operates and with which the members of the supply chain interact. Guidelines were developed by the authors to establish the objectives of the supply chain, action taken by each of the actors and the chain performance. The authors interviewed over 150 people, including :

- Producers ;
- Intermediaries (i.e. representatives from marketing groups, processors, slaughterers, wholesalers ;
- Buyers, technologists and legal advisers from the major multiple retailers ;
- Independent retailers (including butchers, delicatessens and green grocers).

The material for the institutional analysis was based along similar lines to the supply chain analysis, but the questions were framed about the interpretation of the Regulation. The authors conducted a series of in-depth interviews with senior officials from approximately twenty national institutions. These included the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, the Patent Office, the Meat and Livestock Commission, Food and Drink Federation, the Dairy Industry Federation, the British Meat Manufacturers Association, the National Consumer

Council, the British Retail Consortium and the Consumers Association among others.

3.2. The three products

3.2.1. West Country Farmhouse Cheddar (PDO)

West Country Farmhouse Cheddar is a handmade cheese, produced by around 20 cheese makers in the counties of Dorset, Somerset and Devon. The cheese could also be produced in Cornwall but there are no producers based there at present. Cheddar was originally made in Somerset in the 16th century. Truckles were stored in the caves by Cheddar Gorge, but the name comes from part of the cheese making process when the curds are turned by hand to allow the whey to drain away. This is known as "cheddaring" the curd. All the producers still make their cheese by hand in this traditional way using milk from their own, and sometimes neighbouring, farms. The truckles, or the more contemporary blocks, are stored for a minimum of nine months.

West Country Farmhouse Cheddar is the most "artisanal" product of the three studied and corresponds the closest to the southern European concept of what a PDO/PGI product should be. Some of the producers are passionate about retaining the traditional methods of production. However, others are not, with a few larger producers who find the PDO specifications "unnecessarily" tight.

The cheese is distributed and consumed all over Britain. Consumption is high in the West Country where the cheese is held in high regard. It is perceived by "connoisseurs" to be excellent, though the standard varies between producers and even between cheeses. The cheese is both mature and strong which is increasingly popular in the UK. Some of the product is, however, perceived to be "standard" mature cheddar and it does not receive a price premium, competing fiercely with other farmhouse and Canadian cheddars.

3.2.2. Scotch lamb (PGI)

Records suggest that sheep have been kept in Scotland since the tenth century, though only became popular after the late eighteenth century. There are now approximately 12 thousand sheep farmers in Scotland and approximately 9 million sheep. They are generally reared on grassland, though Scottish geology is varied and complex – much of the land is mountainous especially in the North and West. Rainfall is high and the winters severe. To gain PGI status lambs must be "finished" for at least 60 days in Scotland, also slaughtered and dressed there, they can be born elsewhere ! Many lamb producers struggle in the difficult terrain, and do produce lambs in a similar manner to the past. However, the majority are modernising production, raising lambs to specification for the abattoirs and their retail customers.

Scotch lamb consumption is generally confined to Scotland itself, as lamb is also produced in quantity in England and Wales. Some lamb is sold through speciality butchers in England, and a very small percentage is exported. There is very little difference in the taste of Scotch lamb to the other substitutes. In fact it is Welsh lamb that is perceived as superior by many in the south. However, it has gained somewhat of a reputation in Scotland for eating qualities based on freshness, flavour and tenderness. In addition, the Scots are fiercely nationalistic, especially in the late 1990s because of Devolution from the rest of the UK, and Scotch lamb is therefore seen as local, and important.

The PGI status of the product gives it the reason for its lack of "difference", there are few real links with the land or of traditional methods. It is the reputation within Scotland that allows the lamb its protection.

