Bulletin of the *Transilvania* University of Braşov
Series IV: Philology and Cultural Studies • Vol. 9 (58) No. 1 – 2016

Globalization and family farm survival in Southern Appalachia

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Southern Appalachian family farming communities continue to support cultural heritage and traditional foodways fueled by expanding tourist markets and middle class demand for fresh local foods. Small farming is integral to rural development - promoting economic and environmentally sustainable practices along with being essential to heritage and land preservation. More than any other aspect of culture, food defines mountain communities which continue to identify with the agricultural landscape and a sense of "food place". Globalization creates both challenges and opportunities for farm communities requiring we redefine our understanding of the role of local food in development strategies. Lastly scaling up local foods requires a new development narrative challenging the existing food system and sharing power with small-scale agriculture.

Keywords: *Southern Appalachia, family farming, tourism, cultural heritage*

1. Introduction: East Tennessee small farming traditions

Southern Appalachia's mixed farming tradition represents some of the nation's smallest, most diversified farms. Diverse farming on the hilly terrain in east Tennessee historically produced multiple grains, root crops, livestock, and wild foods - honey, berries, and nuts. Rural households continue to promote home production into the modern era. Throughout the 20th century east Tennessee's family farm communities have been incorporated into regional development strategies for almost a century. The outcomes of Depression era centralized planning shaped resource and landuse patterns by promoting urban growth centers (Cole 1948; Eller 2008; Whisnant 1983). Because of their size and diversity Appalachia's farms facilitated industrialization, family survival and cultural traditions remaining a prominent feature of society from frontier settlement to today's advanced global economy. Starting in the 1930s, with the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) and the Federal and State park systems east Tennessee farms adapted to agricultural reforms, conservation and water projects while maintaining the areas natural landscape and an informal agricultural economy anchoring families to ancestral land. Appalachia's

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rural communities provided the labor for the valley's postwar expansion of furniture and chemical industries and today provide workers to nearby diversifying urban growth centers (Dykeman 1955; Walker 2002; Nolt 2005).

2. You can tell that Grainger taste

On this November Saturday Connie Keys is the only vender at the Morristown Farmers Market. The season is over but the city let her set up for free. We both laugh when I showed her the picture had Burger King in the background of her stand. Connie has been working with her brother on their ancestral farm in Grainger County since she lost her factory job in Rutledge in the late 90s. Connie is part of a tradition of small and part-time diversified farms that have preserved Appalachia's cultural heritage into the 21st Century. She overviews her farm production:

> I sell produce from our family farm. We have 30 acres. My brother raises tomatoes and beans. People come from all over for the beans. They come from Virginia and North Carolina. We don't use migrant labor. Just us and his wife. He only sells perfect produce. They have to be perfect. He raises Turkey Craw and Greasy Back beans. We irrigate from the well on the farm. We don't have no hothouses. He only raises early tomatoes. They're better. After the season I buy from Ritter and other farms in Grainger County. Sometimes I drive to Knoxville to get apples. I am buying from local hothouses now. These are hot house tomatoes but they got that Grainger taste. You can tell that Grainger taste.

East Tennessee's agricultural system represents arguably the nation's largest concentration of continuing small and part-time farms. The diverse terrains in the east Tennessee valley section of the Southern mountains created foodways fostered by family labor, hand preparation, and heirloom varieties of plants and livestock. Here communities like Central Point support small nondenominational and Pentecostal churches. In the hundred years between 1907 and 2007 the county went from no farms over 500 acres to eight. Grainger County is not only unique because its family farms have survived but also because of it culture. The county has few fast food restaurants and no Walmart or large chain stores. At the Bean Station IGA one still find ruminants of rural society – Jenkins brand – souse (made of peppers, pork snouts, relish, and corn syrup), scrapple (made of pork broth, corn meal, and rinds). Without a McDonalds, Walmart or a mall the county supports gas stations, fireworks stores, locally owned grocery stores, diners, and specialty shops

Rural east Tennessee continues it foodways at farmers markets and roadside stands. Starting in April you found produce at intersections, in the parking lots of strip malls, retail stores, churches, and cinema parking lots, on fair grounds, flea

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markets, and city centers. Regional foods are behind a cultural landscape of hunting and fishing, equestrian activities, county fairs, auto racing, and fall heritage, spring strawberry, and summer tomato festivals. Drawing on local and regional demand small and part-time farmers preserve heirloom varieties of beans, corn, and tomatoes (Best, 2013). Larger family farmers like the Mixons, Bulls, Pierce, Longmire, Daltons, Ritters, and the Strattons sell tomatoes wholesale to a broad market. Grainger's tomatoes, both fresh and hothouse, are known for being vine ripened and not using ripening agents or other chemicals used for shipping green tomatoes. Their production techniques create flavorful tomatoes with shorter a shelf life. Vine ripened tomatoes taste like historical farm fresh produce. Anthony Carver, University of Tennessee agricultural agent describes the situation of larger Grainger County tomato producers:

> Some got bigger so they could sell more. Their family quit farming but people kept demanding more tomatoes. So they got bigger. They send tomatoes out-of-state as far as New Jersey and Ohio. Most sell locally to roadside and farm stores, and chains - Wal-Mart, Food City, and Target. Family members drive trucks to deliver wholesale cutting out the middlemen. The cost of producing tomatoes has tripled but what they make has stayed the same. That is also why community-based agriculture has evolved. Most small producers survive marketing locally. However the brand shows up in places like Jungle Jim's a 200,000 square foot international Grocery in Ohio.

3. Emerging Markets - small farms in a reinvented Urban South

Grainger County farmers increasingly are finding markets in urban growth centers. East Tennessee is experiencing a local foods renaissance as locals reconnect and new arrivals try Appalachian foods. In the last 30 years, the upper South's transnational linkages have facilitated changes in society increasing cultural diversity and redefining land use patterns. Agrotourism has become important to sustaining small farms once supported by tobacco production until the 1980s (Kingsolver, 2011). Area family farming has reinvented Market Square in downtown Knoxville hosting food truck and booths selling grass fed beef, artisan foods and crafts and organic produce. Once a regional commercial and distribution center for surrounding wholesale and truck crops, Market Square in downtown Knoxville became as Jack Neely points out once was defined as the "Most Democratic Place on Earth" (Neely, 2009).

Today, Market Square provides a venue for dealers like 4 Corners Ranch. From Washburn the ranch sells steroid free grass fed Longhorn Beef. Others like Clifton Farms involve family members at the market selling tomatoes, beans,

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melons, corn, and peppers. Cruze Farms operates a dairy and sells their own pasteurized Jersey cow whole, chocolate, butter milk and seasonal flavored ice creams at the markets.

While crop diversity and dairy farming have declined, truck and commercial farming along with hay and beef are supporting a new generation of family farmers in rural east Tennessee with (Nolt, 2005). Growing markets in landscaping and equestrian support family farmers who are raising flowers and pumpkins as high beef prices support the popularity of mountain grass fed livestock among an emerging middle class. Jacob Maples and his father sublease land to raise hay along with their 70 head of cattle. From west Grainger County they access Knoxville's middleclass. He offers:

> "I deliver pumpkins to roadside markets in Knoxville for fall festivals. People from Knoxville like to come and let their kids run around in the field. If I let the grass grow up they get lost. I sell pumpkins on Craigs List."

Fresh tomatoes travel to a broad customer base. Local markets including onsite and road side sales, flea markets, and municipal farmers markets. Wholesalers start supplying east Tennessee supermarkets – Kroger, Ingles, Earthfare, The Fresh Market, and Food City as early as April. On the other side of east Tennessee in the Knox County town of Farragut, Grainger County tomatoes appeal to the growing middleclass made up of regional natives and new arrivals. At Farragut's Fresh Market grocery Grainger farmer John Mixon's tomatoes double in price with his purple heirlooms bringing $4.98 a pound.

4. Family farm Nouveau

Globalization means the survival of the region's farms and indigenous foods is more and more linked to culinary tastes. Global tourism is introducing a new generation to the region's culinary styles and foodways (Chesky, 2009; Lalone, 2008; Sewell, 2013). Sevier County hosts many of the Great Smoky Mountain National Parks' 10 million yearly visitors at general stores, retail shopping, waterparks, resorts, mega hotels and dinner shows. In migration to area represents almost every continent - including retirees and a large Hispanic and Eastern European workforce. Sevier County tourism supports over 18,000 jobs with $1.70 billion in revenues (Grainger, 2014).

The secret to Pigeon Forge and Gatlinburg is rural comfort food - places like Mamas and Applewood Farmhouse are remakes of diversified farm menus. Online reviews of its restaurants begin with "This place does not look like much". A main attraction is the large array of Pigeon Force pancake restaurants selling comfort food to guest in vehicles from almost every state. After a visit to gun and knife shops and

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the Hatfield and McCoy Theater are all day pancakes houses like the Frontier and Red Rooster.

The county has lost most of its farms however it supports surrounding agriculture and indigenous farm enterprises survive selling farm products. Swaggerty Sausage, a 100 year old hog farm, today sits side by side with barbecue restaurants, steak houses and hillbilly crafts stores. The operation began as a local family farm and now sells wholesale nationally. With no hog farms left in the area this century old pork operation imports Midwest pork and then sends it back processed Appalachian style. Designated Century Farms like Kyker Farms turn ancestral fields into tourist fun – educational tours, hayrides, corn mazes, zombie paintball, and zipline provide new markets for the family's produce and livestock including pumpkins and goats.

