

Made in Kentucky: The Meaning of “Local” Food Products in Kentucky’s Farmers’ Markets

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I INTRODUCTION

Through the application of technological innovations and the enlargement of arable land, the United States increased its agricultural production and became the world’s largest food supplier in the twentieth century.¹ This capital-intensive production, however, forced thousands of small family farms out of business, and significantly increased the disjuncture of size and scale of production between producers after World War II.² Furthermore, in spite of overproduction concerns, continuous support by federal subsidy programs led producers to expand their operations, thereby relying even more on governmental assistance.

In recent decades, American agriculture has experienced rapid restructuring. This is not only limited to the abandonment of small family farms and the concentration of production to a limited number of large farms, but also includes flexible reactions to international competition, changing market prices, and shifts in the amount of production and consumption targeting both domestic and international consumer markets. On the other hand, for those farmers struggling to continue producing traditional

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crops on available land, alternative strategies such as growing new products or finding niche markets are being sought to maintain their livelihood.

Recent studies on agriculture and food by social scientists have focused on macro-scale dichotomies of production and consumption as well as binaries of local versus global food.³ Many have examined the globalization of food from a critical perspective, including use of the “food mileage” concept to describe how far food products and commodities have traveled between the origin of production and the site of consumption. With the rapid growth of global production and its network of retail chains, many of today’s American consumers do not realize from how far and from how many places their food products come. Food mileage has expanded radically over the past few decades, and while this has brought obvious benefits it has also produced many drawbacks, such as the loss of nutritional content through distribution processes, high transportation costs, and fierce international competition.⁴ In other words, the availability of food products from outside national boundaries is not necessarily beneficial to the domestic food supply. This globalizing trend has spurred the growth of a localized food network, which advocates closer connections between producers and consumers both in terms of spatial distance and personal networks.

Current burley tobacco production in Kentucky is one example of how small-scale farms in the United States are being transformed to utilize a localized food network. Tobacco has long been a signature commodity in Kentucky, and it was the largest burley tobacco producing state in the United States for decades.⁵ With the decline of cigarette consumption and the increase in international competition, however, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) reduced its tobacco quota allotments to burley tobacco growers in the late 1990s. This action forced a significant decline in the amount of tobacco production. Hundreds of tobacco farmers lost a reliable source of income through this process, a situation which led many of them to shift their traditional burley tobacco production to alternative crops. In 2000, the Kentucky state legislature decided to utilize the Master Settlement Agreement (MSA), millions of dollars obtained from tobacco companies after a lawsuit in 1998, by distributing funds to counties to foster alternative agricultural production and related practices.⁶ Kentucky farmers now produce a variety of commodities as alternatives to tobacco.

Because farm size and the labor pool in Kentucky are significantly smaller than the national average,⁷ it is very difficult for the state's farmers to expand production and compete with larger commercial corporate farms. One emerging solution for Kentucky farmers is to sell their alternative agricultural products directly to consumers instead of selling their products to wholesalers that ship products to retail distributors. Examples of this direct sale practice include farmers' markets, Community Supported Agriculture (CSA), roadside farm stands, and mail-order sales.⁸ These opportunities not only enable producers to set their own product prices, but also provide consumers with direct access to fresh and high-quality products. Direct sales, furthermore, usually provide more profit than selling to retailers because they cut the costs associated with intermediaries. Direct interaction between producers and consumers, therefore, emphasizes connections on a small geographic scale, the "local," rather than the "national" or "global." Thus, burley tobacco growers who shifted production to alternative crops are contributing to the establishment of a new locally-based food system.⁹

The scale of "local," however, has not been considered carefully in previous studies. What constitutes "local" food in Kentucky? Is it defined spatially, materially, or discursively? One may think of bourbon whiskey or fried chicken as Kentucky's "local" food, but in general we tend to neglect the connections between *what* is grown and *where* it is grown and *how* a product is branded as "local." It is important, therefore, to critically examine the discursive and geographical meanings of places that are embedded in food in the context of production, marketing, consumption, and culture. Here, place should be understood not just as an absolute space fixed in a certain geographic location (i.e., Haymarket Square, National Mall, etc.), but instead as a site where social relations are practiced through normative and collective processes.¹⁰

