COLES, WOOLWORTHS, AND THE LOCAL

Sarah Keith

Macquarie University

Abstract

Australia is home to one of the most concentrated supermarket sectors in the world, and the practices of the 'big two' supermarkets have far-reaching consequences on food production and retail at the local level. This article surveys key issues in Coles and Woolworths' effect on the food retail and production sectors, and looks at how these supermarkets have adapted in recent years to concerns and criticisms, as well as recent moves towards addressing these criticisms. Over the past decade, several important shifts have occurred which suggest an evolving consumer consciousness and increasing discontent with the corporatised supermarket sector. A primary concern is lack of competition, which reduces incentives to keep prices low for consumers; furthermore, these supermarkets have also been charged with wielding substantial buyer power, resulting in lower prices paid to suppliers. Quality of produce is a further issue, while the rise of private label goods such as milk is concerning for both suppliers and retail competitors. This discontent has led to an ideological opposition to these supermarkets, resulting in public campaigns to prevent their entry into towns and suburbs. Finally, new developments by Coles and Woolworths to improve their reputations, although still at an early stage, are examined.

Keywords

retail, supermarket, local, Coles, Woolworths

Introduction

The supermarket retail sector in Australia has the distinction of being one of the most concentrated in the world (Wardle and Baranovic, 2009: 477). The sector is dominated by Coles and Woolworths (owned by Wesfarmers Group and Woolworths Limited respectively), following a string of acquisitions and expansions by the 'big two' parent companies over the past twenty years. Woolworths currently owns 840 supermarkets in Australia as of 2011 (Woolworths Limited, 2011: 86), up 17 from 823 in 2010 (ibid) while Coles owns 741 (Wesfarmers Limited, 2011: 20), down 1 from 742 in 2010 (Wesfarmers Limited, 2010: 20). Substantial media commentary has occurred concerning these companies' anti-competitive and duopolistic practices, and there is growing concern that the market may now be so concentrated that competitive pressure is decreasing (Mills, 2003: 148). In such an environment, decisions made by these national retailers have the power to shape practices in food production and retail across the board, as well as to affect communities and consumers at the local level.

Meanwhile, recent years have seen the spread of concepts such as 'locavore' (Blue, 2009) and 'food miles' (Stringer and Umberger, 2009) drawing attention to the environmental effects of food transportation. Social and health effects of the corporatisation of food retail have also come to the fore, through films such as *Food, Inc* (Kenner, 2008), *Fast Food Nation* (Schlosser and Linklater, 2006), and *The Future of Food* (Garcia, 2004). Similarly, the negative consequences of large corporations within communities have been covered in features like *Wal-Mart: The High Cost of Low Price* (Greenwald, 2005) and *Capitalism: A Love Story* (Moore, 2009). As consumer awareness of such issues grows, major Australian supermarket retailers are seeking to redress perceived shortcomings in their corporate practices by rebranding and repositioning their businesses, as well as introducing new locally-based food supply initiatives.

Locale-specific food cultures in contemporary Australia, whether in retail, culture, or community, are profoundly affected by the dominant retail model. Smaller, regionally—or locally-based food networks and communities have been compelled to adapt to the increasing consolidation and power of the supermarket sector. At the same time, major supermarkets have begun to explore ways to 'localise' their operations, both superficially and more materially. This investigation aims to provide an overview of the frictions and interactions between the 'big two' supermarkets at the national level and smaller players at the local level. It aims to bring together disparate factors to give an overall picture of the interplay between the national and the local in food production, retail, and consumption. Several case studies are raised, which illustrate the larger-scale concerns underpinning the conflict between the dominant supermarket retail model and local retailers, communities, producers, and consumers.

Supermarket effects on producers and communities

Before embarking on a more detailed discussion of the major supermarkets' structure and practices, some examples of how these retailers affect regional and smaller-scale producers and communities will be discussed. Several distinct objections have been raised regarding the practices of Coles and Woolworths. These include their handling of fresh produce, sale of private label goods (goods manufactured under the specific retailer's brand, often designed to compete against branded products, and offering customers a cheaper alternative), and entry into communities.

Fresh produce

Coles and Woolworths have significant buyer power in the fresh produce market, which affects both the supplier and the quality of the end product. These supermarkets have habitually approached grocery retailing from a demand-oriented (rather than produce-oriented) standpoint, which means that seasonal produce (such as apples, pears, and grapes) is kept at controlled atmospheres year-round and artificially ripened to satisfy continuous demand (Johnson, 2003). Perceptions of lower quality may also be due to Coles' and Woolworths' distribution structure: according to Wardle and Baranovic, the longer travel times and long-storage systems required by such distribution diminish the available range of fresh produce in these supermarkets, and furthermore mean that the food may be "nutritionally compromised by the time it reaches the consumer" (2009: 479). This minimisation of seasonal variation and a reliance on statewide (or nationwide) distribution of a uniform range of fresh produce may hinder distinct food cultures at the local level.

On the side of producers, growers have in the past criticised Woolworths' quality specifications, saying that appearance and shelf life are held to be more desirable than taste (Wade and Bradley, 2002) and that standards accreditation is prohibitively expensive for smaller growers (ibid). An investigation by Friends of the Earth Australia reports that farmers experience difficulty in covering the costs of accreditation necessary to supply Woolworths, often have products returned due to cosmetic faults, and that meeting these cosmetic standards requires use of pesticides, fertilisers, and intensive farming methods (Walker, 2007). These specifications have also been linked with increased use of fungicides and herbicides, as well as increasing exports because "Woolies are too hard to deal with" (Wade and Bradley, 2002). More broadly, Campbell et al. link the heavy use of fertilisers and insecticides with overall ecological unsustainability (2006: 85). Coles' and Woolworths' impact within the domestic fresh produce market was most recently highlighted by the 2010 Queensland (QLD) floods, with their policy decisions over whether to import food or allow the sale of blemished "ugly fruit" substantially impacting QLD'S economic recovery effort (Needham, 2011).

Lastly, Coles and Woolworths have been criticised for their aggressive pricing and market control over fresh produce. This negative coverage has prompted some reaction, including a defensive 2008 statement titled "The Facts About Grocery Retailing" in which Woolworths emphasised their low profit margin and small share of the fresh food market (Woolworths Limited, 2008). Surprisingly, this statement also suggests customer dissatisfaction with Woolworths' produce: this fact sheet states that 71% of their customers' fruit and vegetable expenditure is spent *outside* of Woolworths (ibid: 5).

The high market share and corporate structure of Coles and Woolworths have problematised several aspects for smaller produce growers in particular, who have had to conform to a demand-oriented system with an established range of goods, assertive pricing, as well as accreditation guidelines, in order to supply these retailers. In recent years, however, it appears that the supermarkets' reputation is changing: for instance, rising Woolworths consumer satisfaction levels have been directly attributed to changing practices in fresh produce retail (Palmer, 2009). Although scant data is available on the reasons for this positive change, possible causes include re-modelled supermarket interiors, a focus on selling and promoting Australian-grown produce, and a more flexible supply chain incorporating local produce. These are discussed further later in this article.

Private label groceries

The rise of private label (also known as 'own-brand' or 'generic') groceries produced by Coles and Woolworths presents another cause for concern for smaller producers and local food networks. Private label goods are customarily cheaper than branded goods and are increasing in popularity; for instance, private label milk currently represents 71% of the market (Commonwealth of Australia, 2011b: 34). This negatively affects the competitiveness of smaller brands. Secondly, private label goods are presented identically in stores nation-wide. According to Mills, private label products "enhance the market power of the chain, rather than that of the supplier who makes the 'own-label' product, and whose identity is not known to the consumers" (2003: 146). With this in mind, the rise of private label products directly hinders the development of producer and regional identity.

These factors are illustrated in the "milk wars" of early 2011, which generated significant media attention. Milk, as a private label product with significantly more market share than its branded equivalent, has typically been a focal point in Australian supermarket competition. In 2010, the Senate Economics References Committee produced a 92-page report titled "Milking it for all it's worth—competition and pricing in the Australian dairy industry", outlining concerns over pricing and competition (Commonwealth of Australia, 2010). Tensions intensified when, on Australia Day 2011, Coles cut the price of milk to $1 per litre. The move was referred to by the *Sydney Morning Herald* as "the first salvo in a $60 million milk war […] timed to cause the maximum discomfort for Woolworths" (Greenblat and Hawthorne, 2011). The figure of $60 million refers to an insider estimate of the cost of this price reduction (ibid), however Coles itself denies that the product is loss-leading (Malden, 2011). The Australian Dairy Farmers Association urged an investigation into the implications of this move, and a Senate Economics Committee inquiry into the sustainability of this price cut was launched in March 2011 (AAP, 2011). To date, 160 submissions have been made regarding this enquiry, from dairy farmers, regional co-operatives[1], food manufacturers, and related industries (Commonwealth of Australia, 2011a); the latter includes the Australian Egg Industry Association, which expressed concern that eggs are being similarly treated (Ironside, 2011).

