

Section

7

Current processing and marketing of native foods

7.1 Processing and marketing

The commercial industry makes use of plants in different ways to the Indigenous traditional uses; whereas Indigenous communities used native food as a prime source of nutrition or for functional or therapeutic reasons, commercially the native foods are purely used for their unique flavour profile and their novelty value. Most of the products are chilli and satay sauces, jams and herbs.

To date, native foods have been used as a minor but defining flavour ingredient. Native ingredients are unique because of their strong and distinct flavour. The vast majority of sales to date are in sauces, flavourings and spices where the native ingredient is less than 2% by volume of the product.

New bush flavours are finding their way into ice cream, sauces, jams, beverages, pies, sweets, breads, pasta and as spices. Native foods can be a minor ingredient in conventional dishes or the main feature on dedicated native food menus.

Generally native foods are processed and sold in various forms other than fresh, such as dried, pureed, or simply as an additional ingredient in a product. Bottled sauces and condiments appear to be the most popular, particularly in the retail market.

There are a number of companies involved in processing and marketing native foods.

All of the major companies have had some success with export; in fact the UK market for these products is significantly bigger than the Australian domestic market we understand by a factor of six to one. The companies are getting strong distribution in supermarkets/department stores including Tesco and Sainsburys.

From what we can determine, there are four key players in the market:

- Australian Native Produce Industries (under the Red Ochre brand)
- Robins Bush Food
- Cherikoff
- Taylor's Foods.

Details of their activities are outlined below. In addition there are a number of smaller operations.

7.1.1 Australian Native Produce Industries (ANPI)

ANPI has been a major driver of the Australian native food industry. ANPI was formed in 1993 and is one of the leading commercial companies in the industry. It is a fully integrated producer, buyer, wholesaler, processor and marketer of native foods.

The ANPI developed out of the Red Ochre restaurant which was established by Andrew Fielke and is credited to be one of the major drivers for the development of the commercial native food industry.

Andrew, an internationally acclaimed chef, began experimenting with natural ingredients, which developed to the point that this became a theme and feature for the entire

restaurant. Out of this developed ANPI, which was established to commercialise the industry. The core business of ANPI was to co-ordinate the collection and commercial production of ingredients and to process foods. ANPI is now a totally separate business entity to the Red Ochre restaurant. Over time ANPI became more involved in the propagation of plants for sale to growers.

ANPI trade under the Red Ochre brand name. The Red Ochre range includes retail and food service products. The retail range is available in Coles and Bi-Lo supermarkets throughout Australia, the IGA group of independent supermarkets in South Australia and from gourmet outlets. The Red Ochre range has had considerable success in domestic and export markets.

ANPI offers the following products:²³

Seeds/nuts/other

- Bunya Nut
- Macadamia Nut
- Paper Bark
- Wattle Seed
- Sauces/dressing
- Wild Lime and Chilli Marmalade
- Bush Tomato Chilli Jam
- Bush Tomato Salsa
- Muntries Chutney
- Pepper Leaf Mustard
- Sweet Lemon Aspen and Macadamia Dressing
- Lemon Aspen Conserve
- Native Currant Jelly
- Quandong Jam

Fruits and Berries

- Currant (native)
- Davidson Plums
- Desert Lime



²³ www.anpi.com.au

- Illawarra Plum
- Kakadu Plum
- Lemon Aspen
- Muntries
- Riberry
- Rosella Flower
- Quandong

Herbs/Spices

- Aniseed Myrtle
- Bush Tomato
- Lemon Myrtle
- Mountain Pepperberries
- Mountain Pepperleaf
- Peppermint
- Rivermint
- Sea Blight/Sea Salad Greens
- Sea Parsley – Southern Ocean
- Slender Mint – Kosciusko
- Warrigal Spinach
- Wild Basil

New Products

- Smokin Pepper Berry Sauce
- Bush Tomato Sauce
- Sundried Tomato and Pepper Leaf Pasta Sauce
- Muntries Stuffing
- Pepper Leaf Blackening Spice
- Rosella Flower Syrup

Pasta

- Warrigal Spinach Spaghetti
- Wattle Seed Linguini
- Red Wine and Pepper Leaf Fettucine

Oils

- Eucalyptus Oil
- Lemon Myrtle Oil
- Macadamia Nut Oil

All of the packaged goods are marketed under the Red Ochre brand.