3.2.3. Jersey Royal potatoes (PDO)

The Jersey Royal can only be produced on the island of Jersey off the south coast of the UK. The southern position allows for a mild climate with few frosts, and the potato can be harvested earlier than any other early potato in the UK. The volumes are small as there is restricted hectarage on an island, also the potato is not high yielding and the fields fragmented on the island. The vast majority is exported to the UK mainland, and some is exported abroad. Local consumption is high but obviously limited in comparison to the export volume. The Jersey Royal takes 6.5% of the UK early potato market. The price of the potato is high in relation to other UK potatoes. It is extremely well regarded by consumers who look forward to the product coming onto the market. It is the most famous branded potato.

The Jersey Royal has been protected mainly to limit production to the island, and to gain an extra unique selling point over other early potatoes which are encroaching onto the Jersey Royal "season". Although the product is said to be unique there is actually little to warrant it as "artisanal production". Farms are increasingly run as businesses, with specifications imposed by the major multiples. Some potatoes are planted and lifted by hand, but the large majority are lifted by machinery, and little of the crop is fertilised by seaweed (which is bought in industrial bags !).

4. RESULTS FROM THE RESEARCH PROJECT PDO AND PGI PRODUCTS : MARKETS, SUPPLY CHAINS AND INSTITUTIONS

The next section will use the case studies to draw out evidence to support (and /or dismiss) the theoretical views of this paper. We will look at the evidence to see whether some consumers do appreciate the products in relation to place and tradition, the concept of PDO and PGI, and are prepared to pay a premium for them.

4.1. Markets

4.1.1. Consumers perception of PDO and PGI

In the qualitative consumer survey undertaken by Wilson and Fearne (1998), it was shown that very little is known in the UK about Protected Origin products. For a summary, see Table 1. When the respondents were asked whether they had heard of Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) it was clear that very few had in the UK[7], though several asked whether it was like the *Appellation Contrôlée* mark and many immediately guessed it was something to do with Yorkshire pudding, or wine, or Tequila. A proportion of consumers knows that "Champagne has to come from Champagne" and (prompted) most have seen the *Appellation Contrôlée* marks on bottles of French wine, French cheeses etc. Some mentioned patents and the Trade Descriptions Act.

Most people tried to formulate what PDO/PGI might be (i.e. link between the produce and the region, "is it like the sherry/Yorkshire Pudding/tequila debate ?") and some respondents thought it a quality assurance. A number of products were suggested as potential specialities or products that might have a geographical indication (ranging from Aberdeen Angus beef to Devon toffees). Some respondents guessed wrongly (i.e. Cheddar has to come from Wells).

Many of the respondents thought the legislation was a good thing, but this was by no means universal. "It obviously does (matter), to people who want to buy from a certain area" and several were positive about the benefits to the consumer. Products were more likely to be genuine and the quality standards would necessarily be high. The participants were, on the whole, very sceptical about the truthfulness of the promises made by retailers and manufacturers, and thought that the protection conveys honesty. Some respondents were willing to pay more for products that were acknowledged to be the best and seen as superior, but these were generally not things they would buy every day. Regionality was seen by some as important, and protecting a local product could bring positive benefits to the area.

Several participants thought the concept of PDO a "daft" marketing concept which will artificially keep prices high. One respondent thought that it was a form of snobbery and would most likely go for the inferior product as a result. Taste, and quality of the product, was perceived to be more important than protecting the origin of the product. If the substitute product were identical would it matter ? Quite a few respondents did not see how it could benefit the consumer but instead the producer (who several thought earned enough in subsidies anyway !). Several thought it conveyed protectionism for little reason.