This event firstly shows the buyer power of large retailers, demonstrated by the decade-long rise of private label (generic) milk, which overtook branded milk sales in 2000 (Hogan et al., 2004: 35) following the deregulation of the dairy industry. Lower prices are cited as a major factor in this shift, and these lowered prices are brought about by aggressive tendering by milk processors for private label milk contracts with supermarkets (ibid). The tendering process has been explicitly linked with "crippling" the dairy industry, favouring shareholders' and customers' interests at the expense of dairy processors and farmers (Stone, 2003: 1). Farmers are reported to take 4% of profits from dairy sales, in comparison with 80% for retailers, and 16% for processors (NARGA, 2010: 6). Coles has rebuffed these claims by suggesting that rather than exploiting their buying power, there is in fact a concentrated supply base in the Australian milk market. Managing director Ian McLeod stated, "In some states you're effectively faced with a monopoly in terms of your milk supply […] depending on whether markets are moving positively or negatively, then they can either choose to expand or contract supply by freeze-drying milk and sending it overseas" (ABC Radio National, 2010). It is however more commonly argued that the private label sector is a major component of the dairy industry, and therefore that tendering for private label contracts is indeed highly competitive (Issar, 2004: 9).

Private label goods are therefore firstly concerned with achieving lower prices and a consistent supply, which requires the use of processors big enough to supply large-scale contracts. This aggregated supply system minimises the local and regional origins of produce, but also may threaten independent producers in competition with private label goods. Although the effect of supermarkets' private label products on smaller and local producers is difficult to determine, limited evidence suggests that it is possible for smaller producers that are closely affiliated with a region to maintain consumer support (Jopson, 2011). The eight-farm Berry Rural Co-operative, producers of South Coast dairy products (on the south coast of New South Wales [NSW]), reports that overall sales have not dropped significantly since Coles' introduction of $1-per-litre milk (ibid). Terry Toohey, chairman of the NSW Dairy Board, proposes that regional residents are aware of the economic effects that would occur if local milk processors suffered a fall in business because of cheap supermarket products (ibid). A protest by a Tasmanian milk co-operative over failed collective bargaining with milk processor National Foods similarly resulted in a community boycott of National Foods products, successfully leading to an eventual settlement (Commonwealth of Australia, 2010: 69). Accusations that the industrial processing of cheaper milk involves adding inexpensive permeate, a milk byproduct from cheese production, have also been raised (Frith, 2008).

The "milk war" draws attention to the shift towards large-scale supplier contracts, which favours the growth of large processors to meet demand (Commonwealth of Australia, 2010: 53). Another less-obvious effect is that the wholesale of milk via centralised processors, and its branding as a private label product, has particular impact on the ability of regional producers to define and promote a unique food identity. The role of local food in promoting regional communities is discussed by Brunori (2006), who theorises that *terroir* is a form of territorial capital embedded in a product (ibid: 128). Milk producers, such as Jersey Fresh from the Barossa Valley in South Australia, (one of the organisations that lodged a submission to the Senate Enquiry on milk price cuts [Commonwealth of Australia, 2011a]), are part of a network of producers that contributes to the region's reputation as a food tourism destination. Their "defiantly unhomogenised milk and thick, glorious cream are a highly valued part of Barossa food culture", as one newspaper puts it (*The Australian*, 2009: online). Through the increased sales of private label milk, Coles and Woolworths reduce the market share of branded products and consumer awareness of the provenance of produce; as Burch and Lawrence (2005) write: the rise of supermarket private labels "challenge the remaining vestiges of manufacturer power as exemplified in the power of the brand". Feagan (2007) writes that the fixation of food products to place furthermore aids consumers in making decisions regarding consumption choices, "in broader spheres of the sociocultural and environmental" (ibid: 26); removing traces of origin therefore limits informed consumption. Limited evidence suggests, however, that established smaller, regionally-based producers (such as the Berry Rural Co-operative) may be able to leverage their connection with a community to survive in a price war, whereby the very act of not supporting large retailers has positive consequences for the community. This quality-versus-price aspect relies on the appeal that long-term benefits can be gained through supporting a 'local' product.

Erosion of local autonomy

Throughout Australia, towns and suburbs have also contested the incursion of Coles and Woolworths into local communities. These have been prefigured by similar disputes over national chain stores and town planning in the UK throughout the 1980s and 1990s (Seth and Randall, 2001: 285). The greater market power of large grocery chains is widely perceived to cripple the viability of smaller businesses, although proving a direct causal link is difficult (ibid: 286). Economies of scale make it possible for goods to be sold cheaply, while the practice of predatory pricing—selling key items at a lower rate than a nearby competitor—can entice consumers away from established local businesses. Legislation to prevent misuse of market power through predatory pricing has proven problematic (Boswell, 2002) despite intervention by the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC).

Large companies such as Coles and Woolworths are often perceived as 'intruders' to communities where small, family-owned businesses are the norm. The viability of small businesses, including food retail and primary producers, is key for regional and rural Australian communities (ibid). In a Trade Practices Act review, Senator Ron Boswell writes that the loss of smaller independent businesses in country towns has a snowballing effect, removing other businesses and employment from the area;

likewise, the use of local suppliers, service people, and locally sourced produce are likely to decrease (ibid). Although job creation is often cited as a benefit of a large supermarket moving into an area, this is counter-indicated by research of the UK supermarket sector showing that the opening of a large supermarket costs, on average, 276 jobs (Corporate Watch, 2004: 18).

Much of the opposition to large supermarkets entering communities focuses on legislation relating to zoning and development. In 2009, the residents of Newport, in NSW, launched a campaign against council rezoning to allow the construction of a local 3/4 acre Woolworths supermarket, citing concerns over diminished green space and public land, as well as village character (NewportVersusWoolies.org, nd). Similar reasons, including increased and unsafe traffic, were given for the unsuccessful opposition to a Coles supermarket in Oatley (NSW), while residents of Mount Evelyn (Victoria) successfully opposed the development of a Woolworths supermarket on the grounds that it breached the community's zoning and development regulations. Organisations such as Love Your Locals (www.loveyourlocals.com.au) have arisen to lobby against proposed legislation that may harm smaller businesses, such as the 2009 Draft Centres policy that addresses metropolitan planning. Started by the Independent Retailers of NSW and ACT Inc. (IGA), Love Your Locals claims that this legislation will deregulate the commercial zoning system to the detriment of local operators, giving "big developers and the large retail chains the ability to drive rezonings through the planning system without proper regard for communities" (Love Your Locals, 2011).

Two notable campaigns against the opening of Woolworths supermarkets have occurred in the towns of Maleny (QLD) and Mullumbimby (NSW). Both of these campaigns, although hinged on planning and regulatory issues, were organised protests against the perceived threat to community character and autonomy. The campaign to stop a Woolworths development in Maleny started in 2003, and relates firstly to the destruction of a platypus habitat near the construction site (Maleny Voice, 2008a). Larger concerns over corporate responsibility and the power of large corporations in small communities are also explicitly mentioned (ibid, 2008b). Though this started as a planning and development campaign, the evolving conflict drew attention to the threatened autonomy of local communities and businesses, and the loss of retail diversity following a large entrant to local food economy. A 2005 investigation into the receptivity of the Maleny community to a Woolworths development found that as many of 79% of Maleny residents opposed Woolworths' construction at the Obi Obi Creek site (Market Facts, 2005: 4). When questioned whether they would support Woolworths' construction at another site in Maleny, 53% remained opposed (ibid). 38% of respondents stated that they opposed Woolworths because Maleny is "not a place for national corporate retailers", suggesting a social and ideological—as well as practical—opposition to Woolworths' presence (ibid: 9). Anderson and Cook describe how local food systems "enable community residents to bring their aspirations and values to bear on the larger global food production system" (2005: 245). Dixon (2007: 33) similarly discusses such cultural resistances as opposition to the 'Wal-Mart effect', arising from "shared perceptions that one institution should not be able to dictate consumer choices, the working lives of suppliers and employees, and those of competitor businesses" (ibid).

