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# PRODUCT, PROCESS AND PLACE

## AN EXAMINATION OF FOOD MARKETING AND LABELLING SCHEMES IN EUROPE AND NORTH AMERICA



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### Abstract

Considerable academic interest now revolves around the recomposition of specific (or 'alternative') food chains based on notions of quality, territory and social embeddedness. A key to such recomposition is the marketing of 'difference' through a range of accreditation and labelling schemes. Using examples from Europe and North America, this paper examines how 'difference' is constructed by producers and other actors in the food supply chain by combining the attributes of 'product, process and place' (PPP) in a range of marketing and labelling schemes. Results indicate that it is possible to

identify 'critical' and 'territorial development' rationales that influence the ways in which the three Ps are combined. An examination of the rationales and practices sustaining such labelling schemes provides insights into some of the opportunities and threats shaping the emergence of new geographies of food production and consumption in Europe and North America.

**KEY WORDS** ★ difference ★ Europe ★ food supply chains ★ new geographies of food ★ North America ★ PPP schemes

### Emerging new geographies of food?

Much of our contemporary understanding of farming derives from what is increasingly being recognized as a misconception; that to farm is to produce food. Of course, farmers do produce food; that is why they farm and why society has traditionally supported them. However, farmers are essentially cultivators and breeders, their metier is agronomic rather than gastronomic – one of providing the materials for food and less and less the delivery of food itself. The growing detachment between the production of agricultural outputs and the manufacture and supply of food to the wider population has been one of the principal characteristics of the modern agrofood sector. The twin processes of appropriationism, where natural food inputs are increasingly replaced by

manufactured inputs, and substitutionism, where agriculture becomes closer in its form of organization to industry (Goodman et al., 1987), have contributed to this distancing of the activity of food production from that of farming.

One of the widely observed consequences of this disconnection has been the associated fracture between the consumers of food (and their interests) on the one side and the traditional producers of foodstuffs, the farmers, on the other. Mass marketing and standardization, increasingly subsumed under the epithet of generic 'McDonaldization' (Ritzer, 1993), have distanced the consumption of food as social practice from its production as a geographically and socio-economically positioned activity. Moreover, the rise of the food transformation and retail sector has, in the words of Marsden et al. (2000: ix) 'increased

their grip upon the coordination and provision of food supply, quality and choice'. A second consequence has been the steady decline in the revenue which farmers are able to derive from the sale of their produce. In simple terms, not only are prices falling as traditionally protected markets are opened up to global trade liberalization, but the locus of added value has moved away from the farm and the more proximal transformation and processing industries, such as dairies and abattoirs, to the larger food-processing and retail sector. According to Pretty (2001), only an estimated 7.5 percent of the final retail price of food in the UK currently returns to farmers, against a figure of 50 percent over 60 years ago.

Against this background of fracture – emerging from late 20th-century mass consumerism (whether production or retail-led), food chain verticalization and agricultural productivism – there exists an increasing number of contrary and contesting social trends of diverse origin which have collectively offered a sustained challenge to many of the tenets and impacts of all three. The various components of this challenge are by now well known, ranging from societal concern for environmental quality and animal welfare (and other negative externalities of productivism) to new forms of reflexive and discerning consumerism (Murdoch and Miele, 1999; Weatherell et al., 2003) and food activism, sustainable farming methods and the recomposition of specific (sometimes referred to as 'alternative') food chains around notions of quality and territorial and social embeddedness (Hinrichs, 2000; 2003; Ilbery and Kneafsey, 2000a; Murdoch et al., 2000; Allen et al., 2003; Sage, 2003; Winter, 2003a). Furthermore, increasingly promoted as the basis of a new and broader rural policy agenda (van de Ploeg and Renting, 2000), these different components are held to potentially offer 'a territorialised, ecologically-embedded successor to the modernisation paradigm of rural development' (Goodman, 2004: 3).

If that 'modernist paradigm' was largely predicated upon agricultural modernization (industrialization) and the functional distinctiveness of rural space as agricultural space (with rural development being synonymous with agricultural development), then its successor needs to be seen in terms of a critical process of reconnection. The recent UK Government Policy Commission on the

Future of Farming and Food, for example, encourages the notion of a reconnected food chain:

*Reconnect* our farming and food industry; to reconnect farming with its market and the rest of the food chain; to reconnect the food chain with the countryside; and to reconnect consumers with what they eat and how it is produced. (Curry Report, 2002: 6)

In this context, the process of reconnection, with its implicit acknowledgement of rupture and 'disconnection' in the food chain, is currently being held up as a panacea for agricultural survival, including restoring consumer confidence in food production and rural development (Winter, 2003b). Nevertheless, the encompassing nature of the 'reconnection project' is itself problematic, at least in terms of practical implementation and analysis. It promises, in typical neo-liberal fashion, a view of food production and consumption that is uncomplicated and utopian<sup>1</sup> – combining farming and food chain developments, countryside management, consumer health and education. Potential contributors to the project include, for example, specialist food producers adding value to local products, various forms of direct marketing, public-authority action groups for health and education, and community food schemes. This can create confusion about the nature, composition and functionality of different alternative food geographies.

One emerging means of analysis within the alternative food geographies literature is to recognize the role and significance of food labelling and accreditation schemes. Three examples are cited below.<sup>2</sup> First, Stassart and Whatmore (2003: 454), in their case-study of the Belgian cooperative Coprosain, recognize the role of the Coprosain trademark, enlisted by the cooperative to: "'speak" in its name . . . [as] . . . a collective signature that marks all Coprosain produce as kin'. As a response to food scares, the Coprosain label reconciles the short-circuiting emphasis of farmers and the health concerns of consumers and acts as a messenger of 'connectedness' between animals, farmers and consumers. Second, in an analysis of the Rhöngold organic dairy in Germany, Knickel and Renting (2000) recognize the role of the 'Biosphere Reserve image' to advertise Rhöngold products and unify different elements of business activity. Third, Renting

et al. (2003), in an examination of new food chain developments in Europe more generally, view quality and organic food labels as examples of 'spatially extended' short food supply chains. They argue that product labels transfer information about the production process and the area to the consumer, as well as providing necessary opportunities for (small) producers to retain value and enhance their identity.