7.1.2 Robins Bush Food

Robins Bush Foods manufacture Australian native food products and supply retail and food service markets. Juleigh Robins began her career as a chef and became interested in native foods. Robins Foods now produces around 60 lines for both retail and food service and currently exports retail products to the UK, Germany, Canada and Taiwan. The company is keen to develop further markets, especially in Europe (where its products have already enjoyed some success) and to open new markets in the US and South America. It is currently involved in a total quality management program under Qantas Flight Catering.

Robins Bush Foods' products include:

- Bush Tomato Chutney
- Spicy Illawarra Plum Chutney
- Wild Rosella and Chilli Salsa
- Bush Tomato and Chilli Salsa
- Mango and Native Mint Salsa
- Lemon Aspen and Raspberry Relish
- Riberry and Fresh Ginger Relish
- Illawarra Plum and Chilli Sauce
- Lemon Aspen
- Bush Tomato Sauce
- Wild Rosella Jam
- Kakadu Plum Jelly
- Lemon Aspen Curd
- Wattleseed Syrup
- Macadamia and Native Pepper Marinade
- Wild Rosella Coulis



Various products are packed in both retail and food service pack quantities. Robins currently markets under three brands, Hot Oz, Robins Bush Foods and Wild Herbs.

7.1.3 Cherikoff Pty Ltd – The Rare Spice Company²⁴

Vic Cherikoff was one of the pioneers of the native food industry and the founder of Cherikoff Pty Ltd – The Rare Spice Company, the first commercial supplier of native food products.

The pioneering work began with half a decade of scientific analytical research into the nutritional value of native foods. These native foods were mainly supplied by Indigenous communities and through Vic's own collection. Some of these foods were then supplied to chefs and slowly the possibility of an Australian cuisine developed.

The company has moved upstream and now processes and markets native foods.

Previously called Bush Tucker Supply Australia, Cherikoff is one of Australia's largest dedicated wholesalers of native foods. Cherikoff offers a substantial range of products from around 36 different species. The company started in 1983 and now supplies restaurants, caterers, bakers, manufacturers (food, cosmetic, pharmaceutical), ice cream makers, the tourist industry, airlines and exporters with a vast range of raw ingredients and value added products. They also supply ready to use sauces and syrups for professional chefs and have a growing retail range for home use. Cherikoff's projected turnover in 1994 was \$2.2 million.

Cherikoff Pty Ltd markets a wide range of products, including herbs, spices, fruits, seeds, nuts, flavoured oils, extracts, purees, flavourings, sauces, syrups and preserves.

The company's founder, Vic Cherikoff, has extensive experience in training chefs on the uses of native foods in more

²⁴ www.cherikoff.com.au

conventional dishes. The food service component of his business is substantial.

Cherikoff Pty Ltd has been doing a lot of trade shows in the UK, San Francisco and New York and received a lot of attention recently at the International Food Exhibition.²⁵

Cherikoff's products include: ²⁶

Fruits

- Akudjura
- Bush Tomato
- Davidson's Plums
- Illawarra Plums
- Kakadu Plums
- Lemon Aspen
- Lemon Aspen Juice
- Munthari Berry
- Quandong
- Riberry
- Wild Limes
- Wild Rosella

Herbs/Spices/Vegetables

- Aniseed Myrtle
- Forestberry Herb
- Lemon Myrtle
- Mountain Pepper
- Native Peppermint
- Native Mint
- Native Pepperberries
- Warrigal Greens

Seeds and Nuts

- Bunya Nuts
- Wattleseed
- Wattleseed Extract

²⁵ 'Native adventurers,' Foodservice news, May 2001.

²⁶ www.bushtucker.com.au

Oils

- Aniseed Myrtle Oil
- Gum Leaf Oil
- Lemon Myrtle Oil
- Native Peppermint Oil
- Macadamia Nut Oil

Pasta

- Lemon Myrtle Fettucine
- Rainforest Herb Fettucine

Other

- Witjuties
- Sugarbag
- Paperbark

Cherikoff Products

- Bush Tomato Chutney
- Spreadable Kakadu Plum
- Spreadable Rosella Fruit
- Illawarra Plum Sauce
- Mountain Pepper BBQ Sauce
- Lemon Aspen Syrup
- Rainforest Lime Splash
- Spicy Bush Tomato Relish
- Wildfire Spice
- Desert Dried Bush Tomatoes in Oil

7.1.4 Taylor's Foods Pty Ltd

Taylor's Foods manufacture marinades, sauces and salad dressings. Taylor's foods, formed in 1980 is a business unit of the large Henry Jones IXL which is a major producer and marketer of jams. The company developed the Wild Harvest brand for the UK in 1998, which is a boutique range of quality sauces featuring key indigenous ingredients such as Aniseed Myrtle, Bush Tomatoes, etc. Wild Harvest is available through specialty retailers and selected supermarkets. It won the gold award for the Best International Speciality Food at London's International Food Exhibition. Its products are now widely

available throughout Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom.