In this paper, I examine critically the concept of "local" food sold in Kentucky as it emerges under post-tobacco restructuring. Specifically, through case studies of Farmers' Markets in Kentucky's second and third largest cities, Lexington and Owensboro, I analyze how agricultural products are represented and sold in settings where their sites of production or spatial scale are specified as "local." I also wish to consider the ontological and epistemological meanings of "local" in the context of direct farm products sales: What is understood as "local food" in farmers' markets? Where are these "local" food products coming from? Why

do both producers and consumers perceive “local” to be important? In order to address these questions, I focus on why and how producers represent and emphasize the “local” in selling their products in farmers’ markets, and how consumers, on the other hand, perceive the “local” differently from producers. Hereafter I will use the term “localism” to describe the promotion of local-scale production and consumption as opposed to the national or the global scale. I argue that specification of a product’s origin not only represents the producer’s recognition of geographical scale, but also functions to reproduce and strengthen the fixed scale of “local” without defining what “local” actually means. Various studies show that consumers are much more interested in local products than they used to be.¹¹ This paper, therefore, discusses what exactly the phrase “local foods” specifies, and shows how ambiguous the term actually is. To address these points, my analysis examines how the term “local products” relates to the geographical location of actual production sites, many of which indicate producers’ farms or residences. This study is mainly based on qualitative data obtained from informal interviews, textual analysis of signs, and field observation at farmers’ markets.

II TRANSFORMATION OF KENTUCKY’S AGRICULTURE AND THE EMERGENCE OF “LOCAL” FOOD

1) The Restructuring of Burley Tobacco Production and Its Disadvantages

For many decades agriculture remained one of the most important industries in Kentucky. In spite of the relatively small size of the state, in 2002, Kentucky had the fifth largest number of total farms in the United States.¹² What was unique about Kentucky was that its burley tobacco production, the state’s major cash crop, had a significantly higher income per acre compared with other grains and cash crops. Such conditions, in addition to the lack of capital investment, the need for intensive labor, and topographic conditions, kept the state’s acreage of farmland per farm much lower than the national average. In this sense, burley tobacco was a critical product for Kentucky farmers, because very few products could provide as substantial a revenue in relation to the size of the farmland as burley tobacco did. Furthermore, price support programs for tobacco production, which began in the New Deal era and continued until several years ago, helped farmers to maintain a stable income.

With an increase in international competition and a decrease in do-

mestic consumption, the USDA started to reduce quota allotments for tobacco production after the late 1990s. This decision created dramatic changes in tobacco-oriented agricultural economies. Unlike corn or wheat, where the market decides the price and producers can farm unlimited acres of land, the establishment of the price support program meant that tobacco growers' production was highly regulated by an allotted quota limiting the acreage and pounds they were allowed to grow. Burley tobacco is typically labor and land intensive, requiring only a small acreage to produce a substantial income. Therefore, when the quotas were cut by more than 50 percent, producers were left to seek alternative crops that would yield a similarly high income on limited acreage.

Some farmers have converted to agritourism, such as pick-your-own, or hosting school tours, which attract visitors by providing the experience of touching farm animals and experiencing farm life. Other farmers have shifted their production from burley tobacco to alternative but traditional products, including major grains (corn, wheat, soybeans, and sorghum) and beef cattle, or have experimented with non-traditional products such as vegetables, fruits, flowers and nursery products, goats, sheep, poultry, catfish, and freshwater shrimp. The majority of producers have diversified their production. Between 1997 and 2002, the number of farms that raised tobacco decreased from 46,792 to 29,253,¹³ while the production of a variety of alternative traditional and non-traditional products increased.

Several non-traditional products, however, did not have established markets in which farmers could sell their produce. Therefore, it became clear that marketing directly to consumers was critical to farmers' success. Unlike burley tobacco, which was taken to established warehouses and graded for auction, selling perishable food produce for high prices with no traditional market required different strategies. Grain production was not competitive with farmers operating at much larger scales in the Midwest and Plains states. Furthermore, products such as vegetables and fruits, unlike traditional grain crops, were not eligible for USDA subsidy programs. Small-scale producers with limited land and financial resources, therefore, needed to market their products in innovative ways in order to earn a profit sufficient to sustain their production and living expenses.