A key mechanism for reconnection, therefore, is widely held to be the development and marketing of food products that are in some way *different* from those that are both mass-produced and readily available in mainstream retail outlets and for which consumers seemingly display an increasing enthusiasm. For those operating at the 'production' end of the food chain, the notion of 'difference' becomes critical to the process of reconnection: creating a difference in 'quality' between specific products and mass-produced products; creating a difference between geographical anonymity in food provenance and territorial specificity; and creating a difference in the way certain foods are produced. Furthermore, having achieved such a difference, it needs to be acknowledged, highlighted and marketed through such processes as accreditation and labelling, which have become so common as to merit the nomenclature 'schemes'.

Taking an avowedly 'production sector' approach, the objective of this paper is to examine how such differences are constructed by food producers, processors, retailers and other actors in the food chain and beyond who seek to promote product distinctiveness. No attempt is made to understand whether the different labels do in fact reconnect producers and consumers. Instead, using examples of accreditation and labelling schemes from both Europe and North America, the paper focuses in particular on the ways in which the intrinsic environmental qualities of places and sustainable environmental management practices, linked to dimensions of food production, are specifically enrolled as elements of distinctiveness and difference. Examination of the rationales and practices sustaining these labelling schemes helps to provide fresh insights into the emerging new geographies of food. Finally, the paper explores how these experiences might inform the development of similar attempts to create difference in the UK.

## Constructing difference: conceptualizing accreditation and labelling schemes

Differentiating countryside products, for example through the use of distinctive labels or marks, is not a new phenomenon. The French 'Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée' (AOC) was created in 1935 to protect the integrity, notoriety and quality of wines (Moran, 1993; Barham, 2003). However, the 1990s witnessed a rapid multiplication throughout the world of schemes which specifically sought to use labelling, certification or accreditation as a means of promoting individual production locales, particular production processes or specific agricultural and craft products. In the EU, for example, over 500 local food and drink products have been registered under PDO (Protected Designation of Origin) and PGI (Protected Geographical Indication) schemes<sup>3</sup> since 1992 (Ilbery and Kneafsey, 2000b; Ilbery et al., 2000; Parrot et al., 2002).

The reasons for the explosion in such schemes are both complex and multiple; they differ from country to country. For many producers, the need to derive greater revenue through the creation of added value remains a primary concern. For others, protecting and enhancing the environment may be a dominant reason. However, more likely is the need either to defend local traditional products and the social and economic structures which sustain them, or to find alternative and more socially just means of producing food. Three essential ingredients for constructing difference can be identified, namely 'product', 'process' and 'place'. These categories may be combined in different ways depending on the motives behind the scheme (Figure 1).

These categories can also be grouped into two broad and interlinked rationales, as outlined below.

*Territorial development rationale* (schemes as intervention). Focusing primarily on the links between *products* and *places*, this is essentially motivated by a desire to develop markets for products with distinct origins in order to protect livelihoods, build territorial identity and secure community cohesion. As illustrated in the case-studies which follow, the strategies emerging from this rationale can vary, reflecting different institutional mixes, production–consumption cultures and historical contexts. Some schemes concentrate on developing and defending profitable niche markets based upon regulated and

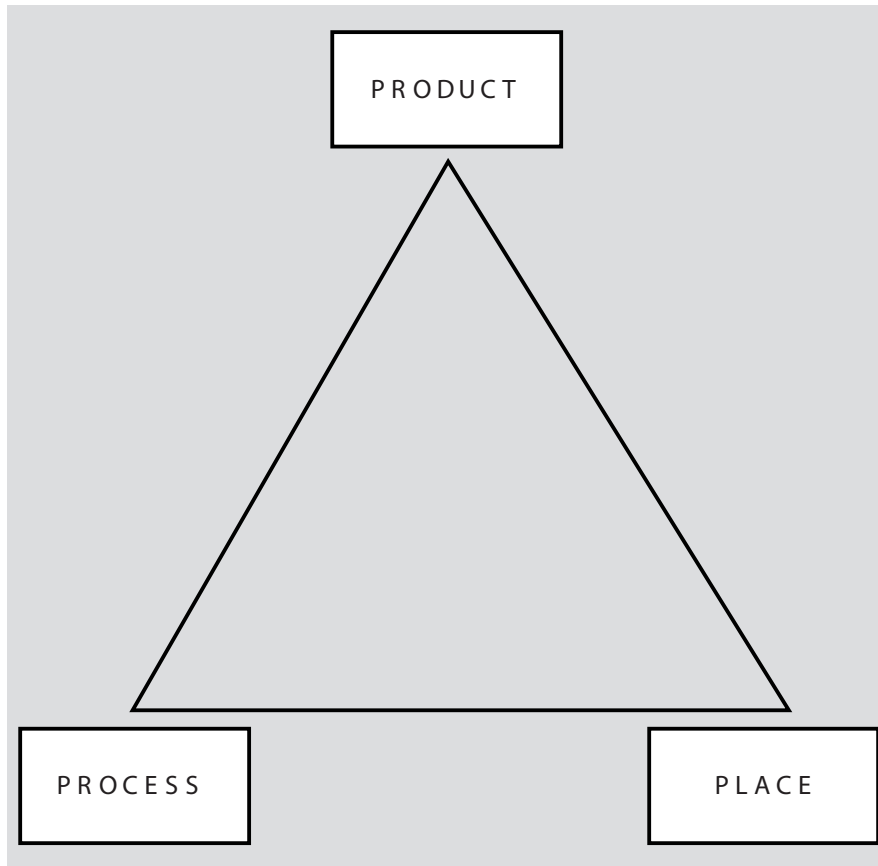


Figure 1 Constructing difference through product, process and place

authenticated links between product quality, local environmental distinctiveness, and locally embedded production skills, as in the case of AOCs and PDO/PGIs<sup>4</sup> (Bessi re, 1998; de Roest and Menghi, 2000; Miele and Murdoch, 2002; Morris and Buller, 2003). The recent consumer shift towards more ‘local’ and ‘natural’ products is nurturing this approach and encouraging quality production systems to become ‘re-embedded’ in local territories (Ilbery and Kneafsey, 1998; Nygard and St rstad, 1998; Holloway and Kneafsey, 2000; Murdoch et al., 2000; Morris and Buller, 2003). Other, usually more recent, schemes take a broader, less regulated approach and try to establish links between place images and products using logos and slogans. They attempt to promote produce originating from a