Likewise, the town of Mullumbimby opposed the development of a Woolworths supermarket on the grounds that it would compromise the town's character as a self-sufficient community with no chain stores (ABC, 2010b). Concerns included the loss of control over local retail, the outflow of capital, and the loss of local food variation. One resident stated, "Everyone here is behind, say, the newsagents or the butcher. They actually own the shop and when you buy from them, they actually live there and they sell to you and it is local produce" (ibid).[2] Permission for the supermarket's development on state-owned land was made at NSW state-level, overriding the local council's opposition (Mobbs, 2010), due to Mullumbimby's identification as a town with urban growth potential (Hamilton, 2008). A summary of a meeting of the Mullumbimby Community Action Network writes that the tension is the result of a culture clash, concluding, "It's all about sustainable futures and local living economies versus corporate globalisation, mass starvation, the collapse of civilisation and destruction of the eco-systems that support life" (Maslow, 2008). This 'culture clash', situated in the arena of food retail, represents a larger ideological conflict between self-determination in preserving and maintaining local autonomy, versus corporate and national economic interests.

Supermarket effects on producers and communities

These three examples—quality of produce, the 'milk war', and erosion of local autonomy—show how Australia's concentrated supermarket sector has had wide-ranging economic and social effects on communities. The sale of fresh produce is subject to corporate-level decisions over appearance and perceived quality, while expanding vertical integration and mandatory accreditation systems may make supplying to Coles or Woolworths problematic for smaller producers. Meanwhile, the increasing market share of private label goods such as milk encourages a move towards larger-scale, industrialised processing corporations to ensure a consistent level of supply for these supermarkets. This in turn raises concerns over transparency and fair pricing policies (CHOICE, 2011). These matters firstly affect the ability for smaller producers to have their products stocked in-store, as private label goods command a rising share of the market, and therefore shelf space. Secondly, it hinders the development of new, smaller-scale products with unique or identifiably regional origins.

The dominance and far-reaching consequences of these supermarkets has also generated ill-will in small communities such as Maleny and Mullumbimby, who are ideologically opposed to the entry of large supermarkets into their territory. These supermarkets are perceived to have negative social impacts, including job loss, erosion of 'character' and local businesses, and too much control over local council decisions. These case-studies show how the nature of food production in Australia is closely linked with the structure, decisions, and policies of Australia's 'big two' supermarkets, and how consumer choices and communities have likewise been shaped by these companies.

Coles and Woolworths: history and criticisms

Since the 1960s, the food supply chain in Western nations has been increasingly controlled by retailers, following post-war economic changes and the deregulation of manufacturing and processing industries (Burch and Lawrence, 2005: 1). The control that retailers exert over the food supply chain in Australia is particularly pronounced. In Australia, Wesfarmers Group and Woolworths Limited are the two largest retail corporations, collecting an estimated 23 cents of each dollar spent in the country (ABC, 2010a). Aside from the major supermarket chains of Coles and Woolworths, the interests of these corporations include liquor retailing, home improvement and office supplies, general merchandise, mining, insurance, chemicals and fertilisers, energy, hotels, and consumer electronics.[3] The following will explore how these supermarkets affect local and regional producers and communities, and describe attempts by the government and other lobbyists to curtail their influence.

Coles and Woolworths dominate the food retail market in Australia due firstly to the sparse and highly urbanised population that fosters the development of large, metropolitan food retailers rather than smaller, locally based retailers. Secondly, the widely dispersed centres of habitation and key food producing areas require effective transportation networks, a difficult feat for smaller producers. Thirdly, as Wade and Bradley (2002) identify, the sparseness of the Australian population favours substantial economies of scale in order to keep costs low. Given these factors, the Australian food retail market has been shown to be the most concentrated in the world (Jacenko and Gunasekera, 2005: 3), with Coles and Woolworths responsible for the sale of up to 80% of all packaged groceries (NARGA, 2010: 5). Store numbers have increased appreciably in the last decade; for example, Coles built 229 new stores between 1998 and 2008, to a total of 750 (Coles Supermarkets, 2008: 19). It has also been estimated that Coles and Woolworths have more than 90% of the 'one-stop' shopping market (Mills, 2003: 146). Since 2000, Coles and Woolworths have also aggressively pursued a larger share of the liquor retail market; their current share is around 45% (CHOICE, 2010), and industry research suggests that by 2015 the liquor industry may be totally subsumed by the supermarket industry (ibid).

Concerns have been raised over both the sustainability and anti-competitive effects of the increasing concentration of the retail sector, in particular its effect on smaller producers and retailers. These concerns fall into three main areas; selling power (where reduced competition results in reduced incentives to lower prices for consumers), buying power (where a concentrated buyers' market limits competitiveness of prices offered to producers and suppliers, and limits the range of products available to consumers with preference given to larger, cost-effective brands over smaller players), and retail (where the presence of a large, 'one-stop' shop in an area may hinder smaller independent competitors and local development). The current state of the sector regarding these three areas is discussed below.

Selling power (Duopoly) and buying power (Duopsony)

The national supermarkets' growing ability to dictate the price of goods sold affects consumers and food market pricing within communities. Concerns over the competitiveness of grocery prices in the concentrated supermarket sector were formally outlined in a 2008 public inquiry by the ACCC, which proposed that "Australian consumers would significantly benefit if Coles and Woolworths faced more competitive threats that encouraged more aggressive pricing strategies" (ACCC, 2008a: xvi). Mills (2003: 148) argues that although competition between Coles and Woolworths may once have served to keep prices low for the consumer, the food retail market is now so concentrated that the competitive pressures to keep prices lower is diminishing.[4] A 2010 survey by independent consumer watchdog CHOICE determined that prices had in fact risen over a one-year period, despite claims to the contrary by these supermarkets (CHOICE, 2010b).

Following the 2008 ACCC inquiry, in 2010 the Federal Government amended the Trade Practices Act 1974 (now the Competition and Consumer Act 2010) to guard against 'creeping acquisitions'—substantial mergers that have a negative effect on market competition (Palmer, 2010). This amendment has however been criticised by both large retailers (Mara, 2008) and legislators (Xenophon, 2010) for failing to define terms such as 'unconscionable conduct' and 'substantial market power'. Woolworths has also been criticised for apparently pricing fresh produce at significantly more (e.g. 250%) than wholesale cost (Passmore, 2008), although Woolworths contends that cost of goods make up 77% of the final retail price (Woolworths Limited, 2008: 12). CHOICE maintains that lack of competition, rather than rising wholesale costs, is likely to be the cause of higher retail prices (CHOICE, 2009). The duopolistic nature of Australian food retail market is a result of diminishing food retail options, and therefore a loss of local variety.

Coles and Woolworths have also been defined as a *duopsony*, a 'buyer's duopoly', meaning that their buying power is capable of shaping the price and conditions of sale of producers. Wardle and Baranovic write that both wholesale purchases and retail sales of groceries in Australia are "dominated by few players—effectively creating a combined duopsony and duopoly", which may result in "lower prices paid to producers and higher prices for consumers" (2009: 478–479). Practices in this area directly affect suppliers, including farmers, processors, manufacturers and wholesalers.

In the wholesale market, the 'big two' have been reputed to artificially lower the price of produce by withholding purchasing for one or two days, creating an oversupply and therefore a decline in price, although this practice is formally denied by Woolworths' CEO (Bradley, 2002a; Bradley, 2002b). The price concessions asked by these major retailers has been colourfully likened to "beating up" suppliers (Gottliebsen, 2008) and "ripping off Australian farmers" (Truman, 2008). Industries as a whole can be affected, such as the Australian meat and livestock industry; because Coles and Woolworths purchase over 50% of the total young cattle market, their influence is able to keep prices low (Carter, 2008a).[5]

Additionally, the supermarkets' move to a 'vertically integrated' structure, including both wholesale and retail (ACCC, 2008a: xv), has diminished the role of third-party wholesalers, and allows Coles and Woolworths to deal directly with producers. Woolworths is increasingly using the direct supply model and in 2002 reduced wholesale purchases of fresh fruit and vegetables to less than 50%, while over 95% of

Coles' beef is sourced directly from producers (Condon, 2011). This bypassing of wholesalers to deal directly with growers achieves lower costs, however smaller competing retailers using produce wholesalers are unable to achieve similar low costs (Bradley, 2002b). Growers may find avoiding wholesalers advantageous, as agents' commissions (Bradley, 2002c) and an opaque chain of supply can be avoided (Bradley, 2002d), however higher prices are not guaranteed (Bradley, 2002e).

