

Producers in Cornwall lick their lips at surge in growth

In July 2011, the treasured Cornish pasty received official protected status, albeit with a three-year transitional period. Now the time limit is up, **Craig Blackburn** investigates whether the process has benefited Cornwall and producers have complied

employed three authentication companies, plus local authorities' trading standards departments up and down the country. By July 2011, the Food Safety Act 1990 was updated to reflect the changes. The new regulations stipulate that for a product to be called a 'Cornish pasty' it must be made in Cornwall to a specific recipe and production method and packaging must carry the Protected Geographical Indications (PGI) logo, pictured right.

If not, suppliers could ultimately face prosecution. To give the seven non-Cornish suppliers a chance to make these changes, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) set a three-year transitional period.

That period ended on August 12. The CPA, meanwhile, is rolling out a national numbering scheme - expected to be complete by February - which will allow consumers to track every product. So, after 12 years of work, was it worth it? Mark Norton bought Prima Bakeries in Scorrier, Redruth, four years ago and is now producing 2,000 pasties a day and employing 50 staff.

The process involved a government department, created two European Commission (EC) directives and



"When I bought the company we were baking one day a week," he said. "Now we are producing pasties six days (a week)."

"For a company of our size it is hard to quantify the sole benefit of the PGI other than to say that, certainly, the whole process really put the focus on Cornwall and the Cornish pasty."

Mr Norton proudly started "exporting" pasties across the Tamar, as he puts it, for the first time this year.

As a result, over the past few weeks he has taken on more staff at a time when many seasonal companies are temporarily laying off employees.

Ian Trevithick, pasty maker at Brian Etherington's Meat Company in Scorrier, which sent 6,000 Cornish pasties to Festival Interceltique in Brittany this year, said: "The PGI process has helped our sales immeasurably. We are fully behind it."

From making 100 pasties a day for the company two years ago, he now produces up to 1,500 a day, helped by four other staff.

Managing director Mark Etherington added: "We are certainly going forward and we have got expansion plans for the future as we've outgrown our premises. It is quite exciting."

The company is starting online sales in two weeks and has "interest" from more than one overseas client. Fiona Rick, a director of Cornish Premier Pasties in St Columb Major, which makes 20,000 Cornish pasties a day, said: "Over the past few years we have doubled our staff and premises, and started selling more Cornish pasties outside the county and out of Europe."

"This is not solely down to the CPA, but I do think that the PGI put Cornwall on the map and it made people - retailers and wholesalers - come to Cornwall direct to get the



Pasties being made at Prima Bakeries in Redruth

product." She added that, far from promoting Cornish producers, many of the group's clients wanted to re-brand their pasties and "sell them as their own".

Since August 12, it appears, the seven non-Cornish suppliers have renamed their products to comply with the regulations.

Ruth Huxley from the CPA, said: "We are not aware of anybody who, since derogation (the three-year period) ended, has been trading illegally."

Since July 2011, said senior Cornwall Council trading standards officer Julie Benson, her department had been investigating complaints - as the 'home' prosecuting authority - from consumers around the UK, but mostly in relation to these seven exempt companies.

It has had no complaints since the August deadline.

But as the West Briton went to press, Cornish pasties from Peter's

Food Service appeared on sale on the websites of major supermarkets.

A spokesman for the company said it had "adhered fully with European Commission requirements," adding: "Unfortunately, certain website images do not seem to have been updated in line with the required changes and older images have remained in place."

A Google search using the names of some of the other six companies, combined with the words 'Cornish pasty', also returned a long list of outdated website listings.

Glitches aside, Mark Muncey,

According to the CPA, it is still too early to quantify the benefit without updated industry figures.

But Ms Huxley says: "I don't think we can say yet with any certainty what the impact of the end of the derogation will have on the Cornish producers, although Cornish producers see it as a very positive thing."

"One of the key benefits to Cornish producers is that, in some cases, the products that were allowed the derogation just didn't bear any resemblance to a proper Cornish pasty, so the fact that they can no longer use the name means that the distinctiveness and the market potential of the Cornish pasty is now enhanced."

But not every Cornish pasty producer is happy with the new rules.

Ann Muller, whose family has been making pasties for generations in the Lizard, started a Facebook page against the PGI rules because they state that a Cornish pasty cannot be crimped on the top, contrary to her family traditions.

An online petition was set up in support of her business called Stop Barring Ann's Pasties From Being Sold As Cornish Pasties. Ms Muller did not want to comment.