Local food fuels a southern food renaissance in the Smoky Mountains at one the nation's premiere resorts - Blackberry Farms in Walland. Selling frontier life, the resort has turned mountain farming practices into luxury cuisine and outdoors recreational activities. Blackberry Farms offers an inn, restaurant, farm, and wellness center to "to inspire people to cook and eat local foods in season (Medow 2014). Along with traditional farm practices such as grubbing are yoga and horseback riding. On over 9,000 acres, the farm makes its on apple butter, beer cheese, and honey along with thousand dollar whiskey, wine and cheese tastings and food parings on land once farmed by family systems.

Paradoxically not far away in Walland is the 'Old Mill" restaurant sells traditional stone ground cornmeal, quilts, crafts and voluminous amounts of green beans and corn fritters. Nearby commercial agriculture also has an appeal to tourists. Bush Beans cannery markets its operation in Chestnut Hill with a tourist visitor center and general store where you can eat pinto bean pie and learn your weight in beans while visiting bean advertising superstar Duke the Hound's doghouse. Frontier foods have also survived. Once near the home of hundreds of stills on Thunderroad, Strange Honey Farm in Del Rio today sells wildflower and hardwood unfiltered native honey, bee pollen, molasses, and combs from 1000 hives. Strange sells online and to high end and everyday grocery stores. Other indigenous food operations like Carver Orchards in Cosby continues Appalachia's heirloom heritage with126 varieties of apples on 40,000 trees. The family makes fried pies, cider, and apple fritters at their family style farmhouse restaurant.

Gobalization has led to changes in southern alcohol laws have added a new dimension to Appalachian tourism. Several distilleries and wineries are emerging in east Tennessee - re-establishing once indigenous practices lost to history. Instead of gambling it is moonshine that makes Sevierville tourism "Sin City'. Today moonshine is legal and urban. Once a main supplier of infamous 1950s Thunderroad moonshine, Cocke and Sevier counties lead a new tradition of legal moonshine commercial distilleries driven by tourism and urban investors. While Appalachia has struggled with selling heritage in the past (see Becker 1998) marketing local farm

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products helps to sustain small farms in rural areas in Southern Appalachia (Horn, 2011). Scaling-up local foods will require making local foods central to development strategies.

5. Increasing small-scale agriculture's role in development

Davis and Baker (2015) suggest locally defined grassroots development strategies are a key feature of Appalachian identity and an important alternative to mainstream approaches to development. Expanding the role of foodways beyond an economic tool for rural growth requires creating an alternative development narrative scaling up the role of small farming into broader grassroots approaches addressing not just economic issues but also Appalachia's health, cultural preservation, and sustainability (Nolt, 2005). Truck farming has historically supported industrial development strategies and today is a key component of rural tourism. For distressed mountain areas food production and the local multiplier effects of small farming continue to sustain rural communities in the face of deindustrialization and the decline of coal. Emerging opportunities to expand traditional practices like beekeeping provide small-scale investment opportunities in distressed micro-economies (Horn, 2011).

Expanding small business opportunities is the key to sustaining community-based agriculture. Mary Berry of the Berry Center argues that support for local foods and middle class involvement in small farms must go beyond a 'faddish economy' to one that transcend rural areas (Collins, 2014). Ironically globalization may be an important factor in the return of the region's traditional foodways and farm preservation. Appalachians must come to terms with foodways that are both changing and surviving due to globalization - including newly arrived Hispanic immigrants and a growing out-of-state population (Baker, 2012).

6. Sharing Food Power

In order to move forward local and tourist support of small farming must be accompanied by equity in farm policies and small businesses. This research suggests cultural continuity and small diversified farming in Appalachia is central to addressing the emerging development milieu. In the mist of rapid social change rural food markets continue to highlight ancestral practices not yet lost to mass production - heirloom seeds and grass fed beef and seasonal fresh vegetables. Reinventing a role for the once ubiquitous importance of small-scale agricultural traditions should be central to addressing rural development. Power – in the hand of large local farmers receiving the majority of farm subsidies and the control held by corporate

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food systems to produce and market often unhealthy food continues to marginalize the role of local food in development. Establishing a new language giving priority to local food is essential. Education is important for addressing policy support for resource allocation equity and generating support for local food. Opening dialogues must be accompanied by grassroots pressure to address farm subsidies and reward sustainable practices (Gaventa, 2012). Specifically, new types of engagement should include a political and marketing language predicated on changing the discourse on who produces food, what practices it supports and what are the outcomes of its distribution.

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