Bigger producers are favoured by these retailers, as large volumes are required over long periods, and economies of scale can be leveraged (Wade, 2002). These practices have been blamed for reducing the viability of small fruit and vegetable growers, forcing farmers to "get bigger or get out" (Wade, 2002), as complex accreditation, quality assurance schemes, and contracts can make providing directly to supermarkets unfeasible for smaller producers (Bradley, 2002c). A 2010 study specifically lists "duopoly of supermarkets—farmers getting low prices" as a motivation for farm diversification (Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation, 2010: 38). Issues of unsustainability and unfairness are repeatedly raised in submissions to the 2008 ACCC inquiry into grocery prices lodged by many producers' associations, including Bundaberg Fruit and Vegetable Growers, Western Australian Fruit Growers' Association, the Northern Territory Horticultural Association, AUSVEG, Growcom (QLD) as well as individual producers (ACCC, 2008b). These expressed concern about the lack of pricing transparency and the tendency towards "retailers using their market power to push costs, risks and responsibilities back down the supply chain" (Growcom, 2008: 4). This structure furthermore implies that producers will often deal with only one supermarket buyer, meaning that the 'de-listing' of products (i.e. ceasing selling them) can be catastrophic for suppliers (Mills, 2003: 146). Evidence of corruption in dealing with suppliers is also apparent; in 2009, Woolworths terminated three executive fresh food purchasers over "irregular" dealings with suppliers, in breach of Woolworths' policy (Speedy and Durie, 2009).

In 2010, a report by the National Association of Retail Grocers of Australia (NARGA) raised concerns over "the unparalleled hyper-concentration of the grocery retailing sector" leading to more imported food products, at the expense of Australian farmers

(NARGA, 2010: 5). NARGA cites decreasing food production and simultaneous increase in food values (ibid: 16) as evidence of an unsustainable retail sector (ibid: 17). These combined factors have linked the concentrated grocery retail market with lowered profitability for farmers (ibid: 44). The report also outlines trends in increased food consumption, declining domestic food production, and a rise in imported food, concluding that "the way forward, if the current patterns hold true, indicates further dilution of local capacity at both primary and secondary level" (ibid: 9). Marsden et al. (1999: 299) identify that strengthening local and regional capacity in food production is both an economic concern and necessary for sustainable economic growth and employment.

Retail competition

Of significant concern to both consumers and producers is the diminution of consumer choice that accompanies a concentrated market. Wardle and Baranovic (2009: 479) suggest that, although consumer opinion is that there is not enough competition in the retail grocery sector, over 78% of respondents in a CHOICE survey shop at Coles or Woolworths because "they felt they had few other options available to them", and suggest that what may be interpreted as consumer loyalty is, in fact, lack of choice. Wardle and Baranovic go so far as to interpret this market concentration, in particular the trend of increasing fresh produce prices within supermarkets, as a public health issue (ibid: 478).

The buying, retail, and management practices of Coles and Woolworths have been explicitly credited with halving the number of independent fruit and vegetable retailers between 1992 and 1999 (Wade, 2002). NARGA has raised concerns over the growth of large supermarket chains and their effect in rural and regional Australia in a 1999 government enquiry into the fairness of the retail sector (Commonwealth of Australia, 1999). A subsequent government review of Australia's retailing sector concluded that "statistics conclusively reveal that the major chains have increased their market share at the expense of the independents" (ibid: 46). This review also notes the ill feeling towards the retailing sector, due to their displacement of smaller stores and well-known local identities by 'outsiders' (ibid: 1).[6] Where Woolworths or

Coles supermarkets are already established, their alleged business practices have affected local retailers' competitiveness. Woolworths is believed to engage in predatory pricing, where produce is deliberately sold at a price below that of a nearby competitor, and sometimes at below cost price (Lohse, 2009) in order to entice customers to shop at Woolworths. Woolworths, however, refutes claims that they engage in this practice (ibid). NARGA meanwhile have maintained that Coles and Woolworths strategically target small, independent retailers (Wade, 2002), effectively pricing so low that small retailers are unable to remain competitive. Several retailers have explicitly linked their failure to this practice (Lohse, 2009).

In September 2009, the ACCC ruled that the exclusive leasing agreements used by Coles and Woolworths, which barred shopping centres from leasing space to competitors, were to be overturned (Tadros, 2009). The ACCC has also intervened in the case of business acquisitions by Woolworths, where such acquisitions would be likely to lessen competition and cause higher retail prices (AAP, 2007). The amended 2010 Trade Practices Act goes further, allowing the ACCC to review "greenfields developments", where property acquisitions may jeopardise the future presence of competitors in the area (Clayton Utz, 2010). This legislation aims to counter issues raised in the 2008 ACCC inquiry into the competitiveness of grocery retailing, which notes that although grocery retailing is "workably competitive", high barriers to entry and expansion prohibit competitiveness (ACCC, 2008a: xiv). Town planning has also been a central issue, with critics alleging that such 'big-box' developments re-route traffic and pedestrians away from existing town centres (Needham, 2003)

The 'local' in supermarket food retailing: Definitions and connotations of 'local'

In light of negative press coverage, Coles and Woolworths have taken several steps towards improving their reputation. One frequent criticism of Coles and Woolworths relates to their perceived reliance on imported, rather than Australian goods. Coles' and Woolworths' subsequent retailing of Australian-made produce (Foodweek, 2011), branded with the "Australian Made" or "Australian Grown" kangaroo logo, leverages consumer preference for Australian products in an environment where

90% of consumers prefer to buy products that are made in Australia (ibid). This is a sensitive issue: as recently as May 2011, two Coles and Woolworths stores were publicly reprimanded in the media for displaying inaccurate country-of-origin labelling on imported produce (Hodgkinson, 2011), labelling imported fruit as Australian-grown. However, these supermarkets have defended the origins of their fresh produce: Woolworths, for instance, claims that 95% of its fresh produce is Australian-grown (Woolworths Limited, 2008: 1).[7]

This consumer preference for 'local' (at the national level) foods is partially attributable to a raised consciousness about sustainable and ethical food production; however it has also been shown that ethnocentric beliefs influence this preference (Chryssochoidis et al., 2006). Coles' and Woolworths' attempts to address local food sourcing may therefore not be a response to concerns over the social, economic, and environmental impacts of large-scale food retailing, but a response to ethnocentric views held by consumers. In this case, preference for buying domestic food products is associated with patriotic values (Juric and Worsley, 1998: 432) and benefit to the national economy (ibid: 431).

Figure 1 – Australian Grown (South Australia) labelling, shown in a South Australian Coles catalogue (source: Coles, 2011)

To date, the meaning of 'local', as used by Coles and Woolworths, has mostly been synonymous with 'Australian', rather than referring to the regional or state-level origin of produce. In recent years, however, Coles has explored a local variant of the 'Australian Made, Australian Grown' green and gold triangle logo indicating the state or regional provenance of a product (Australian Made, Australian Grown, 2009), in catalogues and in-store. This development so far seems to be limited to labelling produce originating within the state of the Coles supermarket in question, e.g. a South Australian Coles catalogue will indicate South-Australian grown produce (Figure 1), but produce from other states is labelled generically as 'Australian Grown'. Organisations promoting specific regions have also pitched to Coles; for instance, the 'Made in the Whitsundays' brand has since late 2010 been stocked by Coles supermarkets in QLD (Enterprise Whitsundays, 2010). Similarly, Coles' membership of South Australian promotional body SA Great involves stocking a range of South Australian goods (Coles, 2009b). Woolworths have started to implement similar practices since August 2010, introducing a 'Tassie Grown' labelling system to indicate products grown in Tasmania (Woolworths, 2010a). A statement reads, "Our customers have made it clear that they want more information about what fresh food is produced right here in the Tasmanian food bowl and how they can help the local agriculture industry when they shop" (ibid). In Tasmania particularly, certain food-producing areas such as King Island have well-established brand value, reinforcing the connection between the place of production and perceptions of quality (Khamis, 2007: 22).

Recent events also show that the supply structure is adapting to allow a closer relationship at state and regional level between these supermarkets and producers. Whereas in 2002 contracts between growers and large retailers were made at the executive level, and individual supermarket managers were not authorised to enter into supply agreements with producers (Bradley, 2002c), in 2006 Coles introduced a local suppliers program, providing regionally-sourced produce to Coles supermarkets in key agricultural areas including Bundaberg, Toowoomba, and Gatton—all in QLD (Coles, 2009a). Logistics have also been simplified, allowing producers to deliver directly to local Coles stores (Coles 2009c), bypassing the centralised distribution system.