particular territory, either whole countries or regions; for example Canada’s ‘Foodland Ontario’ and California’s ‘Taste of Sunshine’ labels. Many of these schemes tend to be driven by institutional actors rather than food producers. As Dwyer (2000: 7) suggests in the case of the EU, ‘support from EU structural funds is a common factor in the development of many new countryside product initiatives across Europe’. This is well exemplified in the case of the LEADER programme in lagging rural regions (Ray, 2000). The principal resources include positive economic benefits for local rural economies, the strengthening of spatialized identities, and the development of local or regionally differentiated markets. These schemes most commonly employ *implicit* or assumed countryside

benefits, either through the promotion of traditional production activities or through the maintenance and enhancement of the local economy, again held to be generally beneficial to the countryside. Environmental and management conditions are rarely specific and mandatory.

*Critical rationale* (schemes as a form of opposition). Here labels are employed to draw attention to the environmental, social and distributional *processes* associated with particular products, and to distance them from the perceived negative consequences of product standardization, mass marketing, environmental degradation, and health and safety concerns. For example, organic, bio-dynamic or integrated farming and fair-trade labels, together with a number of 'sustainable farming' schemes in Europe and North America, are driven largely by such concerns and are proselytized as alternatives to more classic forms (Whatmore and Thorne, 1997; Morris and Winter, 1999; Morgan and Murdoch, 2000; Raynolds, 2000). These are arguably the most likely to have *explicit* environmental components built into them. However, many of these schemes adopt a very specific 'definition' of the environment and environmental effects; conditions relating to landscape features and broader issues of 'countryside management' are generally not included (de Snoo and van de Ven, 1999). The principal resources involved include positive environmental and redistributive effects, product quality and moral/societal legitimacy.

In their emphasis upon food quality, local distinctiveness/identity and traditional means of production, many of these types of scheme and initiative purport to be environmentally beneficial and, indeed, specifically seek to construct the 'distinctiveness' of their products around such an attribute. As such, they can be interpreted both as part of a wider drive towards more sustainable and multifunctional forms of agricultural production and as a market response to the progressive incorporation of environmental externalities in agricultural prices (Buller and Morris, 2004). Beneficial countryside management can be both an explicit driver or, as is more often the case, an implicit or assumed consequence. This suggests different interpretations of the notion of beneficial countryside management. For some schemes, the maintenance of farmers on the land is considered, in

itself, to be a beneficial countryside-management benefit (both in landscape and socio-economic terms), irrespective of how the farmers are producing their goods. For others, scheme subscribers must comply with specific environmental conditions, although these are usually concerned with environmental damage (e.g. water pollution, soil erosion) rather than broader countryside-management issues.

The identification of the three essential ingredients of 'product', 'process' and 'place' leads to the proposition of 'PPP' as a generic label for these various schemes (hereafter referred to in this paper as PPP schemes). While relating directly to the two rationales identified above, the categories of product, process and place are not mutually exclusive. As illustrated in the empirical material that follows, PPP schemes address all three elements but in different ways, depending on the motives driving their formation.

## Methodology

Based on research conducted for The Countryside Agency and in particular their 'Eat the View' campaign,<sup>5</sup> two main phases of data collection were pursued. The first involved the creation of a database of PPP initiatives in Europe and North America. Information was obtained through secondary sources, internet searches, contacting key agencies with responsibility for food quality and labelling, existing professional contacts and direct contact with some PPP initiatives by email, fax or telephone. In Europe, a decision was made to focus on particular countries (France, the Netherlands, Spain, Finland, Ireland and Switzerland), chosen to reflect a good geographical spread across northern, southern and western Europe, a range of farming systems, different cultural attitudes towards local, countryside products, and varied uptake of the EU's PDO/PGI scheme. The resultant database contained a range of information, from objectives, geographical scale of operation, date of initiation and products involved to scheme type/emphasis, verification procedures, funding and marketing strategies. A total of 60 PPP schemes was entered into the database: 31 from North America and 29 from Europe.

The PPP database acted as a sampling framework for the second phase of data collection – an evaluation of selected case-study schemes. A total of 21 detailed case-studies with relevance to the UK was selected (11 from Europe and 10 from North America – see Table 1). These were chosen because they:

- involve products/agricultural activities similar to those found in the UK
- operate in an agricultural sector that has environmental characteristics similar to those within the UK
- are established within an institutional context not incompatible with those found in the UK
- focus on local/regional initiatives rather than national or international ‘generic’ initiatives
- have an environmental/countryside-management component, either implicitly or explicitly within the objectives and operation of the scheme.

Information for the case-studies was obtained in four main ways: first, through verification (by email) of the database entries; second, through document analysis of promotional materials and other text-based materials; third, through email questionnaires

to the selected PPP initiatives; and fourth (where necessary), through telephone interviews with key personnel involved in the PPP schemes. In particular, attention in the case-studies revolved around setting up and running the scheme, obtaining and using the label, and evaluation of the achievements and problems associated with the initiative. This paper is based specifically on the second phase of data collection. Analysis proceeds in two stages: first, the 21 case-studies will be examined in terms of the main approaches to and motives for establishing PPP schemes; and second, three of the 21 case-studies – chosen to reflect different ways of combining product, process and place – are explored in greater detail in relation to the actual running of PPP schemes.

