

Bangers and cash!



Jane Tomlinson, Director of Redhill Farm Free Range Pork, farms in Lincolnshire with her husband Terry. As well as running the business, Jane has three children and is founder of

Lincolnshire Farmer's Markets, a founder member of Tastes of Lincolnshire, an Ambassador for Select Lincolnshire and a Slow Food member. Here she discusses the not so humble Lincolnshire sausage.

Sausages are serious business! Just over £650 million was spent on sausages last year and the figure is rising. That is equivalent to nearly £30 per household. No wonder there has been a lot of attention lately in the progress of the application for Protected Status for the Lincolnshire Sausage. If it wasn't such big business Lincolnshire Sausage would already have its protected status – as ever it all comes back to money.

The issue here isn't why should Lincolnshire Sausages be awarded protected status – I think we all agree that it's a regional speciality originating from our county. All genuine producers of Lincolnshire sausages with a connection to the county have agreed that their own secret methods are fundamentally the same. (ie: The agreed specification is 70% minimum pork coarsely ground open texture, breadcrumb or bread rusk, sage, seasoning and natural casings). The only stumbling block is that if Lincolnshire sausages get Protected Geographical Indication (PGI) this means that ALL Lincolnshire Sausages have to be Produced or Processed or Prepared in Lincolnshire.

That in itself isn't much to ask. I would have preferred we insisted on the PDO status (Protected Designation of Origin) where all three have to be carried out in Lincolnshire – but apparently that isn't even remotely viable – so we're not insisting that the pork

and other ingredients have to be produced in Lincolnshire, or even the UK, that means we are even allowing our county sausages to be made with imported pork by some big companies that supply the vast majority of sausages sold by the multiples outside the county. You won't catch any self-respecting Lincolnshire butcher touching the stuff I might add. No, all we are asking is that whoever you are, however big and whoever you supply, with ingredients from wherever, is just that you make them in Lincolnshire.

Most producers could commit to that you would think, even the multi-million pound processor or supermarket chain – they should at least be made to have a processing facility within Lincolnshire –



George Lee, Jim Sutcliffe, National Young Butcher of the Year, Janet Godfrey, Chair of Lincolnshire Sausage Association.

rewarding the county of Lincolnshire with jobs and industry and the knock-on effect that this boost to the local economy would bring.

In an ideal world if we had PDO status and the pork and other main ingredients had to come from the county that would benefit the whole industry supply chain of farmers, growers, slaughterhouses, butchers, processors, packers and distributors. Last time I looked there seemed to be plenty of empty industrial units and sites to develop and I'm sure we have a few people unemployed to fill the jobs.

Just for once when we have an opportunity like this, when we have something unique in this county, something which is very rare in this world of globalised, homogenised food production, would it seem too much to ask that the county that has this regional heritage actually gets some benefit from it?

Something many people may not be aware of is that in many other counties in the UK they have lost their small independent butcher shops to bigger "chain" butchers. These businesses operate in the same way as the supermarkets – having central production and distribution depots churning out the same standardised products to all outlets regardless of region.

Lincolnshire as a county is an exception in this respect having many generation family butchers due to the deep rooted rural connections with farming and the service that these family butchers provided in our historical market towns. These

butchers are still providing that vital link now, keeping skills alive and offering REAL locally reared meats and producing something of quality for those that value it. These butchers and other specialist producers like them are very proud of their heritage and the Lincolnshire Sausage.

So that's it, the issue is that big businesses don't want to move into Lincolnshire to be able to produce Lincolnshire sausages. We're not fighting EU opinion over whether the Lincolnshire sausage fits the criteria for protected status – of course it does! We're not going to be lining the pockets of the vast majority of small independent producers of Lincolnshire Sausages anyway – most of us mainly sell locally within Lincolnshire and will continue to do so after PGI status.

If we can't succeed in insisting that all Lincolnshire sausages have to be produced in Lincolnshire then we're giving away one of our precious assets and a chance to build the local economy for generations to come and giving it to big businesses and intensive farmers of imported pork at the expense of our own farms, our own jobs and local economy.

You may think why bother? Let them do what they like! But do you feel any pride when you see the Red Arrows fly over, do you enjoy the Wolds or feel any sense of belonging when you've been away and return to the view of the Lincoln Cathedral? Would you so readily give them away? If not, then let's not give our food heritage away either.

For more information on the Lincolnshire Sausage Association see website www.lincolnshiresausages.co.uk