Rebranding, restructuring, and remodeling

Another way that Coles and Woolworths have responded to concerns about corporatisation of the food retail sector and competition issues relates to the appearance and branding of the supermarket itself. Coles' rebranded, re-modelled new-look ‘market place’ strategy, initiated in 2008, separates retail into smaller, specialist ‘zones’ which aim to personalise and add variety to the shopping experience. Clearly marked bakery, butcher and deli sections allow consumers to interact with staff assigned to each zone. The new model is credited with increased sales figures, outstripping those of Woolworths (Greenblat, 2010). A press release for a re-modelled Coles outlet reads as follows:

> *Coles Broadway will boast the ambience of a market place, with fruit and vegetables displayed on ice tables to maintain freshness, an in-store bakery baking fresh bread throughout the day and its very own fishmonger who will fillet customers’ fish while they finish their shopping.* (Coles, 2009d)

This strategy is also a conscious attempt to entice consumers to shop for fresh produce within Coles, and away from independent retailers. Coles’ managing director Ian McLeod asserts that “half of Australians don't buy any fresh food from any supermarket”, resulting in Coles’ decision to remodel with a focus on fresh produce (McIlwraith, 2010).

> *The result: walk into a new store and, apart from McLeod having taken away the security gates, the first things to get your attention are the hand-stacked rows of fruit and vegetables on icebeds. None of them above chest-high (literally low-hanging fruit) so customers can see butchers, fishmongers and deli-hands at work.* (ibid)

The enticement of consumers to shop for a wider range of goods at Coles, and therefore higher quantities, allows profits to increase without having to raise prices (ibid). It also superficially blurs the division between corporatised food retail and a ‘market place’ atmosphere with separate purveyors for different goods. Whereas older models of large-scale food retail (still demonstrated by retailers such as ALDI) focus primarily on cost-effectiveness for the consumer, the updated model positions food shopping as part of a conscious lifestyle decision including increased freshness, variety, and personal service.

Woolworths have likewise sought to 'localise' their perception, notably with a 2011 advertising campaign using the catchphrase 'That's My Woolies' to bolster their connection with Australian communities and consumers (AdNews, 2011). A more far-reaching example from Woolworths, however, is its diversification by creating the Thomas Dux chain of grocery stores. Following eight lease acquisitions from the Macro Wholefoods chain in 2009, a total of ten Thomas Dux stores now exist (AAP, 2009). These stores emphasise local food supply, small producers, as well as organic and preservative-free produce. According to a Woolworths spokesperson, Thomas Dux represents a "local community concept" (Palmer, 2008); the connection with parent company Woolworths, meanwhile, is obscured on the Thomas Dux website, which states:

> *We're* your *local grocery store. We are the place where people who love good food love to shop. Let us know how we can improve our range and service. It's about great quality & local food and inspiration. It's about being 'just around the corner'. It's the way things should be.* (Thomas Dux, 2011a: online)

The Thomas Dux brand is owned and appears to be fully managed by Woolworths. Their Yennora headquarters is located in a major Woolworths distribution centre, and employment between Thomas Dux and Woolworths is porous; former manager of Thomas Dux Pat McEntee is now Woolworths General Manager of Fresh Food (Woolworths, 2010b). However, the Thomas Dux website suggests a less restrictive approach to suppliers. Suppliers are invited, via a web form, to enquire about supplying to Thomas Dux at the individual store level (Thomas Dux, 2011b: online), and primarily utilises suppliers that do not currently serve Woolworths supermarkets (Palmer, 2008).

This diversification into a separate "upmarket" brand has been met with some skepticism; market researcher Tim Morris states, "I don't think Thomas Dux will work for [Woolworths]. The middle market retailers that have tried to go upmarket didn't succeed," citing failed efforts by US retailer Safeway (ibid). It remains to be seen whether the Thomas Dux model will be 'blended' with the Woolworths approach: whether Thomas Dux is an insurance against or investigation into increasing customer preferences for local/organic gourmet produce and smaller stores (Ferre, 2008): or whether the 'local' retailer model is the sole opportunity left for expansion in the hyper-saturated retail market.

The obscuration of Thomas Dux's ownership by Woolworths, however, indicates the tarnished reputation of the supermarket duopoly in the public's perception. Some local retailers have capitalised on this, advertising their independence and lack of affiliation with the 'chain stores'. Rather than competing on price alone, this marketing strategy suggests an increasing discontent with the influence and policies of Coles and Woolworths (or parent companies Wesfarmers and Woolworths) among the general population, and an awareness of their negative impact on local communities. A May 2011 advertisement for Bayfields liquor superstores (Figure 2) highlights its independence and implores the reader, "Don't let them ruin more local businesses like what happened to the butchers, fruit shops and petrol stations".

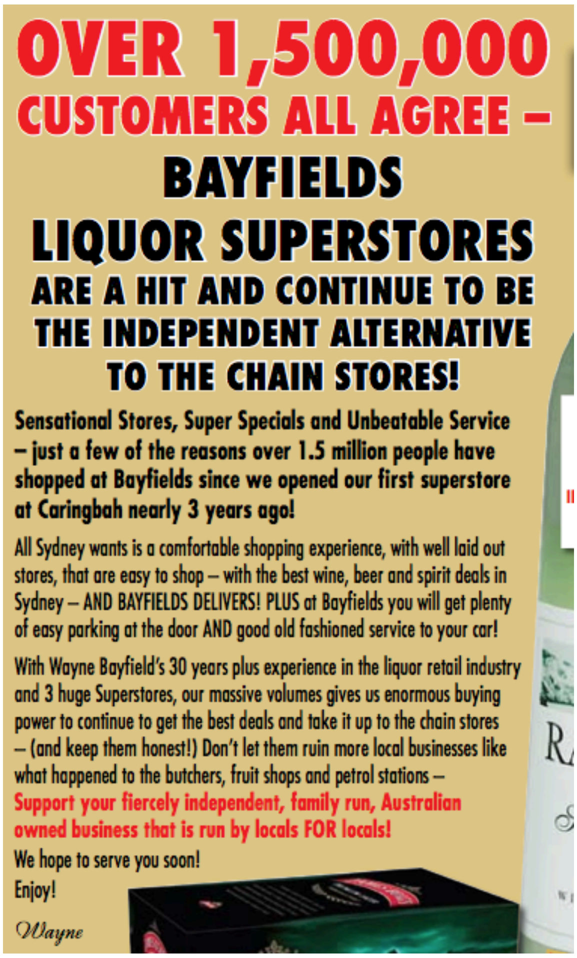

Figure 2 – Advertisement for Bayfields independent liquor superstores (source: Bayfields, 2011)

Conclusion

The buying power of Coles and Woolworths has been key in reshaping how fresh produce is sold, and they now exert significant influence over suppliers. This situation has come under particular scrutiny with the 'milk war' of early 2011 and the rise of private label goods, which reinforce the retailer's brand rather than that of the actual producer. Aside from these factors, the influence of Coles and Woolworths in local decision-making and town planning has also generated acrimony in several communities. This has been addressed partly by a superficial 'decorporatisation' of the shopping experience by both Woolworths and Coles; however it should also be noted that both Coles and Woolworths have recently made material progress toward supplying and labelling locally-sourced produce with identifiable geographical provenance.

This research has attempted to survey the main effects of large-scale food retailing on smaller food communities and producers. While 'gastronomic' or historical perspectives on food reveal a great deal of regional variation, the daily experience of food in contemporary Australia is increasingly shaped by the power and market penetration of national retailers such as Coles and Woolworths. The powerful retail sector thus problematises the discussion of 'everyday' food culture in Australia. The issues raised here are diverse; in particular, the adaptation of national food retailers to changing consumer awareness is a topic for future investigation. The dominance of the 'big two' remains a dynamic issue with far-reaching consequences for producers, communities, and consumers.

Endnotes

[1] Numerous submissions have been received from regional suppliers, co-operatives, and producers, including: North Coast (NSW) Dairy Industry Group, Richmond Dairies, Clover Hill Dairies, Leppington Pastoral Company, Queensland Dairy Organisation, Jersey Fresh Milk Products, and Maleny Dairies.

[2] The manager of Mullumbimby Woolworths, opened in June 2011, has stated that the store will not stock any produce from the region as it does not meet quality control standards (Moynihan, 2011).

[3] A full list of businesses owned by Wesfarmers and Woolworths limited is available on their respective corporate websites, wesfarmers.com.au and woolworthslimited.com.au.