This brief context helps to clarify why selling products "locally" has become so important for many Kentucky farms. In short, producing, selling and consuming "locally" has not been emphasized only for

ideological and ethical purposes, but also as an economic strategy for producers and their home communities more generally.

2) Increase of Farmers' Markets as a Niche Market

Farmers' markets in the United States existed widely in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries until the evolution of preservation technologies, packaging, and the practice of marketing through specialized grocery stores transformed the American food system. Farmers' markets were once the core focal point for selling fresh products in central urban systems.¹⁴ When cities grew larger and motorization developed, the significance of farmers' markets in urban centers gradually declined.¹⁵ As the scale of food retailers increased their operations and food prices became more competitive, fewer products were available for local sale directly to consumers living in proximity to farm producers. While the current availability of a diversity of goods from around the world may benefit consumers in terms of flexibility of choices and prices, what people eat is becoming less tied to the places where people are, representing lost opportunities for nearby producers. On the other hand, with an increase in health concerns over issues such as obesity and the use of pesticides, consumers have begun to demand more fresh products that are high in quality and rich in food values. With the general increase in awareness of food quality and nutrition in recent decades, people's demand for fresh food products brought a re-emergence of farmers' markets. The passage of the federal Farmer-to-Consumer Direct Marketing Act of 1976 changed farmers' markets dramatically, and since then some states have witnessed a doubling or even tripling in the number of farmers' markets.¹⁶ For consumers, purchasing high quality products has become a critical opportunity, and purchasing food products through direct market strategies such as farmers' markets or CSA has become much more attractive. Consumers can buy directly from producers and gain more product information, leading to positive perceptions of quality.

As of 2006, there are 108 farmers' markets in Kentucky.¹⁷ Larger cities such as Louisville, Lexington, and Bowling Green have had their own markets since the 1970s. For smaller cities and counties, however, it was only within the last decade that farmers' markets opened. Nearly 60 farmers' markets in Kentucky opened after 2000, an increase which can be partially attributed to farmers' reactions to the need to seek additional income in the wake of decreased tobacco production. This illustrates two things. First, there were few venues of substantial market size already

available for direct sales of food products. Second, the idea of “local” food began to attract attention in recent years, not as a continuation of tradition, but rather as a newly constructed concept. People who hear the name “Kentucky” may not find it difficult to associate the place name with Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC), a fast food franchise that originated in Corbin, KY. This does not necessarily mean, however, that Kentucky, or even Corbin, is known for raising or consuming chickens. On the other hand, Kentucky produces more beef cattle than any other state east of the Mississippi River,¹⁸ but because the majority of beef cattle are raised for breeding and later sold for finishing to ranches in Midwest and Plains states, Kentucky receives little recognition for its beef cattle industry. Few consumers, therefore, would associate the name “Kentucky” with steak or hamburgers. This lack of association between actual production sites and the perception or reputation of places prompts us to consider how “local food” is constructed discursively and how that discourse is related to direct sales.

III CHARACTERISTICS OF FARMERS’ MARKETS IN KENTUCKY

1) Market Rules and Seasonal Changes

Most of Kentucky’s farmers’ markets begin their seasons between April and June, and continue until sometime in late September to November. Differences in opening and closing of markets depend on the local growing season and whether or not the market accepts out-of-state shipments of consignment farm products. Market operations vary: some are open every day, while some are open only once or twice per week. Understandably, the weekend markets tend to be more crowded and popular than weekday markets. Types of customers vary from elderly citizens to couples and families with children and pets, though elderly women tend to be the largest customer group. Not all vendors operate on all available days every week, because many small vendors have non-farm jobs during the week.

The products sold at farmers’ markets vary significantly from one vendor to another: some vendors sell vegetables and fruits, while others specialize in flower sales. Total product inventory may include flowers and small garden plants, vegetables, fruits, bakery products, honey products, and in some cases meat and poultry products, while seafood, wines, snacks, natural cosmetics, crafts, dog treats, cooking sauces and seasonings, and seasonal specialties are also available.