### Approaches to and motives for establishing PPP schemes

This section focuses on three main points relating to the establishment of PPP schemes among the 21 European and North American case-studies: timing, approach and motives. The first observation

**Table 1** Case-study PPP schemes in Europe and North America

#### Europe

Comté Cheese, France  
 Quercy Lamb, France  
 Les Marques Parc, France  
 IP Suisse (cereal), Switzerland  
 DE (cherry), Spain  
 DO (olive oil), Spain  
 Uniquely Finnish, Finland  
 Waterland, Netherlands  
 Milieukeur (strawberry), Netherlands  
 Greenmantle, Ireland  
 Fuschia Brand, Ireland

#### North America

Oregon Tilth, USA  
 Oregon Country Natural Beef, USA  
 WWF/WPVG/UA Pesticide reduction and eco-labelling, USA  
 Salmon Safe, USA  
 Conservation Beef, USA  
 Rural Roots, USA  
 Berkshire Grown, USA  
 Foodland Ontario, Canada  
 New Brunswick Product Promotion Program, Canada  
 Buy British Columbia, Canada

concerns the year in which the schemes began. With the exceptions of 'Comté' cheese, 'Oregon Tilth' and 'Foodland Ontario', the case-study PPP schemes have been established quite recently, i.e. since 1980; indeed, 14 of the 21 came into being after 1990 (see Table 2). Significantly, many of these food schemes are 'newcomers' to particular food spaces, and their insertion into and acceptance by the modern agrofood system are potentially contentious. Consequently, all the case-study schemes recognize the importance of having a period (of at least one year) of preparatory work before launching the label.

Second, all schemes involve partnerships between producers, institutions, retailers, restaurants and other actors. In Europe, it is possible to distinguish between schemes that have been initiated by institutions and those that have been started by producers; both tend to prioritize economic and territorial development objectives (product and place) above environmental concerns (process). The former would include the 'DO Priego de Córdoba' for olive oil and 'DE Cerezas de la Montana de Alicante' for cherries. Here, the labels are implemented and controlled by the Departments of Agriculture for the respective regional governments; they encourage farmers to become associated with the labels and emphasize the benefits of such quality labels. At a different scale, the EU's LEADER programme was crucial in the formation of 'Greenmantle'<sup>6</sup> and the 'Fuchsia' brand in Ireland. Funding from LEADER in the early stages helped local producers by allowing them to establish their own labelling schemes. Producer-led schemes include the 'Comté' label and the 'Waterland' scheme in the Netherlands. The former was established as a territorial device by the cheese producers of Comté to reinforce the territorial and economic identity of the region, whereas the latter was initiated in 1995 as a critical device by a small cooperative of farmers who wanted to 'voice their views' and 'maintain the open countryside'. 'Waterland' was awarded a grant of £420,000 by the Dutch government to help set up a label to 'sell nature' and sustain the local area's natural habitat. This is significant because, at that time, the Dutch government had experienced considerable criticism over the damage intensive agriculture was causing the environment.

Thus PPP initiatives can be used as public-

relations tools for national and regional governments, who can be seen to protect the environment by supporting initiatives which promote sustainable agricultural production. The 'Waterland' example also illustrates the point that even when institutions do not initiate schemes, they often play an important role in providing technical, financial and administrative support for innovative producer labelling and marketing strategies.

The three Canadian case-studies are based on a territorial-development rationale and are thus government-led at state or provincial level. Thus 'Foodland Ontario', although initiated by the Canadian Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, invited industry 'stakeholders' in the form of 12 grower and retail organizations to help run the initiative. Likewise, the Government of British Columbia established its 'Buy British Columbia' scheme in full partnership with industry. This was encouraged through the creation of a Minister's Council on the Food Industry, which had 16 members representing the entire food, fisheries and beverage industries. In addition, 20 separate stakeholder sessions were held throughout the province with over 250 participants. Industry stakeholders, as well as providing practical experience, also acted as a much-needed source of funding.

In contrast, the seven US schemes have a more critical and process-led orientation and have generally emerged from local or regional level non-profit and non-governmental organizations which have environmental concerns. At the largest geographical scale in the USA, 'Salmon Safe' was launched by a regional non-profit organization, the Pacific Rivers Council. The programme covers an area determined by the natural range of the Pacific Salmon (in the USA), stretching from Northern California to the Canadian Border; it received assistance from two major US private foundations and both scientists and farmers were involved in the development of certification guidelines. Similarly, the 'Oregon Tilth' scheme began as a small-scale and self-funded operation in the Willamette Valley before expanding to the State of Oregon and later Washington. It had distinctly 'alternative' origins in that it grew out of a group of farmers who wished to promote organic, sustainable food-production practices back in 1974. Today, 'Oregon Tilth' is a non-profit organization which has chapters



**Table 2** Principal motives for PPP schemes in Europe and North America

Name of scheme	Year scheme began	Principal motive
<b>EUROPE</b>		
Comté Cheese, France	1958	To protect the quality and territorial identity of Comté cheese.
PDO	1992	To protect the region's small dairies from closure.
Quercy Lamb, France		To protect Quercy lamb from domestic competition and UK imports.
Label Rouge		
IP Suisse (cereal), Switzerland	1989	To encourage farmers to reduce the impact intensive cereal production was having on the environment.
DE (cherry), Spain	1991	To develop and market a local resource (cherries) to strengthen the socio-economic basis of the community.
Uniquely Finnish, Finland	1992	To promote Finnish rural products and sustain socio-economic rural development.
Les Marques Parc, France	1995	To endorse and promote a range of local products from the Park.
DO (olive oil), Spain	1995	To link 'product to place' and strengthen the local economy.
Waterland, Netherlands	1995	To maintain the open countryside, protect the natural habitat and enable local farmers to 'sell nature' as an economic asset.
Greenmantle, Ireland	1998	To create original craft products that are kind to the environment and which promote sustainable creativity.
Fuchsia Brand, Ireland	1998	To create strong regional identity in order to achieve territorial competitiveness and enhance local competitive advantage (i.e. a device for rural development).
Milieukeur (strawberry), Netherlands	1999	To stimulate a more sustainable approach towards strawberry production and improve the image of Dutch farmers.
<b>NORTH AMERICA</b>		
Oregon Tilth, USA	1974	To promote sustainable and organic forms of agriculture.
Foodland Ontario, Canada	1977	To improve product identification and boost sales of Ontario products within the province.
New Brunswick Product Promotion Program, Canada	1981	To improve product identification and boost sales of NB products within the province.
Oregon Country Natural Beef, USA	1986	To establish a market for naturally produced beef from eastern Oregon.
Buy British Colombia, Canada	1993	To build consumer awareness, loyalty and demand for BC agrifood products.
WWF/WPVG/UW Pesticide reduction and eco-labelling, USA	1996	To promote the development of Integrated Pest Management practices and look for marketplace incentives for eco-products.
Salmon Safe, USA	1997	To reduce degradation of water quality and aquatic habitat and thereby protect the Pacific salmon.
Conservation Beef, USA	1997	To use conservation-oriented market forces to develop economically sustainable and ecologically sound cattle ranching in biologically significant landscapes.
Rural Roots	1997	To foster the development of community food systems in inland northwest USA.
Berkshire Grown, USA	1998	To protect farmers and create/retain value-added for locally grown agricultural produce.

throughout the state and the world. It has an active research-and-education programme and tries to bring together producers, processors, retailers and consumers; some institutional support has been received from the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Fund for Rural America and the National Plant Germplasm System.