[4] Surprisingly, the current Managing Directors of Coles (Ian McLeod) and Woolworths Limited CEO (Michael Luscombe) reportedly do not see themselves as competitors, focusing instead on smaller retailers such as Aldi (McIlwraith, 2010).

[5] Similar to the milk industry, the meat and livestock industry was the subject of a 2007 government report to determine fairness of prices paid by the consumer and to the farmer (ACCC, 2007). The outcomes of this report, favourable to the existing arrangements, were criticised by the beef industry (Carter, 2008b). Subsequent government enquiries have received submissions from associations such as Australian Beef, stating in part; "The supermarket duopsony must be dismantled, at least as far as meats are concerned" (Australian Beef Association, 2008).

[6] An example is Mal Meninga Fresh, a grocery in Brisbane owned by Queensland rugby coach Mal Meninga. Meninga has alleged that a nearby Woolworths was altering its prices specifically to undercut Meninga's prices with the intention of driving the store out of business (Dibben, 2009).

[7] Although Woolworths claims that 95% of its fresh produce is sourced from local (i.e. Australian) suppliers (Facts, 2008), it has been noted that fresh fruit and vegetables typically represent less than 10% of grocery turnover (NARGA, 2010: 30).

Bibliography

AAP (2007) 'ACCC opposes Woolies' interest in Coles', *Sydney Morning Herald*, October 17, online at: http://www.smh.com.au/news/Business/ACCC-opposes-Woolies-interest-in-Coles/2007/10/17/1192300841183.html (accessed May 2011)

_____ (2009) 'Woolies expands Thomas Dux Grocer stores', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 13 May, online at: http://news.smh.com.au/breaking-news-business/woolies-expands-thomas-dux-grocer-stores-20090513-b2oj.html (accessed June 2011)

_____ (2011), 'Don't trust Coles, dairy farmers say', *The Age*, 8 March, online at: http://www.theage.com.au/business/dont-trust-coles-dairy-farmers-say-20110308-1blrl.html (accessed May 2011)

ABC (2010a) 'The Beast File: Woolies & Coles', Hungry Beast [television program], online at: http://hungrybeast.abc.net.au/stories/beast-file-woolies-coles (accessed May 2011)

_____ (2010b) 'Mullumbimby takes fight to Woolworths', ABC News, 15 February, online at: http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2010/02/15/2820329.htm (accessed June 2011)

ABC Radio National (2010b) 'Coles Managing Director, Ian McLeod', Radio National (Sunday Profile), online at: http://hungrybeast.abc.net.au/stories/beast-file-woolies-coles (accessed May 2011)

ACCC (2007) 'Examination of the prices paid to farmers for livestock and the prices paid by Australian consumers for red meat: A report to the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry', online at: http://www.accc.gov.au/content/item.phtml?itemId=780673&nodeId=73415507c116dc53beac4996ad1bb75a&fn=Examination+of+livestock.pdf (accessed December 2011)

_____ (2008a) 'Report of the ACCC inquiry into the competitiveness of retail prices for standard groceries, July 2008', online at: http://www.accc.gov.au/content/index.phtml?itemId=838251 (31 May 2011)

_____ (2008b) 'Submissions received by the ACCC', online at: http://www.accc.gov.au/content/index.phtml/itemId/810417 (accessed 15 December 2011)

AdNews (2011) 'That's My Woolies', online at: http://www.adnews.com.au/campaign/that-s-my-woolies (accessed January 2012)

Anderson, Molly D & Cook, John T (2000) 'Does food security require local food systems?' in Harris, Jonathan M (ed.) *Rethinking sustainability: power, knowledge and institutions*, Michigan: University of Michigan Press: 141–150

Australian Beef Association (2008) 'Public submission to ACCC Grocery Inquiry', March 2008, online at: http://www.austbeef.com.au/Postings/15403/Content/ABA%20Grocery%20Submission.pdf (accessed December 2011)

Australian Made, Australian Grown (2009) 'Coles introduces Australian Grown Regional Branding', Issue 27, online at: http://www.australianmade.com.au/assets/Uploads/February-2009-newsletter.pdf (accessed June 2011)

Bayfields (2011) 'Bayfields @ Dee Why Liquor Specials', May 2011, online at: http://www.bayfields.com.au/dee-why-grand.php (accessed 24 May 2011)

Blue, Gwen (2009) 'On the politics and possibilities of locavores: situating food sovereignty in the turn from government to governance', *Politics and Culture 2009 issue* 2, online at: http://www.politicsandculture.org/2010/10/27/on-the-politics-and-possibilities-of-locavores-situating-food-sovereignty-in-the-turn-from-government-to-governance/ (accessed December 2011)

Boswell, Ron (2002) 'Submission: Trade Practices Act Review, Senator the Hon Ron Boswell', online at: http://tpareview.treasury.gov.au/content/subs/129_Submission_BoswellR.pdf (accessed May 2011)

Bradley, Michael (2002a), 'Cherry grower takes home a pittance', *Sydney Morning Herald*, July 8, online at: http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2002/07/10/1026185061884.html (accessed 31 May 2011

_____ (2002b) 'Brothers know the perils of both sides', *Sydney Morning Herald*, July 9, online at: http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2002/07/10/1026185062072.html (accessed May 2011)

_____ (2002c) 'Farmers say big two are leaving them in a jam', *Sydney Morning Herald*, July 9, online at: http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2002/07/10/1026185062030.html (accessed May 2011)

_____ (2002d) 'Down on the farm, a mystery: who pockets the profit?', *Sydney Morning Herald*, July 8, online at: http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2002/07/10/1026185061890.html (accessed May 2011)

_____ (2002e) 'Growers going direct to sidestep markets' secrecy', *Sydney Morning Herald*, July 9, online at: http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2002/07/10/1026185062140.html (accessed May 2011)

Brunori, Gianluca (2006), 'Post-Rural Processes in Wealthy Rural Areas: Hybrid Networks and Symbolic Capital', in Marsden, Terry and Murdoch, Jonathan (eds), *Between the local and the global: confronting complexity in the contemporary agri-food sector*, Elsevier Ltd, Amsterdam: 121–145

Burch, David & Lawrence, Geoff (2005), 'Supermarket Own Brands, Supply Chains and the Transformation of the Agri-Food System', *International Journal of Sociology of Agriculture and Food* v13 n1: 1–28

Campbell, Hugh, Lawrence, Geoffrey & Smith, Kiah (2006) 'Audit Cultures and the Antipodes: The Implications of EurepGAP for New Zealand and Australian Agri-Food Industries', in Marsden, Terry and Murdoch, Jonathan (eds), *Between the local and the global: confronting complexity in the contemporary agri-food sector*, Elsevier Ltd, Amsterdam: 69–93

Carter, John (2008a) 'Supermarket Duopoly ripping off Australian Cattle Producers', *AGMates*, 15 April, online at: http://www.agmates.com/herald/supermarket-duopoly-ripping-off-australian-cattle-producers/ (accessed May 2011)

_____ (2008b) 'Aussie Consumers Over-charged for Beef', *Australian Beef Association News,* 14 April, online at: 'http://www.austbeef.com.au/postings/15403/news/News10645.html' (accessed December 2011)

CHOICE (2009) 'Woolworths shifts grocery prices blame', online at: http://www.choice.com.au/media-and-news/consumer-news/news/woolworths%20shifts%20grocery%20prices%20blame.aspx (accessed May 2011)

_____ (2010a) 'Bottleshop prices', online at: http://www.choice.com.au/reviews-and-tests/money/shopping-and-legal/shopping/bottleshops.aspx (accessed May 2011)

_____ (2010b) 'Supermarket price wars', online at: http://www.choice.com.au/consumer-action/past-campaigns/supermarkets/supermarket-price-wars.aspx (accessed May 2011)

_____ (2011) 'Supplementary submission to the Senate Economics Committee Inquiry on The impacts of supermarket price decisions on the dairy industry, April 2011', online at:

https://senate.aph.gov.au/submissions/comittees/viewdocument.aspx?id=04d39fe7-201a-4012-824b-42ec06fe961d (accessed June 2011)

Chryssochoidis, George, Krystallis, Athanassios & Perreas, Panigiotis (2006) 'Ethnocentric beliefs and country-of-origin (COO) effect: impact of country, product and product attributes on Greek consumers' evaluation of food products', *European Journal of Marketing* v41 n11/12: 1518–1544

Clayton, Utz (2010) 'New bill deals with creeping acquisitions under section 50 of the Trade Practices Act', *Clayton Utz*, 3 June, online at: http://www.claytonutz.com/publications/news/201006/03/new_bill_deals_with_creeping_acquisitions_under_section_50_of_the_trade_practices_act.page (accessed May 2011)