Each market has its own rules, which are approved by the market board and/or its members. Rules generally regulate the fundamentals of market operation: for example, when and where the market will be operated; who can sell products; from where vendors are allowed to bring in products; what kind of products are acceptable for selling; and whether sellers are required to specify product origins. These rules have a significant influence in determining the characteristics of each market, which are based on normative presumptions. For example, some markets are constituted solely of vendors who are also growers. If vendors' regulations did not exist, however, not all farmers' market vendors would be farmers in those cases, nor would all products sold in the market be farm products. If the market rules allow, even vendors who sell farm products may specialize in re-selling products from outside Kentucky by trucking them in directly. For the majority of growers-only markets, however, consignment of products from out-of-state is prohibited. In this way, individual market rules shape whether farmers' markets are "farmers-only markets," or markets that consist of both local farmers' products and those shipped in.

Many farmers' markets accept vendors that come from areas immediately adjacent to the market's county, while there are also several markets that specifically limit vendors to farms within the market county. Because of climatic limitations, not all products sold are grown in Kentucky throughout the year. This is especially true at the beginning of the market season, such as in April or May, when many of the products are brought in from other warmer states and their origins are displayed, such as Florida, Georgia, Texas, and California, or USDA certified products (Figure 1). At this time of the year, flower vendors have a significant market presence, as flower growers are likely to have their own greenhouses that are not affected by severe winter weather. Early season food products include asparagus, radishes, greens, and green onions. As the growing season progresses, vegetables such as tomatoes, sweet corn, green beans, squash, zucchini, potatoes, onions, and green peppers, along with fruits such as berries, peaches, watermelons and cantaloupes, start to arrive at the market and are sold as long as their season lasts. As the growing season continues and the weather gets warmer, the variety of products increases, as does the number of vendors and customers. The Lexington Farmers' Market, for example, had thirty vendors one Saturday in April 2003, while in August that year it had fifty-seven.¹⁹



Figure 1. Scene of Lexington Farmers' Market, 2003 (Picture taken by author)

2) Branding “Local” Products

While there may be ten vendors in July that sell the same kinds of tomatoes, they may all have signs that explain how their tomatoes are different. Because many vendors sell the same products (especially fruits and vegetables), they try to differentiate their products from others by emphasizing their attractive qualities. Some promote an environmentally-friendly production method, such as certified organic farm products or eggs produced by free-range chickens. Others promote their products through geographically specific signs that emphasize where the products have come from. All certified organic farmers, for example, use signs that state both “certified organic” and the place the products were grown, mostly by the name of the county (i.e., Franklin County). The Kentucky Department of Agriculture (KDA) provides financial assistance for promoting and branding state producers’ quality products with stickers and cardboard signs that include the logo “Kentucky Proud” (Figure 2). Therefore, by using these logos, producers can show consumers they are selling products that were grown and raised in Kentucky.



Figure 2. Sales of 4th of July tomatoes along with *Kentucky Proud* logo at Owensboro Farmers' Market, 2006. (Picture taken by author)

As spring moves into summer, more “local” food begins to appear on vendors’ tables. This is a sign that the growing season has progressed and that farmers’ own products have matured and can now be harvested to replace shipped products. The farmers’ own produce is geographically specified with terms such as “home grown,” “locally grown,” “grown in Scott County,” or “grown in Berea, Kentucky.” For those products not grown in Kentucky, vendors often specify which states the products came from (Figure 3). Differences between these terms represent various meanings or interpretations of geographical scale. Producers try to be locationally specific and accountable for what they are selling. Producers also recognize that specification of certain place names is essential for informing consumers about how “local” a product is. For example, “Kentucky grown” potatoes may be perceived as more “local” than “Texas grown” potatoes, even though the type of potatoes may be exactly the same. The degree to which “local” matters, however, depends on how thoroughly consumers demand accountability for the products they buy.