Taylor's Foods' native foods include the following sauces which are marketed under the Wild Harvest brand:²⁷

- Honey Macadamia
- Bush Barbeque
- Ironbark Honey and Chilli
- Macadamia Satay
- Native Plum



²⁷ www.taylorsfoods.com.au

7.1.5 Other suppliers

The following list identifies some of the smaller suppliers in the native food industry. The list is by no means exhaustive.

Table: Other native food suppliers

<i>Suppliers</i>	<i>Comments</i>
Australian Rainforest Products PO Box 6136, South Lismore, NSW 2480, Australia Ph: 02 6689 7414 Fax: 08 6689 7565 Mobile: 0427 897 433 Email: ozentico@nor.com.au	Begun in 1993. Produces and processes native Australian herbs, spices, essential oils and fruits. They supply wholesale bulk to processors and the food service industry. Major lines are lemon myrtle, anisaata, native mint, olida, lemon ironbark and native pepper, and fruits such as davidson plums, ribberries and lemon aspen. They sell domestically and export to Japan, Germany and the US. Supplied by commercial growers to guarantee consistency, supply and quality.
McCormick Foods LVL 1, BLGD 14, Clayton Business Park 121 Rayhur St Clayton 3168 (03) 9264 0333 Fax (03) 9548 9198 1800 802 223 www.mccormick.com.au	Supply a range of native spices, lemon myrtle, lemon aspen and native peppers to food service.
Longreach Bush Tucker PO Box 51, Longreach, Qld 4730, Australia Ph: 07 4658 3873 Fax: 07 4658 3873 Email: bushfood@tpg.com.au www.users.bigpond.com/blackmare/	Outback Qld's leading supplier of native foods. They supply raw products ready for home, restaurant and manufacturing use. Specialise in dry climate species with additional value added products.
Oz Biscuits Ph: 03 9568 2388 Victoria	Supply gourmet delis, cafes, tourist hotels, etc with bush tucker biscuits.
Glenmar Biscuits (Vital Products) 4/25 Runway Drive MUDJIMBA, QLD, 4564 Australia Phone: 61 7 5448 7811 Fax: 61 7 5448 7811 Mr Glenn McMahon, Managing Director	Sell native Australian biscuits in a few different countries, eg Canada, America with great success.
Milligans Gourmet Gallery 5 Kirkwood Road Swanbourne, WA 6010 Ph: 08 9385 3455 milligan@omen.net.au Web: milligans.com.au	Complete upmarket food wholesaler. Native meats, herbs and fruits.

DAVID MCKINNA ET AL
DOTARS and Food South Australia
Strategy to develop the native food industry in South Australia

<p>Taste of Australia (Niche Solutions International) 51 Ronald Avenue GREENWICH, NSW, 2065 Ph: 02 9966 5700 Fax: 02 9966 5711 Email: tasteofaustralia@bigpond.com Website: www.tasteofaustralia.com.au Contact Lynne Wilkinson</p>	<p>Australian bush food, hampers, biscuits, etc. Popular recipes combined with selected Australian native bush foods. Supply retail and food service.</p>
<p>P-Ace8 Shed Q P.O. Box 288 The Brisbane Markets ROCKLEA, QLD, 4106 Australia Phone: 07 3278 5022 Fax: 07 3278 5011 Email: Export@p-ace8.com Web: http://p-ace8.com.au Contact Mr Graeme Adams</p>	<p>Export many items, including bush tucker.</p>
<p>Triak Beverages Pty Ltd 1219 High Street Armadale Vic 3143+ Tel 03 9822 9100 Fax 03 9822 4108</p>	<p>Producers of the Witjuti label of Australian Bush Tucker products with a few unique lines including the witjuti grub in an alcoholic beverage. Located in Armadale, Victoria.</p>
<p>Walkabout Foods 243 Grenfell St Adelaide 5000 (08) 8223 3053 or (08) 8223 1506</p>	<p>Suppliers and exporters of a small range of native gourmet foods.</p>
<p>Beerenberg Mount Barker Rd Hahndorf 5245 Ph: (08) 8388 7272 Fax (08) 8388 1108 PO Box 240 Hahndorf SA 5245</p>	<p>Well known for supplying quality jams, condiments and sauces. However, only very small involvement in native food (consider themselves bush tucker sceptics). Pioneers of quandong jam, but have been disappointed with the results. Have been making quandong jam for 12 years but demand has remained low. Tried to export quandong jam with little success. Also tried to get into the gift market. Explored other native species such as muntries, bush citrus, native limes for jams, but also had no success.</p>
<p>Australian Native Foods Management (ANFM) PO Box 125, Airlie Beach, Qld 4802, Australia Ph 07 4947 3369 Facsimile: 07 4947 3030 Email: whitsunday@anfm.com.au Website: www.anfm.com.au</p>	<p>Offer a range of natural Australian products, e.g. Australian native fruit jams, macadamia paste/satay sauce, Australian native spices, sauces and syrups, etc. Distributed through numerous outlets over Australia, e.g. health, food shops.</p>