Third, in terms of the motives for starting PPP schemes, very few exist solely for the purpose of environmental enhancement (see Table 2). In essence, producers must have some economic incentive or rationale before they will consider adopting a labelling initiative that promotes environmental sustainability. The initial motive seems to vary according to who starts the scheme. For example, PPP schemes initiated by institutions such as national and/or regional governments were usually driven by regional economic-development considerations (i.e. a territorial-development rationale) and, in some instances, by changing policy agendas. For instance, the 'IP Suisse' label was heavily influenced by changes in Swiss agricultural policy. In 1992, the government placed agro-environmental concerns as the new vanguard for the agricultural sector and openly encouraged integrated production and association with the 'IP Suisse' label. Other institutions, such as charitable foundations and non-profit organizations, are likely to have more explicit environmental agendas and rationales as their starting points. Nevertheless, in order for producers to pursue marketing strategies which deliver countryside benefits, it is essential that schemes are economically viable. Producer groups are also driven mainly by economic goals, such as the need to protect their product from imitation, build new markets and forge stronger relationships with consumers.

Even PPP schemes which have strong environmental principles are based on the premise that the pursuit of these principles will ultimately lead to price premiums, increased consumer loyalty and awareness, and the retention of value added, all resulting in benefits for the local or regional economy. Thus the benefits to producers involved in 'Salmon Safe' are positive public relations, increased market share and expansion into new markets, just as 'Conservation Beef' taps into a fundamental feature of ranching culture – the profit motive – as well as allowing ranchers to demonstrate that their management techniques are ecologically sound.

Likewise, the case-study of 'IP Suisse' shows that, despite their quite explicit environmental focus, the label only began to be successful when prices for cereals decreased and farmers realized they could receive better prices for products produced in an environmentally sensitive manner.

## Running PPP schemes

The case-studies also provided important material on issues of funding, personnel, the range of actors involved in PPP schemes, and the principal activities conducted. Rather than cataloguing these for each scheme, this section provides cameos on the running of just three PPPs. They have been chosen to represent three different ways in which the three Ps have been combined according to the territorial development and critical rationales identified earlier. They reflect a range of geographical scales, different dates of establishment, varying types of partnership, a variety of local food-and-drink products, and contrasting emphases on countryside and environmental benefits.

### *Territorial development rationale*

Two case-studies are explored here, in order to demonstrate the different ways in which the links between product, process and place are constructed. The first case has a long history, is highly organized, strongly regulated and deeply embedded into a clearly defined territory. The second is recent, and only weakly embedded in territory in the sense that no link is made between place, process and the end quality, characteristics or 'typicality' of the products. However, both schemes are motivated by a desire to help develop markets, protect livelihoods and strengthen territorial identity.

'Comté Cheese' The 'Comté' label was created in 1958 when the 'Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée (AOC) Comté' was attributed. When, in 1992, the EU accepted the French AOC as a legitimate territorial labelling system, 'Comté' became a PDO. Today, the label regroups 3,200 milk producers, 190 cheese dairies and 20 cheese-refining centres

collectively producing around 46,000 tonnes of cheese. The territory within which 'Comté' is produced is tightly defined by one of the largest cheese AOCs in France. It covers the chalk uplands of the Jura massif and includes part of the Jura département and part of the neighbouring Doubs département. The 'Comté' label represents the close association of a local economy (dairy farmers, cheese production and refining centres), a specific upland environment (chalk-based grass meadows) and traditional practices (linking a particular breed of cattle – Montbelliard – to defined feeding practices). It has been a major factor in reinforcing the territorial and economic 'identity' of this particular eastern corner of upland France.

In 1963, the dairies and refineries set up the Comité Interprofessionnel du Gruyère et de Comté (CIGC) to coordinate and run the label.<sup>7</sup> The CIGC has an office staff of 10 and around 30 inspectors and advisers. Many of the dairies have salespoints run on a permanent or seasonal basis. At local and regional levels, the 'Comté' label has become a major employer and a significant force in the local economy. 'Comté' cheese can also be found in all major supermarkets and at most farmers' markets. The global finance for the label is 95 percent from sales and around 5 percent from government funding through the regional council. To obtain the label, milk used in 'Comté' must be unpasteurized and come from within the defined AOC and from herds located within 25km of the relevant cheese dairy. Also, the Montbelliard cattle must each have one hectare of natural grassland and winter animal feed has to be grass-based; no artificial sources of feed are permitted (including silage), but concentrated foodstuffs (e.g. locally grown cereals) are allowed (up to 30 percent of food ration). Thus the farmer must maintain species-rich natural grasslands, and this entails late grass cutting. Likewise, in the cheese-making process copper basins are used for preheating the milk and no additives, colourants or preservatives are permitted.

The 'Comté' label serves a number of functions and different end-users, including the milk producers, local dairies and local village economies, but also the wider département (county) and region. Both of the latter two rely heavily on the 'Comté' cheese label in the promotion of the area for tourism. There is little doubt that the running of the label has enabled traditional low-density dairy

farming to continue in a sustainable way and thus avoid the intensification and industrialization of cheese production found in other areas. It has also enabled the almost craft and small-scale nature of cheese production to be maintained in the 200 or so local dairies. According to one of CIGC's administrators, 'Comté' has:

Permitted the collective modernization of the production chain without loss of the traditional production methods. The label is a delicate balance between 'facility' for the producers and 'tradition' for the consumers.