Figure 3. Sales of apples and gourds that were produced in Scott County, Kentucky, and Indiana, both sold at Lexington Farmers' Market, 2003. (Picture taken by author)

Another reason why producers choose to employ the “local” label is their understanding that attachment to place is a significant factor in customer shopping practices. As mentioned above, some customers believe that “local” products are better because of freshness, quality, or other characteristics. Others identify with “local” producers with whom they develop a trusting relationship over time. Both producers and consumers attempt to build close personal relationships by selling and buying local products. In fact, the newsletter published weekly by the Lexington Farmers Market always concludes, “Thank you for supporting your local farmers!”²⁰

What, then, are the differences between a “home grown” tomato and a “grown in Franklin County” tomato? Whether the signs describe space at the county or municipal level, specification of a “local” producing area does not necessarily competitively differentiate product quality unless the place names themselves add certain imagined values to products (i.e., wine in Napa, CA, onions in Vidalia, GA, and many others). Signs may distinguish the vendors, and obviously some vendors attract more customers than others selling the same products because of the products’

shape, freshness, price, or manner of display. As to consumers' selections, however, absolute geographical location is not the key factor in evaluating the quality of the products they purchase. This is a critical point, because producers are not trying to sell themselves through labels of specific locations, but are relying instead upon the relative locational term "local." This is different from other cases, where "place" is commodified as a key to the credibility of high quality (such as the case of Napa and Sonoma, CA, for wines), and in which the place becomes a "brand." In contrast, even though many farmers' markets in Kentucky are aware of the importance of local products, the association with absolute location and the meaning of geographical location is veiled by the term "local."

IV WHAT IS "LOCAL" FOOD IN KENTUCKY?

The more farmers' markets and their related food products are examined, the more complex seemingly simple questions become. What is "local food" in Kentucky? As I have already indicated, they are not simply products that are produced within the state boundaries. Then why do people shop for these products? There is a variety of answers to this question, including a desire for freshness, interest in food product nutrition, concerns with environmental and social awareness, and an eagerness to interact and identify with producers. These answers are tied to the preference for "local" products rather than products that are shipped from distant locations or available for purchase in a nationwide grocery chain.

The idea of the "local" scale in food production requires critical examination. First, the term "local" is relative; it does not specify whether it refers to the site where the raw food product is grown, the site where it is processed, or the site where it is prepared for home or commercial consumption.²¹ Second, as I have shown in the empirical evidence above, people associate "local" with different geographical scales: the particular name of a community, city or town, county, or state. Some, for example, consider "local" as the space within a state boundary. Others consider "local" as the county of the producers' or consumers' residence, or their home. In short, compared with a city or state where a boundary is politically delineated, "local" is a social construct: unfixed, and usually defined contextually rather than on an explicit scale.²² With the emphasis on labeling food as "local," for all people who are involved it

is important to not only be specific with the site of production and processing, but also to consider mobile spatial scales between the production, distribution, marketing, and consumption of “local” food.

Producers and consumers construct food localism differently. From the producers’ point of view, localism is practiced when they strategically emphasize that their products are locally produced and/or sold. This is done by providing high quality products to consumers, which they assume will make them competitive, and promoting these products as locally provided; they thus link the image and identity of place to the commodity. Therefore, the site of production as “local” becomes part of the commodity. To reinforce this relationship, producers and farmers’ markets reproduce normative “local” market conditions by regulating which vendors are allowed to sell their products based on where they are from, and what products can be sold based on where they are grown. In other words, each farmers’ market defines the products and their people based on territorial space (where the acceptable products are from) that permits products to enter and exist in a certain place (farmers’ market) and therefore the right to be labeled “local” food.²³

From the consumers’ point of view, localism is practiced when producers are local: not a producer who lives in Mobile, AL, for example, but someone living nearby. A linked assumption is that the markets’ products are also local, grown by the person selling it, instead of someone living in the same town and going elsewhere to purchase wholesale produce and sell them “locally.” Local food creates an aura of trust, credibility, and assurance that consumers seek when buying products from local individuals or particularly people they know.²⁴ When consumers have a direct relationship with the producers, consumers assume that producers are “local” people who are tied to the place of production. Such assumptions are not necessarily valid, however, because even “local producers” may sometimes be providing products from “non-local” sources such as through an out-of-state consignment system. A market’s rules will distinguish between local and non-local products, but very few markets overtly display their rules to customers, and signs showing place names make available only limited information to enable the consumers to understand the meaning of “local.” Hence, “local” food promotes or requires additional attention to the site of production and/or processing. In either case, it is clear that some type of social relationship between producers and consumers is critical to the construction of localism. The term “local food,” therefore, not only refers to the commodities produced

by small-scale farmers in proximate sites, but it also implies that consumers believe that locally grown food products are likely to present desired qualities.