<i>Suppliers</i>	<i>Comments</i>
Casalare Speciality Pasta 40 Burchell La Mirboo North 3871 (03) 5668 1746	Produce a line of native bush pasta. There are five products in the range including warrigal greens fettucine, roasted wattleseed tubes, native mint shell, mountain pepper spiral and lemon myrtle spirals. They sell throughout Australia in speciality pasta shops and health food stores.

Australian native foods are generally sold as raw produce to the following buyers:

- Value adding native food processors
- Gourmet food processors and manufacturers
- Cottage industry processors
- Restaurants and caterers which use local native foods

Value added products are sold to:

- Speciality food stores and delicatessens
- Distributors which service the hospitality, food and catering industry
- Major department stores, airport stores and other tourist speciality outlets
- Supermarket gourmet food sections
- Speciality food services to airlines and tourist resorts.²⁸

²⁸ 'Bushfoods,' Graham & Hart, A handbook for farmers and investors.

7.2 Native food fair²⁹

Event Management and Marketing Co., The Australian Museum in Sydney and Westpac Bank are working together to establish a Native Food Fair. This is an offshoot of FATE – Future of Australia’s Terrestrial Ecosystem, a program aimed at developing a native food farm model for creating sustainable farming of native food.

They are in the early stages of developing and promoting the native food Fair and are currently working on the details, eg. where, when, who, how, the appropriate target market, investment, trade opportunities, etc. Two options being considered are having the fair as part of the Sydney Morning Herald’s Good Food Week or to have it as a stand alone event, possibly on Australia Day. The event will be on in either January or April/May of 2002.

²⁹ Jane Cleveland, Event Management and Marketing

Section

8

Retail and food service marketing

8.1 Retail

It is only in the past year or so that there has been much interest in native foods by Australian retailers. It was not until Coles launched their *Taste Australia* program that there was significant interest in Australia.

8.1.1 Coles³⁰

Coles are leading the way in terms stocking and promoting native food products. Coles launched the *Taste Australia* program and the *Coles Indigenous Food Fund* in March of 2001 with the aim of raising Australians' awareness of native foods. The program is in conjunction with the Indigenous community and three producers of native foods, Robins Australia Foods, Australian Native Produce Industries and Taylor's Foods. The supermarkets deal with the producers is not exclusive; other producers can join the promotion and supply the supermarket. The project has two aims; to develop the native food industry and identify the best means of involving the Indigenous communities in the industry.

Coles is keen to encourage its suppliers to establish links with Indigenous communities who supply native ingredients and to help distribute and promote awareness of Australian native food. The Coles Indigenous Food Fund was established to support Indigenous communities. Coles' intention is to contribute 25 cents per product sold to the fund and have made a \$20,000 initial donation to establish the fund. The

³⁰ Interview conducted with Chris Mara, Coles supermarkets

manufacturers will also contribute to the fund. The intention is for the fund to be distributed to the communities by an advisory board with the intention of developing the harvesting ability of the communities.

Indigenous communities Australia wide can be involved in the program. The plan is for communities to grow the crop and sell it to the producers who process it and sell it to Coles. The financial benefit to the communities is two fold; they receive money for the produce they sell to the producer and they also receive money from the fund. Coles have committed to the program for three years.

Currently there is a Taste Australia section in 120 of 450 Coles stores and they will look to expand it in the future. The initial sales figures are positive. There are 44 SKUs (Stock Keeping Units) across two categories; sauces and specialty foods.

Coles believe that it will be a while until there is fresh native Australia food in supermarkets, but there is potential in the future for products like kangaroo, emu, barramundi, bush tomatoes, yams, etc.