It is clear that the 'Comté' label demonstrates elements of all three Ps. The product has reinforced the territorial identity of the region, both through the enrolment of local actors into a collective project and through recognition of the region and its qualities through the product and its marketing. The label also has clear countryside-management and environmental implications; it is no coincidence that the region has one of the lowest levels of average nitrate application in France. Nevertheless, in the wake of increasing competition from the supermarkets, there are pressures on the 'Comté AOC' to expand production and to segment their product (e.g. into organic and sub-appellations). So far, the response has been to allow organic 'Comté' ('Comté Bio'), but also to tighten up the AOC rules by focusing even more on small-scale craft enterprises and upon local traditions as a way of excluding the supermarkets. Mindful of their broader role in the rural economy, the 'Comté' sector has sought to emphasize a more holistic and sustainable rural-management role. However, it is at risk from continued supermarket pressure, greater segmentation and the withdrawal from production of older producers.

*'Buy British Columbia'* This Canadian label was launched in 1993 as a partnership between the provincial agriculture department and industry, with the objective of building consumer awareness, loyalty and demand for British Columbia's agrofood products. The 'Buy BC' programme has various components, a key one of which is the fostering of partnerships within the agrofood industry; another is the use of the 'BUY BC' logo to raise consumer awareness of locally produced goods. Following the decision of the government to commit C\$9.5m to a

five-year market-development programme, the Minister's Council on the Food Industry (CFI) was established with 16 members representing the food, fisheries and beverage industries. Thus industry-wide cooperative marketing initiatives were encouraged, with the long-term objective of fostering industry partnerships which continue beyond the life of government funding.

Eligible applicants for government funding include industry organizations registered in British Columbia which are engaged in producing, processing or marketing BC food, fish, beverage or agricultural products either grown or substantially processed in the province. Consideration is given to consortia of at least three firms within a sector; individual firms and producers are ineligible. Financial assistance is in the form of a 10–35 percent conditional grant on approved eligible costs for specific new projects. The proposed activities have to benefit the BC food chain and participants are required to use the programme logo. Annual tracking and measurement form an evaluative component of the effectiveness of the programme. Retail food and liquor stores and restaurants in the province are encouraged to participate in the 'Buy BC' programme through a merchandizing scheme, and to display the logo prominently for ease of recognition by consumers. Licensed products using the 'BUY BC' logo have become widespread, ranging from lettuce, hothouse cucumbers and tomatoes, milk, dairy products and bottled water to ice cream, yoghurt, honey, beer, bakery products, venison and certified organic beef. Once obtained, those using the logo are neither monitored nor inspected (there being no requirement in the regulations); only one person has been caught misusing the logo. It is important to remember that 'Buy BC' is a place-based product identification scheme and thus driven by a strong territorial development rationale; it is not a quality-based programme per se.

'Buy BC' is not farmer-focused and the 'core' of the scheme lies beyond the farm gate, for example processors, manufacturers and retailers. However, there is no deliberate exclusion of farmers, and those becoming more involved in direct marketing are increasingly interested in identifying their produce as local. Indeed, farmers use the 'BUY BC' logo on their stalls at farmers' markets and this has had a positive effect on sales. The logo itself is

protected as a certification mark by the province and there is no usage fee for licensing. Over 1240 business associations are licensed to use the 'BUY BC' logo and more than 4500 BC products are identified at retail, with over 450 stores participating in the merchandizing scheme. Recent research (2000) has suggested that up to 1900 direct jobs have been created in the agrofood sector. Additionally, supermarkets, local grocers and producers have experienced strong increases in BC product sales. Research on consumers has also shown that recognition of the 'BUY BC' logo was at 76 percent in 2000, compared to just 27 percent in 1998. A high level of pride was identified in the purchase of BC products. Another benefit of the programme is that companies involved in completely different food products have begun cooperating with each other under the 'Buy BC' banner. As two of the industry participants stated: 'The Buy BC programme has definitely contributed to our success'; 'Buy BC is giving us an opportunity to promote our products we could not otherwise contemplate.'

Despite such claims of relative success, the 'Buy BC' programme is not without difficulties. First, it is vulnerable to changes in political priorities and thus to a possible shift in government funds to other activities (especially with a change of government).<sup>8</sup> Second, the consumer research placed 'impact on the local economy' as only a fourth reason for buying local products, after price, quality and freshness. Indeed, if local produce does not meet the same price, quality and freshness attributes of imported food, then the consumer will choose the latter. Third, continued expansion of the 'BUY BC' logo might run the risk of losing its identity; if this expansion occurs in non-food products (e.g. timber) it might also alienate the agricultural community. Finally, the programme is focused exclusively on 'product and place'; process-oriented attributes and a more critical rationale relating to wider countryside benefits and environmental sustainability are simply not present.

### *Critical rationale*

*Waterland* The 'Waterland' label was created in 1995 to help compensate farmers for the relatively low productivity of the peat soils. Located on the

northern edge of the city of Amsterdam, Waterland is a region well known for its characteristic wildlife and birdlife; the initiative is a good example of how farmers, who have always retained a tradition of nature and landscape conservation, are now developing this tradition as an economic asset that can be sold to consumers. Farmers involved in the 'Waterland' cooperative improve their economic performance by 'selling nature', specializing in high-quality food and direct marketing. The label involves just over 230 farmers (not all full-time) who produce mainly dairy products, although meat and vegetables are also available. Farmers have maintained close relations with conservation groups and environmentalists who act as independent monitors of the farms and provide much-needed labour required to provide habitat protection, construct wildlife areas and count birds' nests. As discussed earlier in this paper, 'Waterland' received a large government grant as part of a four-year experiment between 1995 and 1999; since 2000, the 'Waterland' group has been recognized as an official organization. As the secretary explained:

The Waterland scheme provided a breath of fresh air for Dutch agriculture. I think it proved something really important – that agriculture in the Netherlands could be sustainable. It also provided a window of opportunity for the government who at the time faced considerable criticism. They could be seen to be doing something positive to protect the environment.