At the factory of the biggest player in the Cornish pasty supply chain, business is certainly booming.

Ginsters' 600 staff make about one million Original Cornish Pasties each week from their base in Callington.

Jo Hartop, from the company, said it supplied "everyone from all the major multiple supermarkets" - Tesco, Asda, Morrisons, Sainsbury's, Co-op, Waitrose - "to the convenience and wholesale sector", such as Booker, Spar and Lonsis, as well as the food service sector.

Paul Pearce, from WC Rowe in Falmouth, which supplies the West Cornwall Pasty Company chain and other major national clients, said he is "proud" of being part of the PGI process.

"The importance of the PGI to not just Cornish pasty producers but also to the wider Cornish economy can't be underestimated," he says. "With so many jobs either directly

What is a Cornish pasty today?

ACCORDING to current legislation, the following rules apply to the sale of Cornish pasties:

Recipe:

Short crust, rough puff or puff pastry.

Diced or minced beef, sliced or diced potato, swede and onion.

Vegetable content must not be less than 25 per cent.

Meat content of the pasty must not be less than 12.5 per cent.

Seasoning to taste, primarily salt and pepper.

No other types of meat, vegetables, for example carrot, or any artificial additives are to be used in the filling.

The pasties are D-shaped and crimped, either by hand or mechanically, to one side, and never on top.

There is no requirement for the raw ingredients to be sourced from within Cornwall, but they must be made, or "manufactured" in the county.

They can be baked anywhere in the country.

Labelling:

The approved PGI symbol should be used at point of sale, or on any



packaging containing the product.

Policing:

Three product authentication inspectorate companies conduct annual checks on registered producers to make sure they comply with the new rules.

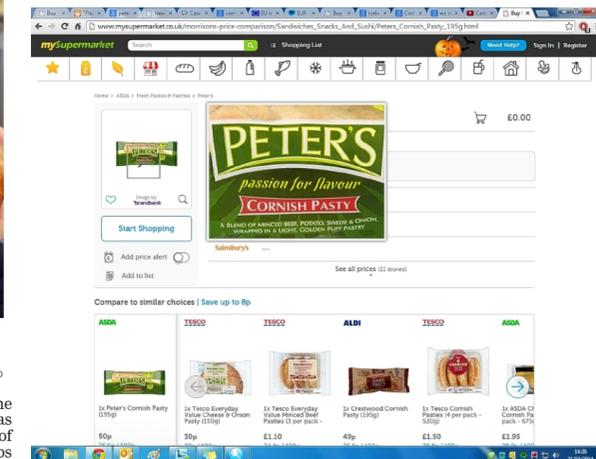
Each member will receive their own certification number (by the end of February) provided by the inspection body to display on packaging and any other point of sale material when selling Cornish Pasties.

This unique number will trace each pasty sold directly back to the producer.



Ann Muller from the Lizard and one of her famous pasties.

www.westbriton.co.uk/buyphoto



Peter's Cornish Pasty (not made in Cornwall) still advertised online.

Most supermarkets sell the much-loved food

THE main supermarket chains - Sainsbury's, Tesco, Asda, Morrisons - sell Cornish pasties.

According to visits to some Cornish outlets, Aldi, Iceland and Lidl do not.

Sainsbury's in Truro sells Ginsters Original Cornish Pasty, Cornish Pasty by Sainsbury's and a Taste The Difference Cornish Pasty, as well as fresh Rowe's pasties on concession stands.

A spokesman for Sainsbury's said: "We work with suppliers based in Cornwall to make them. I'm afraid we don't give any further details on suppliers."

Tesco, in Truro, sells Ginsters Original Cornish Pasty, Tesco

Cornish pasty and Counter Tesco Cornish Pasty.

A Tesco spokesman said they were made and baked in Callington by Samworth Brothers, which owns Tamar Foods and Ginsters.

It also sells fresh Rowe's pasties on concession stands.

Asda at Penryn sells Ginsters Original Cornish Pasty and Asda Chosen By You Cornish Pasty. A spokesman said its supplier was Tamar Foods, in Callington. It also sells fresh Rowe's pasties on concession stands in some stores.

A Morrisons spokesman said its own-label Cornish pasty was sourced from a supplier based in Cornwall.

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Pasty maker Ian Trevithick at Brian Etherington's Meat Company in Scorrier, Redruth.

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