8.1.2 Woolworths³¹

To date Woolworths have done little with native foods; they see themselves as mass marketers and as such the products must be mass marketed with large volumes and not niche products, for Woolworths to stock them. They do not see native foods as a selling point at the moment although they intend to keep a watching brief on it.

Woolworths' store layout is such that products are stocked in categories, i.e. all tomato sauces are in one area, therefore a product must be strong enough to stand alone against other mass market products and brands. In their view, native foods are not currently at this stage of development.

Woolworths currently has minimal SKUs of Native food products, primarily in South Australia and the Northern Territory, with only six SKUs. Native foods are seen as a tourist product and as such are not for mass market. Primarily they stock native foods in stores with a large tourist trade such as Broome, Alice Springs, etc.

In terms of health food, Woolworths sees greater potential for native health remedies. Natural medicines are sought by the market and have the greatest interest with Woolworths. Tea tree oil and eucalyptus oil are seen as native food products that have been within the supermarkets for a long time. Natural medicines that have been used by Indigenous communities for years are seen as having the greatest potential and the strongest selling point.

The managers at Woolworths responsible for condiments and health food indicated that, in their view, the current branding strategies of existing native food suppliers is weak. They believe they are not clearly positioned as native foods and they do not have strong brands. In Woolworths' view, these two

³¹ Interview conducted with Guy Kingsmill, Bevan Carson, Woolworths supermarkets

attributes are essential for the success of the category and without them would be reluctant to support the category.

In Woolworths' opinion native foods would be lost if they were released in the mainstream condiment section. They need to have a special section of their own. The problem is that at present there are not enough products or sufficient volumes to justify this level of attention.

8.2 Food service

The food service sector is pivotal in the development of new food categories. Most new food categories get established by consumers seeing the product when they are dining out. Over time they become familiar and start to build them into their home cooking routine.

The commercial native food industry really had its genesis in the food service sector with chefs, such as Andrew Fielke of Red Ochre, experimenting with native ingredients. From there some 'foodies' saw the potential to develop packaged products for retail sale.

Australia's native food growers and suppliers have been pushing hard for several years to convince chefs, restaurants, hotels and caterers of the benefits of native food products. Many chefs, particularly those in Australia, have been reluctant to try native food on their menus mainly because they don't know how to use them. However, Vic Cherikoff believes that younger chefs are beginning to show more interest. Also, there is an increasing use of native products within TAFE programs, especially in the popular fourth year Australian Contemporary Cuisine course.³²

Because of the nature of the native food products currently on the market they are used as flavour rather than as the centre of plate feature.

Although the adoption of native food by the food service sector has been fairly slow, more and more restaurants are beginning to incorporate native ingredients into their dishes. Most of the restaurants use of native animals or seafood products (eg. kangaroo, emu, barramundi, marron) as a centre of plate feature with native fruit,

³² 'Native adventurers,' *Foodservice News*, May 2001.

vegetables, nuts, herbs and spices as a flavour feature.

The following are some examples:

- ***Walert (possum) Shanks – Osso Bucco style possum shanks slow baked in a tomato, aniseed myrtle and roasted capsicum casserole. Served with fried bulrush shoots and bush dumplings.***
- ***Marram (kangaroo) – Kangaroo fillets seared to medium rare with an aged port and mountain pepper leaf glaze. Served with fried Gippsland potatoes.***
- ***Dugat (barramundi) – A whole baby barramundi baked in paperbark with an infusion of lemon myrtle leaf and river mint. Served with fried Gippsland potatoes and a desert lime, bush tomato and bulrush butter.³³***

In Australia, especially Sydney, a number of restaurants use native food. A few of the well known native food restaurants in Australia are listed below.

1. Red Ochre Grill restaurant chain
2. Flamin' Bull Bush Tucker Restaurant (Warragul)
3. Ballina's Garden Restaurant
4. Sydney's Airport Hilton
5. Furama Central

The most prominent of these is Red Ochre Grill having restaurants located in Cairns, Adelaide, and Alice Springs and which specialises in creative native Australian cuisine. Red Ochre restaurants have received many awards and accolades, and have been filmed, interviewed and reviewed by the world's media including The New York Times, UK Financial Times, the BBC, Getaway and many others.

³³ Mains from Flamin' Bull restaurant

The Red Ochre restaurants are actively involved with the tourism sector and regularly work with regional and state tourism bodies to host chef exchanges, trade journalist programs, cuisine exhibitions and concept catering.