Employing around 10 staff to manage and promote the label, there are four office-staff and two field specialists who travel around the farms to verify compliance with 'Waterland' criteria. These criteria include a requirement by farmers to have cattle to maintain the open countryside, to protect the birds which nest on their land, pass a special course on what farmers can and cannot do (for which they receive an official certificate), and have their farm inspected at least once a year. The label also involves processors and caterers who take 'Waterland' produce such as beef and lamb. Thus the scheme is becoming an important employer in the local area. In 1997, meat was promoted to chefs and restaurateurs, and produce is now becoming more widely available as supply networks extend to include homestead cheese shops, farmers' markets, retail stores and restaurants. Thus the label is also encouraging farmers to diversify, while allowing

them to promote themselves as 'protectors of the countryside'. To improve the market, the group has established a much stronger promotional profile for the 'Waterland' 'ecolabel'. The label itself conveys an image of a threatened bird that environmental groups are actively seeking to preserve, thus re-emphasizing the explicit environmental benefits of this PPP scheme.

As the scheme gathered momentum, extra funding was attracted; for example, Waterland farmers have a contract with the local authority for cleaning streams on their land, and Amsterdam City Council provides farmers with money to enable the public to visit the countryside and help protect the bird habitat. In recognition of the work done, the original government payment has been extended to a structural payment from 2000 to 2006. 'Waterland' is also involved in other local initiatives such as demonstration farms and farm visits for schoolchildren and other groups. Nevertheless, the 'Waterland' scheme is not without its problems. For instance, it has difficulty controlling minerals, fertilizers and sewage, a situation made worse by a growing tension between farmers who are part of the scheme (over 50 percent) and those who are not. It is also difficult to farm what is essentially a peat-soil profile. Again, this has not been helped by delays in receiving money from different sources, money that is needed to ensure that farmers can continue to produce in a sustainable manner.

Without doubt, the main achievements of the 'Waterland' label have been its environmental benefits and allowing agriculture to diversify. Indeed, the secretary predicted that 'Without this label, farming in the area would disappear and the open countryside would be lost'.

Producer research has shown that farmers using the 'Waterland' label are happy and view the scheme as an important environmental and economic success. Likewise, consumer research has shown that 'Waterland' lamb and beef compares with the best on the European market. Farmers are now looking to 'sell nature' by processing the milk in the area to create a cheese that has territorial identity (*à la Comté*) and strong environmental qualities. They are also hoping to further develop agrotourism, through tasting events to promote local produce and cycling routes to encourage more people into Waterland. Thus the scheme demonstrates many elements of the three Ps (combined within a critical

rationale which is, in turn, developing into a territorial development rationale), and is a good example of constructing 'difference'.

## Discussion and conclusions

This paper has explored the potential of PPP schemes to create, identify and market 'difference' within the agrofood sector. It is now possible to locate the 21 case-study PPP schemes into the 'product-process-place' triangle depicted in Figure 1. Thus the European schemes considered are often founded on a long tradition of locally specific products and traditional production methods, with a strong territorial development focus. The link between product quality and specific places is quite explicit (Figure 2a) and product copyright is often through territorial delimitation. For the North American schemes examined, process and place schemes predominate; while the former are more characteristic of the US schemes, the latter are popular in the Canadian examples (Figure 2b). Many of the US schemes are of an inclusive spatial nature and are often driven by a more critical rationale and thus social and/or environmental criteria. Instead of product copyright and territorial delimitation, there is process certification and rural community sustainability.

Many PPP schemes serve to promote and market products which derive from 'traditional' and extensive production techniques founded upon the sustainable use of natural resources and the physical environment; this is clearly demonstrated in two of the three presented cameos. In doing so, they distinguish themselves, through the label, from products produced under more intensive farming systems. For the bulk of these schemes, it is the intrinsic environmental qualities of the local territory that contribute to both the quality of the product and to the environmentally beneficial nature of the production process. The additional costs of producing within these environmental and resource constraints (often in the more economically marginal farming regions of Europe) are then translated into higher retail costs. Another interesting finding is that, in the face of increasing competition from other labels or large retail concerns, many PPP schemes which emphasize the links between product and place tighten up rather than slacken the environmental and land-management criteria associated with PPP production. In doing so, they strengthen the sustainability claims of the label. This is often achieved through production ceilings, which help to maintain the prices for extensively produced goods.

The multiplication of PPP schemes has allowed farmers and local food producers to capture new markets, as consumer demands shift towards quality