Such theoretical grounding applies to the current formation of Kentucky's local food movement. Different actors have different goals in specifying their products as "local." For individual producers, in order to explain that they raised their products, or that the products were grown at home (or in a certain county or town in Kentucky), the specification of where it was produced or if it was "home grown" is the most critical information to provide. Market managers and farmers' market group members that include the market board, however, define eligibility for membership by the location of the producer's farm and residence. The groups, therefore, construct territorial boundaries that delimit what and where constitutes "local." In other words, mutual group surveillance of where products come from defines their own sense of "local," placing less concern on where "local" actually is in absolute terms. This is an ironic disjuncture because market institutions within Kentucky define spatial scale differently. The Kentucky Department of Agriculture, state government, promotes the branding of Kentucky producers' products with the "Kentucky Proud" logo as quality products that were grown and raised in Kentucky. Meanwhile, some county farmers' markets already define their marketable products with labels such as "home grown in Henry County," whereby products that were grown outside of that county are not considered local to that market, even though they were also "grown in Kentucky."²⁵ The scale of "local" is not defined in absolute terms but is socially constructed, while consumers seek a standard of credibility yet assume some variability within the scale of "local."

V CONCLUSION

Over the past century, more people have become concerned about their health and diet as well as the impact of industrialized agricultural production, and therefore, food has received increasing critical attention.²⁶ Considering consumers' increasing interest in food and diet, "the geography of food" is also likely to receive increasing attention along with the expansion of farmers' markets.

This paper illustrates how the representation of spatial scale influences the adoption of "local" food through the case study of farmers' markets in Kentucky. With the collapse of tobacco-based agriculture, production

and direct marketing of food products have become a critical factor for producers' economic survival. Consumers are also affected by this movement through increased access to fresh, high quality food products. To connect these groups, two important conditions must exist: substantial consumer demand for fresh produce that global retail chains cannot (or do not) supply, and ample quantities of fresh produce supplies from nearby producers. Rapid increases in the number of farmers' markets throughout the state indirectly reflect that the demand for locally grown produce exists already. Indeed, according to Glasscock (2002), quantitatively, given the total volume of vegetable products produced in Kentucky, the state and producers could theoretically feed the citizens of Kentucky without relying on external products.²⁷ In that sense, farmers' markets, along with other direct marketing strategies, play a critical role in sustaining both producers' incomes and consumers' access to quality food, thereby strengthening "local" and regional-level food security.

For researchers, what remains to be understood is what exists beyond the idea of local scale. It is important to consider the contemporary conditions of American local food systems in their geographical contexts. Although farmers' markets are strongly tied to small-scale agricultural production, distribution and availability of products as well as consumer-producer relationships are highly embedded spatially, and their networks of social relations eventually produce places, including farmers' markets.²⁸

In Kentucky, it appears that farmers' markets are attempting to fix the meaning of "local" food or food "made in Kentucky." This trend, however, masks the micro-scale importance and significance of the geography of food. To understand the process of Kentucky's agricultural transformation—including its diversification of production—it is important to recognize the characteristics of places that are now forming their own identities. In the context of post-tobacco agricultural restructuring and attempts to promote direct farm product sales, I argue that the significance of place for selling Kentucky food products will be critical beyond relying on the idea of the local scale. The shift from tobacco-dependent agriculture to rapid increases of alternative non-traditional products such as fruits and vegetables has expanded the number of direct sale opportunities such as farmers' markets. This has offered broader access to "local" food for both producers and consumers. In order to adopt food localism as one of the ways to support small farms in

Kentucky, however, the meanings of “local” scale need to be examined further, as interpretations and the value of the scale vary across the range of involved actors. Kentucky has 120 counties, the third largest number after Texas and Georgia, and each county has distinctive characteristics. In that sense, clearly, the unique characteristics of distinct places, as they emerge in space at the intersection of social relations and identities,²⁹ will be critical to the successful production of diverse “local foods” in the 120 counties of Kentucky. To illustrate, all farmers’ markets in Kentucky may be selling tomatoes, but not all markets and not all tomatoes are the same because place matters to production, distribution, marketing, and consumption of food.