Despite the popularity of some of these restaurants, demand has been much stronger in overseas markets than in Australia. According to Vic Cherikoff, overseas chefs are exposed to a far greater range of foods and are more willing to experiment when something new comes along.³⁴ Native food has become very popular in many overseas restaurants. For example, the *Woolloomooloo* restaurant in Paris, which features Australian native food, has been extremely successful.

Native foods are also featured in Qantas Airways' in-flight meals, on luxury cruise ships, in Parliament House, in Australian embassies overseas and in many international hotel restaurants throughout Asia.

One of the barriers to greater adoption of native foods by food sector operators is their cost. The current farm gate prices of many native foods are relatively high, e.g. \$25/kg for bush tomatoes, \$50/kg for lemon myrtle leaf and \$16/kg for Illawara plums. Most food service operators aren't willing to pay these prices and this is limiting opportunities for increasing market demand. Food service operators, even at the top end, are very sensitive to food cost.

At this stage the principal consumers of raw produce are restaurants and gourmet food processors, with ANPI and the Sydney based Cherikoff Pty Ltd being the largest buyers. The majority of produce is dried, frozen or further processed into value added products.

³⁴ "Native adventurers," Food service News, May 2001.

Another issue with food service operators is consistency, product performance and food quality. Some of the chefs we talked to indicated that they had some concerns about native foods in this area which made them reluctant to use them. They feel that they would rather wait until the industry became more established before risking their reputation on native foods.

Section

9

Indigenous issues

9.1 Indigenous issues

Indigenous communities have been using native species in a sustainable way for food and medicine for thousands of years and as such have accumulated a huge amount of knowledge. One of the greatest challenges facing the native food industry is how to integrate the Indigenous communities in an equitable way to develop the industry for the good of all involved.

There are several issues facing the industry with regards to Indigenous involvement and they include;

- the ownership and equitable transfer of intellectual property;
- support with developing economically sustainable farms;
- assistance with getting produce to market;
- the lack of coordination of communities;
- the use of land for commercial interests; and
- strong partnerships and links with companies in the industry to ensure a controlling interest throughout the process.

A Sustainable Resource Management report titled Strategy for Aboriginal Managed Lands in South Australia identified five key principles that should be addressed when developing projects on Aboriginal Managed Lands. They are:

- Ensuring Indigenous community ownership and control of projects
- Building partnerships
- Promoting Indigenous community participation
- Building in sound technical advice

- Monitor performance and evaluate outcomes.

Each of these principles should be applied when considering Indigenous involvement in the native food industry.

9.2 Native foods provided by Indigenous communities

Previously Indigenous involvement was limited to providing knowledge of native foods and in carrying out wild harvesting. Much of the bush harvesting is still being conducted by various Indigenous communities.

However, in the last couple of years, a number of Indigenous initiated groups have begun to emerge.

There is a small representation of Indigenous people within the native food industry in NSW, but this appears to be growing.³⁵ Those in Northern Territory seem to be missing out because they are too far away from the populated areas. There is strong interest from a number of Indigenous communities in South Australia in the native food industry. Already there are communities that collect or grow native foods, but they are relatively small operations.

The Narungga Progress Association, an Indigenous group in South Australia, established a bush tomato crop of 10,000 plants. They purchased the plants through a funding scheme with ATSIC. They had success with the growing phase but found it difficult to find a buyer willing to pay a “fair” price for the produce. The initiative is on hold until the industry becomes more established. Their aim was to develop an economically sustainable business. There are reputed to be a number of communities wishing to develop similar operations but they are finding significant barriers.

The following information was provided by Chris Mara, Coles Supermarkets, and these communities are involved with the Taste Australia program.

³⁵ ‘Indigenous involvement in the bushfood industry,’ Geocities website, May 2001.

Central Australia

- The Anmatyere people, about two to three hours north and north west of Alice Springs in the Tanami Desert.
- The Arrente people from Utopia Community, on the Sandover River.
- Arrent and Anmatyere people from the Bonya and the Hartz Range Communities in the Plenty River Region. These communities lay about four hours north east of Alice.
- The Tangenteyerte Community at Alice Springs.

The products harvested, and soon to be cultivated, from these communities are primarily the bush tomato and wattleseed. They have also harvested konkerberry, rock figs and bush bananas and have undertaken some product development work with these products.