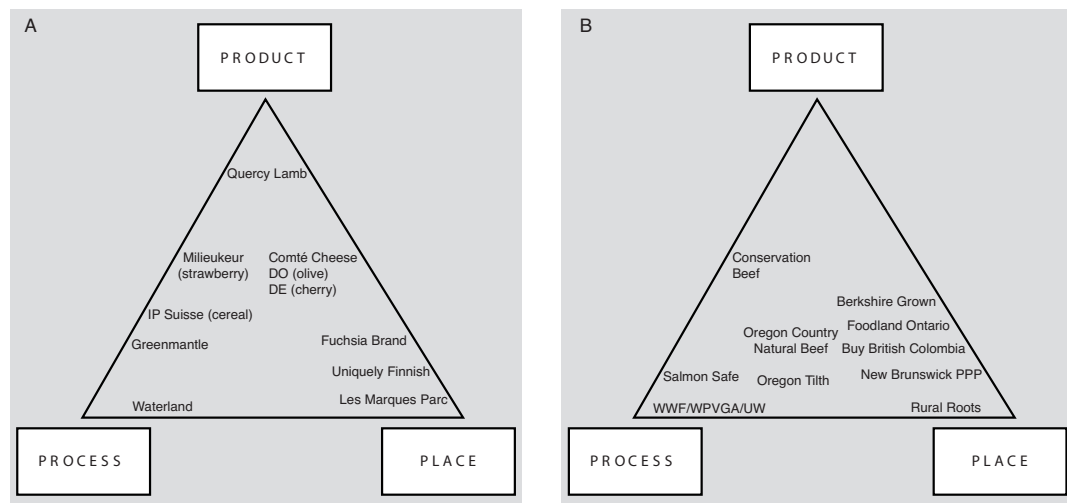


Figure 2 PPP schemes in (a) Europe and (b) North America

products, and to give some credibility to an alternative trajectory of agricultural development based on differentiation, local quality food products and the integration of particular environmental and resource configurations into production and marketing styles. Nevertheless, this multiplication is not unproblematic. The rapid growth of PPP schemes has led to a proliferation of, and confusion over, labels and certification bodies. 'Label fatigue, that is, a bewildering and counter-productive proliferation of competing quality schemes, labels and logos', has also been noted by Goodman (2004: 10). For example, the introduction of PDO and PGI schemes in the EU was an attempt to bring order to the chaos of multiple national and subnational schemes. Yet these labels are little more than a form of local territorial protectionism designed to prevent specialist and place-specific products becoming generic. Thus they are not quality labels in their own right, neither do they contain mandatory baseline environmental standards. As a consequence, they have added to rather than replaced national and regional schemes. Likewise, in Canada the majority of schemes do not require a membership fee for using the label. Clearly, oversubscription can lead to a loss of prestige, forcing producers to further differentiate their products through, for example, organic methods. In addition, the research found that evaluation and monitoring are often a low priority for scheme organizers and operators.

The 21 case-studies also helped to identify a number of problems experienced when establishing PPP schemes. Apart from the frequently reported issue of funding, there was often resistance from local producers to join the scheme, concerns about generating sufficient demand for the product(s), doubts over the competence of PPP staff to develop a useful labelling initiative and marketing strategies, and the lack of straightforward accreditation processes. In many cases, producers were often not convinced of the need to change their methods of production; they were also worried about possible increases in production costs and the idea of being constantly checked by external agents. Scheme leaders often struggled initially to assure farmers about the suitability and usefulness of the scheme. They also sometimes acknowledged that it was difficult to know how best to market the product and raise value added. In this sense, it is often difficult to use 'place' in combination with the other

two Ps as a framework for product marketing and labelling. Invariably, some producers and other actors will join a PPP scheme only when it has become established and economic benefits are more certain.

Finally, from this analysis of selected European and North American schemes, one can begin to 'draw out' some recommendations for the establishment and running of PPPs in the UK. While the vast bulk of PPP schemes come into being as a result of actors' desires to promote, usually, one or two of the three foci of product, process and place, a key lesson learned is that PPP schemes can address all three in an explicit and proactive way. They can involve partnerships between local producers, retailers and other actors, not only to create a sufficient volume of the product but also to maximize the environmental and land management benefits of the activity and/or locality. Where new schemes are being set up, with the possible involvement of intermediary bodies and agencies, producers could be involved in the drawing-up of operating conditions and rules governing the labels' use. These conditions can allow for PPP schemes at different geographical scales, either spatially inclusive or exclusive. Spatially inclusive schemes are usually driven by critical process concerns and the need to advocate sustainable practices, whereas spatially exclusive schemes tend to protect the uniqueness, individuality and originality of a product, a production process and the place where these come together; thus they engender greater territorial development.

With the recent multiplication of PPP schemes in the UK, operators need to know and access suitable markets, recognizing the possibilities for value added and the limitations they offer. PPP operators need to extend their vertical links down the food chain in order to gain this value added, including for example processors, retailers, distributors and consumer bodies. In addition, there is a need to explore potential sources of initial funding. While LEADER schemes and regional-government grants have been popular in Europe, PPP schemes in the USA often obtained financial support from the state offices of USDA and state universities. Potential sources for the UK include Food From Britain, DEFRA, The Countryside Agency and Regional Development Agencies. Once running, PPP schemes can do certain things to help

overcome strong competition from large-scale food retailers. First, they can pay real attention to the three Ps by achieving an equitable balance between an economically significant production volume in a designated geographical area and environmental and land-management benefits. Second, operators can, where appropriate, locate their scheme within regional promotional activities relating to local food and tourism. Recent research (Enteleca, 2000) has demonstrated that 40 percent of tourists notice local labels while on holiday. Third, schemes should be externally accredited and verified by third-party agencies and this should be used in their promotion. This will encourage PPP members to monitor and evaluate their economic, territorial-development and environmental performance. PPP schemes thus emerge as a key element in the process of, to borrow from the Curry Report (2002), reconnecting farming, food, the countryside and the consumer through the construction of 'difference'.

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## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> For a broader discussion of the (utopian) neo-liberal project see, for example, Harvey (2000) and Leyshon and Lee (2003).
- <sup>2</sup> Other notable examples include: Barham (2003), AOC labels in France; de Roest and Menghi (2000), PDO/PGI labels in Italy; Busch (2000), examples of US and European labels and standards; Raynolds (2000), international organic and fair-trade labels. In addition, a number of seminars and research projects have examined the role of origin-labelled products, e.g. the 67th European Association of Agricultural Economics seminar: 'The Socio-economics of Origin Labelled Products in Agri-food Supply Chains' (Oct. 1999), Le Mans.
- <sup>3</sup> For the PDO label, products must be produced, processed and prepared using unique methods within a particular geographical area, where the quality and characteristics of those products must be due exclusively to the

geographical area. For the PGI label, products must be produced, processed *or* prepared using unique methods within a particular geographical area, where the quality and characteristics of those products are attributable to the area.

- <sup>4</sup> As well as in France, Italy and Spain use appellation contrôlée quality-mark schemes. In Germany, also, similar labels exist at national, regional and local levels (for examples, see Dwyer, 2000).
- <sup>5</sup> Launched in 2000, 'Eat the View' is a call to customers to buy countryside products (e.g. food, crafts) that are derived from more sustainable production systems.
- <sup>6</sup> Greenmantle is a small, specialist craft company in County Tipperary, Ireland; it was awarded the Craft Council of Ireland quality mark. All wood products are produced in an environmentally sensitive manner.
- <sup>7</sup> The 'Gruyère' (a wholly Swiss cheese today) was soon dropped, but the organization retained the name.
- <sup>8</sup> In fact, since completing this research, the authors have heard that funding has been withdrawn due to changes in the political profile of the provincial government. The 'Buy BC' programme has thus ceased to operate, although it did spawn a number of other partnerships and initiatives along similar themes.

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