Table 1 : Perceptions of the Protection by Consumers

What is PDO/PGI ?	Other products :	Is PDO a good idea ?
▪ No idea (the majority of responses) ▪ No-one else can use the name ▪ Protecting a niche market ▪ Original authentic product ▪ Quality mark ▪ Marketing boost for small producers ▪ EEC ruling ▪ Assurance of origin Then once prompted.....	▪ Champagne ▪ Whiskey ▪ Wine ▪ Sherry ▪ Pastis ▪ Produce of France ▪ Appellation Contrôlée ▪ French cheese ▪ Camembert ▪ Brie ▪ Cheddar ▪ Kiwi Fruit ▪ Apples ▪ Mexican Tequila ▪ Prawn cocktail crisps ▪ Yorkshire pudding ▪ Aberdeen Angus ▪ Lincolnshire ham ▪ Devon toffees	No : ▪ Euro nutter idea ▪ Daft ▪ Marketing ploy ▪ Keeps the price up ▪ Giving enough in subsidies anyway ▪ Unless you are a connoisseur does it matter ▪ Premium pricing Yes : ▪ Retains quality ▪ Benefits the farmers ▪ Benefits the consumer ▪ Important to support local industries. ▪ Consistency of taste ▪ You know what you're getting

4.1.2. Consumers' perceptions of place

How do consumers look at the places where the traditional regional foods are produced ? For all three case studies the focus group results are positive. All three are seen as holiday destinations, traditional rural areas where the countryside is attractive and clean. For a summary see Table 2.

Jersey is thought to have a lovely climate, and the island is full of character and charm, flowers, Jersey cows and millionaires ! For those who live in the island it is also held to be extremely positive. Several commented that the island has a "hold" on the inhabitants, and although they felt a need to leave it occasionally for a break, they looked forward to returning.

Scotland too is thought to be very beautiful, though the weather is changeable and it often rains. There were several comments of "wonderful" and "beautiful" scenery, with positive remarks over the hills, the heather and the sheep grazing. Those living in England made reference to the relaxed pace of life, men in kilts and the kindly, proud and nationalistic (but occasionally dour) nature of the Scots. Those living in Scotland were extremely positive about the country i.e. "I love the wide open spaces" and "the extremely friendly people", "the pace of life is marvellous". Scottishness is very important to many of the Scots and Devolution was an important topic in the focus group. One woman commented she always buys Scottish products, another remarking that "I really like the ability to be able to choose politically what I want to buy, rather than just on price".

The West Country is thought to be full of small-scale farms, winding lanes with high hedgerows and "happy cows". It conjures up a picture for some of green fields, farmhouses and traditional rural images of fat dairymaids and farmers wives. Several participants mentioned cream and clotted cream, scrumpy (strong cider) and strong farmhouse cheddar cheese, intimately relating food to place. For those living in the West Country they too have a picture of "a little fat farmhouse wife, with pails of milk" but agree that this is just a "marketing ploy" and they would "see straight through it" if a company attempted to use this image to sell products. They like the area, but do not have the chocolate box rural image that those participants not from the area had of the West Country.

4.1.3. Consumers' perceptions of traditionality

Consumers vary in their response to whether products really were traditional and authentic or really industrialised fakes. Most important was the feeling that traditional products must benefit the consumer, there is no point in retaining a romantic image if the product is not up to modern standards. However there was genuine support for the idea in terms of patriotism (Scotland) and heritage (the UK as a whole).

Some participants thought Jersey farms were small and specialised, others thought the opposite with lots of machinery and commercialised production : "They try to present a romanticised image of hand dug potatoes and you think you're getting individual potatoes but I would think its much more of a business". Consumers realise that "producers want the quality to be right, and if the pesticides and everything makes that then we have to accept it". An interesting comment was made by a Jersey woman "apparently what we don't want is malformed ugly potatoes,... I think (the retailers) have made us want things that are perfect...". She thought it would be very hard to change these demands for quality back to the traditional "odd shaped vegetables" of the past. A certain amount of nostalgia crept into the various focus group sessions i.e. food used to taste better when they were not "bred to be the same size and shape" though one participant mentioned that "we spend less on food now than we've ever done, proportionally. It's cheaper to buy food. Remember the 50's..."

In Scotland respondents were pragmatic. If farmers want to remain traditional in their way of producing then that was fine, but they "can't keep tradition if its not going to benefit the consumer, or be economical or feasible". Farmers are not going to "put money into (traditional methods) if it's merely a tradition. If the traditional way is working then keep it". Another argued that it a better product is made "the traditional way" but this suggestion came from a person living in Inverness who remarked "I think us city people see the country life in a romantic way".