The top end

- Bulla community at Timber Creek
- Kalkaringi Community at Victoria River,
- Kybrook Farm Community at Pine Creek,
- Larrakia Nation in the Darwin region,
- Maningrida Communities from central Arnhem Land,
- Nauiya Nambiyu Community from the Daly River,
- Pirlangimpi Community at Melville Island
- Yolngu Community in northeast Arnhem Land
- The Laynhapuy Homelands Association and the Yirrkala community

They provide lotus nut, long yams, capok bush and kakadu plums.

Gulf and Cape Country

- Doomadge community in Burke Shire

- Cloncurry Aboriginal Womens Issues Group

The main products from this region are wild limes, native thyme, wild oranges (two species), split jack (related to wild orange) and the bush cucumber.

Victoria

- Gunditjmara community
- Yorta Yorta community

9.3 Intellectual property

A major concern of the Indigenous communities relates to native title and intellectual properties, which is outside the scope of this report. In terms of intellectual property the issue is far more complex than the normal commercial output of providing and being rewarded for intellectual properties. Knowledge about native foods is an integral part of the Indigenous culture and spirit, and part of the dreamtime stories which are extremely sacred to them and should not be exploited for commercial gain. Indigenous Australians have used native foods for thousands of years as food sources and for therapeutic benefits.

Intellectual property encompasses a number of areas with regards to the Indigenous groups and native foods, including which species can be used for what purposes and, more importantly, the dreamtime story that is associated with each native species. This is arguably the biggest component of the intellectual property. It plays such a pivotal role within their culture and to sell it means that they are effectively selling their culture.

We understand that within Indigenous communities there are some differences of opinion on this issue; some do not believe in giving away Indigenous culture and intellectual property at any cost whilst others see the opportunity to capitalise on this knowledge. This issue also applies to many other elements of the Indigenous culture such as paintings of traditional dreamtime stories.

Indigenous knowledge has been gathered and passed down through the generations and an opportunity exists for mutual gain through partnership with commercial operators. In one respect, the simplest way to share the information is to document it and make it available to the industry at large.

However, this strategy does not allow a more active involvement of Indigenous stakeholders.

9.4 Developing economically sustainable farms

In the present scenario of produce being collected by bush harvesting, Indigenous communities benefit and can do so of their own devices. However, to develop the industry to the next level, Indigenous stakeholders need to be involved in commercial productivity and they may need some assistance in developing capacity to grow commercial crops. Several attempts have been made at commercial ventures that have not been successful.

The other factor is that growing crops takes significant time and capital investment. Some native species take up to five years to yield a crop. Therefore an investment will take greater than five years to return a profit. In many cases Indigenous communities do not have the means to invest in new crops.

A major issue for Indigenous communities is the marketing of their products and, particularly, getting it to market and achieving a satisfactory return.

9.5 Getting produce to market

Several Indigenous communities have made attempts at developing a native food operation. From what we understand in most cases they have not succeeded mainly because of difficulties in getting the product to market or, even, finding markets for it at all.

At present the supply chains for native foods are not well developed. This is exacerbated by the fact that the Indigenous communities are geographically isolated, they produce small quantities and they produce diverse crops.

For the industry to develop and for Indigenous communities to play a significant role, the issue of getting produce to market must be addressed parallel to the development of commercial crops.

To succeed, Indigenous communities need the necessary relationships and strategic alliances in place with processors and marketers.

9.6 Lack of co-ordination of communities

There are many different Indigenous communities, each of which has different concerns, cultures, intellectual property and issues that must be addressed.

Many of these communities are taking steps to develop a native food industry as a means of generating income and creating employment opportunities and a strong base for their people. A central issue that is developed throughout this report is the importance of achieving critical mass. A major constraint for the Indigenous community is the difficulty they have in achieving critical mass.

Collectively, the Indigenous communities have a better chance of developing critical mass. If their efforts are to succeed, there needs to be a much closer co-ordination between Indigenous communities. For example, by consolidating production, communities will be able to accumulate more quantities than are now available to processors and for which they may be prepared to pay a higher premium. There may also be opportunity for co-operation in terms of co-ordination and the logistical system to get the product to market.

9.7 Commercial use of land

Indigenous held land represents over 20 percent of the South Australian state. There are three Statutory Tenures in South Australia that apply to land management; they are Pitjantjatjara Lands, Maralinga Lands and the Aboriginal Lands Trust. These three acts hold the title to the lands that are under inalienable freehold title, that is they cannot be sold, mortgaged or traded to other persons.

Land that is acquired on behalf of Indigenous people continues to have the same tenure as before it was purchased. There is freehold land, perpetual lease land and pastoral lease land. Each category has different restrictions, which need to be considered when commercially developing the land.