Coles (2009a) 'Coles Bundaberg supports local growers', press release, online at: http://www.coles.com.au/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=6BE2C4BiOzo%3D&tabid=101 (accessed June 2011)

_____ (2009b) 'Coles supports local growers in the mid north coast', press release, online at: http://www.coles.com.au/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=V%2BdyFPhtK80%3D&tabid=101 (accessed June 2011)

_____ (2009c) 'New-look Coles St Agnes now complete', press release, online at: http://www.coles.com.au/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=G%2FJbwXBOpto%3D&tabid=101 (accessed June 2011)

_____ (2009d) 'Coles Broadway set to be star shopping attraction', press release, online at: http://www.coles.com.au/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=MdNBHNZbJyQ%3D&tabid=101(accessed June 2011)

Coles (2011), 'Coles Catalog', 4 May, online at: http://catalog.coles.com.au/

Coles Supermarkets (2008) 'Public Submission to The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission Inquiry into the competitiveness of retail prices for standard groceries', Senate submission, online at: http://www.coles.com.au/Portals/0/content/pdf/News/ACCC%20FINAL6%20March.pdf (accessed May 2011)

Commonwealth of Australia (1999) 'Fair Market or Market Failure? A review of Australia's retailing sector', online at: http://www.aph.gov.au/senate/committee/retail_ctte/report/report.pdf (accessed May 2011)

_____ (2010), 'Milking it for all it's worth—competition and pricing in the Australian dairy industry', online at: http://www.aph.gov.au/senate/committee/economics_ctte/dairy_industry_09/report/index.htm (accessed 31 May 2011)

_____ (2011a) 'The impacts of supermarket price decisions on the dairy industry: submissions received by the committee', online at: http://www.aph.gov.au/senate/committee/economics_ctte/dairy_industry_supermarket_2011/submissions.htm (accessed June 2011)

_____ (2011b) 'The impacts of supermarket price decisions on the dairy industry: Second Interim Report', online at: http://www.aph.gov.au/senate/committee/economics_ctte/dairy_industry_supermarket_2011/second_interim_report/report.pdf (accessed December 2011)

Condon, J (2011) 'Coles: pushing 'value' hard in a challenging consumer market', *Beef Central*, 29 August, online at: http://www.beefcentral.com/trade/domestic-trade/article/540

Corporate Watch (2004), 'What's wrong with Supermarkets', online at: http://www.corporatewatch.org/?lid=2596 (accessed 31 May 2011)

Dibben, Kay (2009) 'Mal Meninga fears cash tackle with supermarket price war', *The Sunday Mail (Qld)*, September 27, online at: http://www.couriermail.com.au/news/sunday-mail/mal-meninga-fears-cash-tackle-with-supermarket-price-war/story-e6frep2f-1225780004226 (accessed 15 December 2011)

Dixon, Jane (2007) 'Supermarkets as New Food Authorities' in Burch, David & Lawrence, G (ed.) *Supermarkets and agri-food supply chains: transformations in the production and consumption of foods*, Edward Elgar Publishing, Cheltenham, UK: 29–50

Enterprise Whitsundays (2010) 'Whitsundays brand to appear in major supermarket', media release, 22 September, online at: http://madeinthewhitsundays.com.au/LiteratureRetrieve.aspx?ID=81541 (accessed June 2010)

Feagan, Robert (2007) 'The place of food: mapping out the 'local' in local food systems', *Progress in Human Geography* v31 n1: 23–42

Ferre, James (2008) 'Woolworths open first Thomas Dux store', *Australian Food News*, 24 April, online at: http://www.ausfoodnews.com.au/2008/04/24/woolworths-open-first-thomas-dux-store.html (accessed June 2011)

Foodweek (2011) 'Coles pushes Aussie products', *Inside Retailing*, 17 January, online at: http://www.insideretailing.com.au/Latest/tabid/53/ID/9916/Coles-pushes-Aussie-products.aspx (accessed February 2011)

Frith, Maxine (2008) 'Creamed off by milk companies', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 13 April, online at: http://www.smh.com.au/news/national/creamed-off-by-milk-companies/2008/04/12/1207856909188.html (accessed May 2011)

Gottliebsen, Robert (2008) 'Woolworths' market muscle', *Business Spectator*, 26 February, online at: http://www.businessspectator.com.au/bs.nsf/Article/Woolworths-market-muscle-C727C?OpenDocument&src=srch (accessed May 2011)

Greenblat, Eli (2010) 'Fresh-faced Coles trumps its rival', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 22 October 2010, online at: http://www.brisbanetimes.com.au/business/freshfaced-coles-trumps-its-rival-20101021-16w02.html (accessed June 2010)

Greenblat, Eli & Hawthorne, Mark (2011) 'Cut-price milk strategy sours as supermarket wars turn nasty', *Sydney Morning Herald*, February 12, online at: http://www.smh.com.au/business/cutprice-milk-strategy-sours-as-supermarket-wars-turn-nasty-20110211-1aqgc.html (accessed May 2011)

Growcom (2008) 'Submission to the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission on the Inquiry into the competitiveness of retail prices for standard groceries', online at: http://www.accc.gov.au/content/item.phtml?itemId=812872&nodeId=7c45465bdf0ee17c9a9d769e8871a7f5&fn=069%20-%20Growcom%20(11%20pages).pdf (accessed 15 December 2011)

Hamilton, Kate (2008) 'A big box comes knocking', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 26 July, online at: http://www.smh.com.au/news/national/a-big-box-comes-knocking/2008/07/25/1216492732938.html (accessed June 2011)

Hodgkinson, Katrina (2011) 'Supermarkets busted: dodgy labelling leaves a sour taste', media release, online at: http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0009/388971/20110511-Hodgkinson-Coles-and-Woolworths.pdf (accessed June 2011)

Hogan, John, Shaw, Ian & Berry, Peter (2004) 'A review of the Australian dairy industry', ABARE eReport, online at: http://www.abare.gov.au/publications_html/landwater/landwater_04/er04_dairy.pdf (accessed May 2011)

Ironside, Jeff (2011) 'Re: Inquiry into the impacts of supermarket price decisions on the dairy industry', online at:

https://senate.aph.gov.au/submissions/comittees/viewdocument.aspx?id=943d15d9-03d1-4f7b-a60c-8e0272a1cbb5 (accessed June 2011)

Gurpreet Issar, G (2004) 'Strategies and Relationships in the Dairy-food Supply Chain: Options for Milk Producers in South-east Queensland', Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Queensland

Jacenko, Andrew & Gunasekera, Don (2005) 'Australia's retail food sector: some preliminary observations', ABARE Conference Paper, online at: http://adl.brs.gov.au/data/warehouse/pe_abarebrs99001186/PC13141.pdf (accessed June 2012): 1–9.

Johnson, Lyall (2003) 'Supermarkets, growers take fresh approach', *The Age*, January 25, online at: http://www.theage.com.au/articles/2003/01/24/1042911546533.html (accessed May 2011)

Jopson, Debra (2011) 'Nary a murmur from Berry's moo believers', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 9 March, online at: http://www.smh.com.au/nsw/nary-a-murmur-from-berrys-moo-believers-20110308-1bmop.html (accessed May 2011)

Juric, Biljana & Worsley, Anthony (1998) 'Consumers' attitudes toward imported food products', *Food Quality and Reference* v9 n6: 431–441

Lohse, Rodney (2009) 'Taking On Woolworths', Today Tonight (television program), 12 October, online at: http://au.todaytonight.yahoo.com/article/6208653/consumer/taking-woolworths (accessed May 2011)

Khamis, Susie (2007) 'Gourmet and Green: Branding King Island', *Shima: the International Journal of Research into Island Cultures* v1 n2, online at: http://shimajournal.org/issues/v1n2/d.%20Khamis%20Shima%20v1n2.pdf (accessed 25 January 2012)

Love Your Locals (2011) 'Frequently Asked Questions', online at: http://www.loveyourlocals.com.au/about-the-campaign/frequently-asked-questions (accessed May 2011)

Malden, Malcolm (2011) 'Reports of the imminent death of Australia's dairy industry are exaggerated', *Sydney Morning Herald*, March 9, online at: http://www.smh.com.au/business/reports-of-the-imminent-death-of-australias-dairy-industry-are-exaggerated-20110308-1bmng.html (accessed May 2011)

Maleny Voice (2008a) 'Obi Obi Campaign Event Timeline', online at: http://www.malenyvoice.com/obiobi/background/timeline.php (accessed June 2011)