Some participants from the West Country were much more cynical. One woman commented "I think that this word Farmhouse cheese is sounded round wildly, really - they're more than likely to be made in a processed stainless steel vat rather than somewhere else on a farm.... They could be made by the millions of gallons as by 50 gallons...". However, a couple of the participants were adamant that traditional products were "home-made", and they were more likely to be natural and probably organic. They certainly would not be mass-produced. The downside to traditional products was that "nowadays" they were considered to be posh, and therefore would probably have a high price tag.

Table 2 : Place and Tradition in relation to Regional Speciality Foods

Jersey Royals	Scotch Lamb	West Country Farmhouse Cheddar
What is Jersey like ? ▪ Warm/ hot ▪ Clean, healthy ▪ Earth – soil I is fantastic ▪ Lots of flowers ▪ Jersey cows ▪ Need to get off it occasionally - has a hold ▪ Millionaires, no VAT	**What is Scotland like ?** ▪ Wonderful ▪ Relaxed pace of life ▪ Men in kilts ▪ Beautiful scenery ▪ Hill sheep ▪ Hills and heather ▪ Good food ▪ Proud, nationalistic	**What is the West Country like ?** ▪ Rich creamy milk ▪ Happy cows ▪ Cream and clotted cream ▪ Strong drink, strong cheese ▪ Dairy area, small experimental businesses ▪ Conjures up a picture ▪ Farmhouses vary
Traditional product ? ▪ Slightly sweet ▪ Grown with seaweed ▪ Taste great ▪ Expensive ▪ Earthy taste, firm texture ▪ Small specialised farms ▪ Small scale	**Traditional lamb ?** ▪ Support as an idea ▪ Scotland lends itself to sheep production ▪ Must benefit the consumer ▪ Romantic ▪ Few poor farmers ▪ Modernity is wrong	**Traditional farmhouse cheddar ?** ▪ Posh ▪ Organic, not mass produced ▪ Gimmick, marketing ploy ▪ Home made ▪ More natural ▪ Rinded cheese ▪ Small scale image

4.2. Supply chains

4.2.1. Producers

The interviewed producers had a variety of opinions towards their products, tradition and place. For the majority of the West Country Farmhouse Cheddar producers place and tradition was of great importance. Two producers in particular were adamant about keeping practices traditional, with exact attention to detail. Although cheddar has become a generic product there was a general feeling from all the producers that the authentic product was made in the West Country by hand. Tradition was less important for the Jersey Royal producers, and least important in Scotland.

Place was extremely important to the producers of Jersey Royals. The major advantage of receiving protected status is the inability of others not on the island to sell the product as their own. It was alleged that one of the major retailers had trialed the Jersey Royal potato in Egypt. Fortunately for Jersey the trial was abandoned because the flavour was different. There have also been instances of a non-hand made West Country Farmhouse Cheddar being sold as such, but this is no longer possible, which the producers feel to be positive. Place was important for the Scots farmers, mainly in relation to their own nationalistic feelings that Scotland was a much better place than further south.

The over-riding impression the authors had was that the majority of producers of the three products, however, felt that the business was most important, the product came later (market-orientated rather than production orientated). The products were niche, high value products which were differentiated to the standard and could bring high margins. The protection was an additional marketing tool which would enable products to continue to have a market when market forces suggest this might be difficult.

Scotch lamb producers felt protection for them was not about artisanal production, or about area delimitation. The protection had been enforced "from above" i.e. by an institution. Many felt that the protection would do little for them as there would be little "trickle down" to the producers because of the fragmented nature of each business especially as the supply chain was not well streamlined, and the retailers were felt to be too powerful.

4.2.2. Intermediaries

There was little or no discussion of traditionality or delimitation of place which arose spontaneously with the intermediaries, except in the case of West Country Farmhouse Cheddar where production methods are seen to be vital.