There is also co-operative management of land where the Indigenous people are involved in the management of protected areas, this includes national parks and conservation parks and local government reserves.

It must be noted that permits from the National Parks are needed to gather native species from the relevant lands.

Interest is strong from Indigenous communities to develop commercial operations on their land.

There are few native food operations by Indigenous communities at the present time. Some communities are beginning to develop commercial growing operations on their land but these are relatively small. Several communities are gathering produce through wild harvesting and they have individual relationships with processors or local restaurants. At present the Indigenous involvement from the supply side is well below its true potential.

9.8 Industry partnerships

From our research it appears that, in general, Indigenous communities want to be actively involved in all levels of the native food supply chain through partnerships with commercial operators. They see the industry as one that can provide financial independence and as one that can offer a wide variety of jobs to the Indigenous community and, particularly, for youth.

A major concern expressed by Indigenous stakeholders is that if they simply become suppliers of raw produce that they will not be able to control the destiny of the industry and they will not receive a significant part of the profits that are generally made further along the supply chain.

The Indigenous community would, ideally, like to have strong and equitable partnerships with the processing and marketing companies.

Section

10

RIRDC R&D Plan for the Native Food Industry

10.1 Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation (RIRDC) R&D plan for the native food industry

RIRDC has a research and development plan in place for the native food industry for the period of 2001-2006. The native food plan is targeted specifically at plant based native foods as animal based species are covered under RIRDC's New Animal Products program.

Through consultation with the industry RIRDC has identified the following areas as being funding priorities:

1. Understanding, strengthening and developing markets
2. Improving existing products and developing new ones
3. Enhancing the ability of the industry to meet appropriate safety and food standards
4. Improving production efficiency while maintaining ecological integrity
5. Enhancing the human resources of the industry

Objective 1: To understand, strengthen and develop markets

Strategies

- Develop a generic promotion and marketing language and terminology to be used in consumer education

- Promote global access to native foods by researching the best methods to raise awareness of these unique products and educating consumers of their uses in international markets
- Undertake innovative product development

Objective 2: To improve existing products and develop new ones

Strategies

- Preserve, explore and protect the genetic resource base of wild harvested native food
- Bring commercially valuable or promising varieties and species into cultivation
- Improve existing plant selections and develop new species through selection and breeding, and to develop a system of agronomic and varietal descriptors for the industry

Objective 3: To enhance the ability of the industry to provide products that meet appropriate safety and food standards

Strategies

- Devise and disseminate strategies for helping the industry to establish and meet the relevant codes written in the context of environmentally sustainable production
- Establish industry-driven quality and food-safety standards and descriptions for value-added and processed products

Objective 4: To improve production efficiency while maintaining ecological integrity

Strategies

For wild harvested foods:

- Support the better management of currently wild harvested crops and the development of appropriate conservation strategies
- Provide improved practices and technologies (pre and post harvest) for conserving, picking, sorting and handling wild harvested produce

For cultivated native foods:

- Provide environmentally friendly agronomy and pest control packages that support sustainable monoculture, polyculture, organic and other production systems
- Integrate bushfood production into other farming and business activities
- Devise means of improving product quality and consistency, including improving pre and post harvest technology
- Develop and disseminate technical and economic information on existing and improved production systems

Objective 5: To enhance the human resources of the industry

Strategies

- Develop a readily accessible database on native food, industry structure and participation
- Encouraging networking, workshops and the production of newsletters
- Support the involvement of indigenous people in the industry and its development
- Support nationally focussed but regionally developed education and training in business planning and in native food production and processing

Source: RIRDC R&D Plan for the Native Foods Industry 2001-2006 (www.rirdc.gov.au/pub/nativefoods.html)

This consultancy generally agrees with the direction and strategy outlined in the RIRDC plan.

With regard to market development, there is a need for some basic consumer research to gain an understanding of attitudes, awareness, beliefs, purchase and consumption behaviour with respect to native foods. This information would be particularly helpful for determining the optimum positioning for native food, the terminology used and so forth.

The emphasis on food safety and quality is commendable, especially given the fact that at this stage, to a large extent, this is still a cottage industry with much of the value adding being done in home kitchens or smaller food service establishments.

In our view, a high priority for government research funding is in the area of improving productivity from cultivated products, particularly in the area of genetic selection, monoclonal reproduction, agronomy and orchard management. This is based on the strongly held opinion that the long-term growth will come from cultivated production as distinct from wild harvest. Wild harvest is not sufficiently reliable in terms of yield, production levels and product quality.