Contextually speaking, the same thing can be said of any other market in the United States. From California to New Jersey, numerous farmers’ markets exist nationwide across each state, but each has different rules for defining market rules and what qualifies as the scale of “local.” As I mentioned in the beginning, however, we tend to neglect the connections between *what* is grown and *where* it is grown and *how* a product is branded as “local.” Why are cantaloupes produced in Posey County, Indiana regarded as more special than “Kentucky Proud” cantaloupes? From the standpoint of supporting small farms and providing fresh produce, “local food” will continue to play an important role in the US food system. An increase in publications that advocate the “local food movement” in the United States reflects these trends.³⁰ But the word “local” is not innocent: it can be used for various political ends by those who try to (and who have the ability to) determine its meaning.³¹ An understanding beyond the definition of “local” scale in food becomes important not only for researchers but also for producers and state governments who are involved in policy making for restructuring processes. The examples from Kentucky that I have discussed in this paper only tell us that we have a lot more to investigate in order to understand the significance and multiple meanings of “local food” in the United States.

NOTES

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²⁰ Lexington Farmers Market E-mail Newsletter, 4 September 2003. Available upon request.

²¹ Aurora S. Hodgson and Christine M. Bruhn, "Geographical Names on Product Labels: Consumer Attitudes toward Their Use," *Food Technology* 46, no. 2 (1992): 83–89.

²² Katherine T. Jones, "Scale as Epistemology," *Political Geography* 17, no. 1 (1998): 25–28; Sallie A. Marston, "The Social Construction of Scale," *Progress in Human Geography* 24, no. 2 (2000): 219–42; Neil Smith, "Geography, Difference and the Politics of Scale," in *Postmodernism and the Social Sciences*, eds. John Doherty, Elspeth Graham and Mo Malek (New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 1992), 57–79; Neil Smith, "Scale," in *The Dictionary of Human Geography*, eds. R.J. Johnston, Derek Gregory, Geraldine Pratt, and Michael Watts (Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishers, 2000), 724–27.

²³ Claire C. Hinrichs, "Embeddedness and Local Food Systems: Notes on Two Types of Direct Agricultural Market," *Journal of Rural Studies* 16, no. 2 (2000): 295–303.

²⁴ Enticott, "Lay Immunology, Local Foods and Rural Identity: Defending Unpasteurised Milk in England."

²⁵ Author's field notes from Farmers Market Summit hosted by Kentucky Department of Agriculture, March 25, 2006. On the issue of "defensive localism," also see Michael Winter, "Embeddedness, the New Food Economy and Defensive Localism," *Journal of Rural Studies* 19, no. 1 (2003): 23–32.

²⁶ Eric Schlosser, *Fast Food Nation: The Dark Side of the All-American Meal*, (Boston, Mass: Houghton Mifflin, 2001).

²⁷ Rebecca Glasscock, "The Long Road to Kentucky: A Geography of Fresh Vegetable Production and Consumption," (Ph.D. diss., University of Kentucky, 2002), 205–38.

²⁸ Lucy Jarosz, "Understanding Agri-Food Networks as Social Relations," *Agriculture and Human Values* 17, no. 3 (2000): 279–83.

²⁹ Jim Duncan, "Place." Gregory, Geraldine Pratt, and Michael Watts (Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishers, 2000), 582–84.

³⁰ Brian Halweil, *Eat Here: Reclaiming Homegrown Pleasures in a Global Supermarket*, (New York, NY: Norton, 2004); Gary P. Nabhan, *Coming Home to Eat: The Pleasures and Politics of Local Foods*, (New York, NY: Norton, 2002); Norberg-Hodge, et al., *Bringing the Food Economy Home*, to name a few. In addition, Wendell Berry's critiques on industrial agriculture and call for supporting local farms should not be missed: Wendell Berry, *The Unsettling of America: Culture and Agriculture*, 3d ed., (San Francisco, Calif.: Sierra Club Books, 1997).

³¹ E. Melanie DuPuis and David Goodman, "Should We Go 'Home' to Eat?: Toward a Reflexive Politics of Localism," *Journal of Rural Studies* 21, no. 3 (2005): 359-71.