_____ (2008b) 'Obi Obi Campaign—Lessons Learnt', online at: http://www.malenyvoice.com/obiobi/lessons-learnt/index.php (accessed 3 June 2011)

Mara, Chris (2008) 'Creeping Acquisitions Discussion Paper', Coles Group Limited, online at: http://www.treasury.gov.au/documents/1422/PDF/Coles_Group_Limited.pdf (accessed May 2011)

Marsden, Terry, Murdoch, John & Morgan, Kevin (1999) 'Sustainable agriculture, food supply chains and regional development: Editorial introduction', *International Planning Studies* v4 n3: 295–301

Market Facts (2005) 'Community response to a proposed supermarket at Maleny: report of findings', online at: http://www.malenyvoice.com/obiobi/resources/Market-Facts-Maleny-Report.pdf (accessed May 2011)

Maslow, David (2008) 'Woolworths and the culture clash in Mullumbimby', *Tweed Shire Echo*, 28 May, online at: http://www.tweedecho.com.au/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=483&Itemid=543 (accessed June 2011)

McIlwraith, Ian (2010) 'Wesfarmers gets serious with Coles revamp', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 9 April, online at: http://www.smh.com.au/business/wesfarmers-gets-serious-with-coles-revamp-20100409-rylt.html (accessed May 2011)

Mills, Gordon (2003) 'Buyer Power of Supermarkets', *Agenda* v10 n2: 145–162

Mobbs, Michael (2010) 'Bathrust Burr: Mullumbimby—beautiful one day, Woolies supermarket the next', *The Fifth Estate*, online at: http://www.thefifthestate.com.au/archives/11625 (accessed June 2011

Moynihan, Ray (2011) 'Woolworths opens in Mullumbimby', *The Byron Shire Echo,* 21 June, online at: http://www.echo.net.au/archives/full_versions/Echo_26_02.pdf (accessed December 2011)

NARGA (National Association of Retail Growers of Australia) (2010) 'The challenge to feed a growing nation', online at: http://www.narga.net.au/documents/2010/NARGA_lowres_web.pdf (accessed May 2011)

Needham, Kirsty (2003) 'Trolley Wars', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 6 October, online at: http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2003/10/05/1065292473908.html (accessed May 2011)

_____ (2011) 'Floods empty the food bowl', *Sydney Morning Herald*, January 24, online at: http://www.smh.com.au/environment/weather/floods-empty-the-food-bowl-20110123-1a18b.html (accessed May 2011)

NewportVersusWoolies.org (no date), 'Newport vs Woolies—Home', online at: http://www.newportversuswoolies.org/index.htm (accessed June 2011)

Palmer, Daniel (2008) 'Woolworths' Thomas Dux experiment to fail?', *Australian Food News*, 23 May, online at: http://www.ausfoodnews.com.au/2008/05/23/woolworths-thomas-dux-experiment-to-fail.html (accessed June 2011)

_____ (2009) 'Consumers warming to Woolworths' fresh produce', *Australian Food News*, 19 October, online at: http://www.ausfoodnews.com.au/2009/10/19/consumers-warming-to-woolworths-fresh-produce.html (accessed May 2011)

_____ (2010) 'Creeping acquisitions legislation to open competition in grocery retailing: Emerson', *Australian Food News*, 22 January, online at: http://www.ausfoodnews.com.au/2010/01/22/creeping-acquisitions-legislation-to-open-competition-in-grocery-retailing-emerson.html (accessed May 2011)

Passmore, Daryl (2008) 'Anger as winter vegetables marked up 250 per cent', *The Sunday Mail (Queensland)*, June 15, online at: http://www.couriermail.com.au/news/queensland/outrage-at-vege-price-hike/story-e6freoof-1111116634513 (accessed May 2011)

Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation (2010) 'Reasons why Farmers Diversify: Northern Midlands, Tasmania', online at: http://www.farmpoint.tas.gov.au/farmpoint.nsf/downloads/1A77E4C8A7884A0ACA2577FB0001A7FA/$file/Reasons_Why_Farmers_Diversify_RIRDC.pdf (accessed 15 December 2011)

Seth, Andrew & Randall, Geoffrey (2001) *The grocers: the rise and rise of the supermarket chains*, Kogan Page Ltd, London, UK.

Speedy, Blair & Durie, John (2009) 'Woolworths' axe for fresh food people', *The Australian*, October 28, online at: http://www.theaustralian.com.au/business/news/woolworths-axe-for-fresh-food-people/story-e6frg90f-1225791897011 (accessed May 2011)

Stone, Sharman (2003) 'Address to Gympie Landcare Conference', online at: http://www.malenyvoice.com/obiobi/resources/Stone.pdf (accessed 31 May 2011)

Stringer, Randy S & Umberger, Wendy J (2008) 'Food Miles, Food Chains and Food Producers', *Connections* online at:

http://www.agrifood.info/connections/2008/index_2008.html (accessed 12 December 2011)

Tadros, Edmund (2009) 'Coles, Woolworths must allow competitors in shopping centres', *News.com.au*, September 18, online at: http://www.news.com.au/business/coles-woolworths-must-allow-competitors-in-shopping-centres/story-e6frfmbi-1225776670699 (accessed May 2011)

The Australian (2009) 'Battle for the Barossa', *The Australian*, 21 November, online at: http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/features/battle-for-the-barossa/story-e6frg8h6-1225799452474 (accessed May 2011)

Thomas Dux (2011a) 'About Thomas Dux', online at: http://www.thomasdux.com.au/about-thomas-dux.html (accessed June 2011)

_____ (2011b), 'Become a supplier', online at: http://www.thomasdux.com.au/contact-us/supplier.html (accessed June 2011)

Truman, Steve (2008) 'Woolworths & Coles are squeezing farmers too hard' (comment), *AGMates*, 18 June, online at: http://www.agmates.com/herald/woolworths-coles-are-squeezing-farmers-too-hard/ (accessed 31 May 2011)

Wade, Matt (2002) 'Green giants are gobbling up the little growers', *Sydney Morning Herald*, July 9, online at: http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2002/07/10/1026185061953.html (accessed May 2011)

Wade, Matt & Bradley, Michael (2002) 'Woolies the worm in that plastic fruit', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 10 July, online at: http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2002/07/10/1026185062222.html (accessed May 2011)

Walker, Cam (2007) 'Woolworths Giveaway: Whose money is it anyway?', *Friends of the Earth Australia*, online at: http://www.foe.org.au/sustainable-food/activities-and-projects/supermarkets/woolworths-giveaway-whose-money-is-it-anyway/ (accessed May 2011)

Wardle, Jon & Baranovic, Michael (2009) 'Is lack of retail competition in the grocery sector a public health issue?', *Australia and New Zealand Journal of Public Health* v33 n5: 477–581

Wesfarmers Limited, 'Wesfarmers Annual Report' (2011) online at: http://media.corporate-ir.net/media_files/IROL/14/144042/2011_Annual_Report_Main_Body_pages_1_65.pdf (accessed January 2012)

_____ 'Wesfarmers Annual Report' (2010), online at: http://media.corporate-ir.net/Media_Files/IROL/14/144042/Reports/2010AR_pg_1_to_66.pdf (accessed January 2012)

Woolworths (2010a) 'Tasmanian farmers to benefit from Woolworths new Tassie Grown labelling', press release, online at: http://www.woolworths.com.au/wps/wcm/connect/website/woolworths/about+us/woolworths-news/tasmanian+farmers+to+benefit+from+woolworths+new+tassie+grown+labelling (accessed June 2011)

_____ (2010b) 'Beef prices slashed by up to 20%', press release, online at: http://www.woolworths.com.au/wps/wcm/connect/website/woolworths/about+us/woolworths-news/woolworths+slashes+beef+prices (accessed June 2011)

Woolworths Limited (2011) 'Annual Report 2011', online at: http://media.corporate-ir.net/media_files/IROL/14/144044/WWL0002_AR2011_WEB.pdf (accessed January 2012)

_____ (2008) 'The Facts about Grocery Retailing at Woolworths', available online at: http://library.corporate-ir.net/library/14/144/144044/items/287977/FactsAboutGroceRetailingatWoolworths.pdf (accessed May 2011)

Xenophon, Nick (2010) 'Competition and Consumer Legislation Amendment Bill 2010 [Provisions]', 23–26, online at: http://www.aph.gov.au/senate/committee/economics_ctte/competition_consumer_10/report/d01.htm (accessed May 2011)