It was thought for all products, by the majority of the intermediaries interviewed, that traditional regional products, and the protection as an added measure, is a good way to exploit a definite market opportunity in terms of competitive advantage. The meat companies were generally unanimous that the protection will bring benefits especially when the export market re-opens, and this also the case for the Jersey Royals and West Country Farmhouse Cheddar which are already exported. It is thought that the producers and public will benefit considerably from the legislation (maintaining the craft tradition and continuing to make/consume a good quality product).

The protection is seen to be important in developing consumer confidence, especially in the meat industry (the meat companies and retailers are seen to be working together in terms of animal husbandry, vet practices, farm assurance etc.) and also with cheese where recent media attention has increased consumer health concerns about raw milk in the cheese-making process. Producing products in traditional ways is for some thought to be "safer" and more secure because that product has survived where others have not.

4.2.3. Multiple retailers

Regional and speciality products are increasingly being stocked by the retailers. One buyer suggested that "the move to regional food is the move away from mass produced blandness". The retailers believe that UK consumers now have a more knowledgeable palate and many would prefer to eat a small amount of something good rather than quantity of inferior quality. They see a trend towards traditional, authentic products and will be increasingly stocking products from regions. One of the major multiples in particular will attempt to sell some products from local producers, though this is potentially more complicated with central buying and the streamlining of the supply base.

The retailers vary in their vision of PDO and PGI. Negative comments included the concern that the protection has little quality (i.e. taste) control links. Why should the fact that a product comes from a certain place and can be proved to be made in a certain manner make it a good product ? In the same vein, the legal advisor was worried that protection could kill "development" of the product. Could production practices change without the inherent nature of the product changing ? Another concern was the tenuousness of those that have been accepted for the protection at the present time. Why should Welsh lamb not be protected when Scottish lamb is[8] ? Customers are intelligent and might be interested, and willing to pay a premium for the protected products, but how would it be possible to persuade them that some (in their eyes equally good) products are protected and others not ? One legal advisor failed to see the importance of PDO considering the Trade Description Act is already in place, and the UK has good intellectual property laws. If the consumer is mislead by the retailers then that is wrong, and their corporate reputation is impaired – it is almost inconceivable that this would happen. In any case, any fraud would be defended by the producer in Court.

Several retail buyers/technologists (and the two legal advisors interviewed) were worried that having the protection could be counterproductive and the producers could restrict themselves in their group-imposed specifications. The logic to this followed several routes. One thought was that any moves to constrict production could possibly be detrimental to the availability of the product or it might increase product availability, but the quality would fall as producers could sell what they liked as the label suggested quality (this could then result in the Jersey Royal, for example, being bought right at the beginning of the season and then discontinued). This discludes economic factors and it is important, however, not to underestimate the consumer.

The majority of the UK retailers are not labelling products with PDO & PGI as yet (though several are interested in the concept). This is because the consumer is, a present, uninformed about the protection and there is no point in having yet another label on the product as the "customer is bombarded with information". UK legislation is so stringent about labelling that suppliers and retailers have trouble including all requirements on the labels. A further problem is the ageing population who have trouble reading the small writing on labels which furthers the issue as to what they should/ could leave off.

All the retailers interviewed thought that if there was a massive market campaign then that would be a different matter and PDO/PGI products could become brands in their own right. Overall they were positive about the protection, if it could in the future help them and they would not have to pay for this privilege.

4.3. Institutions

Many UK institutions were initially sceptical about the Regulation for a number of reasons (see Wilson and Fearne 1999). The UK has since attempted to implement the Regulation once established on a community-wide basis. The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has now "ownership" of the protection in the UK, and has taken some steps towards promoting the protection to interested parties[9]. MAFF believe that the concept ties neatly in with the trend of producers taking control of their marketing, with the (re)emergence of farmer's markets[10] and farm shops. They are increasingly positive about the mark, confident that consumers are increasingly interested in regional traditional products and valuing guarantees of authenticity. MAFF believe that the future is positive for the scheme.

Other institutions interviewed were not so positive, as there seems to be no real interest in the protection in the UK amongst institutions, as yet. Some of the institutions (such as the Food and Drink Federation) were openly hostile to the draft Regulation, and many have yet to change their minds. Regulation 2081/92 is generally seen as protectionist, anti-competitive and of limited use. The application procedure takes too long and it is thought many producer groups will apply for trademarks instead.

CONCLUSION

"Further, broader but more grounded, research" such as that suggested in Acknowledging Consumption has been attempted in this paper. The authors have looked at the supply chains of three products, while simultaneously attempting to tie in abstract post-modern theory relating to the search for place/rootedness and tradition, the emergence of a trend towards speciality foods and a new regulation imposed from "outside". Has theory helped provide part of the explanation for this emergence ? The authors believe that, although abstract, a link can be conceived, and that UK consumers, along with many producers, intermediaries, retailers and institutions, may understand the ideas behind the protection of regional traditional foods at a deeper level than previously thought. The Regulation was initially met with much scepticism, and many remain ambivalent, but as has been shown there are those in the supply chain have extremely positive hopes for the future.

NOTES

(1) He gives the example of chocolate which is a physical object made up of definite ingredients but it offers a wide range of use values, from sweetness through to comfort.

(2) Heading title taken from the book *The Age of Anxiety* (1998) about the close of the 20th century.

(3) An inordinate, pluri-cultural range of styles, techniques and technologies, but...also..an uncertainty and indeterminacy about their use and their authority.... (Dictionary of Modern Thought p 671). Jameson (1991) suggests two metaphors that capture postmodernism : the first is pastiche (copies of copies of copies), the second a breakdown in meaning (i.e. lots of unrelated signifiers).

(4) The authors thank Ms Martine Dufour of the Institut d'Economie Rurale for this clarification.

(5) France, Greece, Italy, The Netherlands, the UK and Switzerland.

(6) Quantitative data was also collected in 1998/1999 but this has yet to be analysed by the authors.

(7) In Jersey, however, it seemed that the respondents did know of the protection and were aware that Jersey Royals had been protected.

(8) There is an application lodged with MAFF at present for the protection of Welsh Lamb as a PGI.

(9) Safeguarding Britain's Food Heritage is a new campaign launched on the 23 June 1999.

(10) See the work by Harriet Festing, Wye College, University of London for more information

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Figure 1 : PDO/PGI products by sector and country

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	Total
Austria			7					3	1			1			**12**
Belgium			1						1			1			**3**
Denmark			2					1							**3**
Finland								1							**1**
France		1	38	2	1	1	46	14	1			5	1	3	**113**
Germany	11	3	4			1	3	2	6		31	1			**62**
Greece		1	20		1	1		29		4		24	1	1	**82**
Ireland															**0**
Italy		1	29				4	24	21			20		4	**103**
Luxembourg							1		1					1	**3**
Netherlands			3					1							**4**
Portugal			14				19	18	15			7		9	**82**
Spain		2	12				6	13	6			4		1	**44**
Sweden			1												**1**
United Kingdom	4		14	6		1	5	1						1	**33**
Total	**15**	**8**	**142**	**8**	**2**	**4**	**84**	**107**	**52**	**4**	**31**	**63**	**2**	**20**	**535**

Source : adapted from the MAFF website (1999).

KEY

1. Beers	2. Bread, pastry, cakes etc	3. Cheese
4. Ciders	5. Essential oils	6. Fresh Fish, Molluscs and Crustaceans etc
7. Fresh Meat and Offal	8. Fruit, Vegetables, Cereals	9. Meat Based Products
10. Natural gums and resins	11. Natural mineral waters and spring waters	12. Oils and fats
13. Other Agricultural products	14. Other products of animal origin	