



John's soaring!

You CAN soar with the eagles when you work with turkeys!

John Watson's Pooginagoric turkey business is flourishing, with increasing demand leading to double-digit growth.

Yet 25 years ago, sceptics slammed John's "crazy" idea to start turkey farming, saying it wouldn't get off the ground.

The story of John's dogged triumph begins on page 6.

Forward, ho!

Planning evolves for visionary butcher-farmer alliance

A detailed discussion paper is being prepared to accelerate plans for a visionary alliance between retail butchers and farmers to counter escalating beef prices.

The paper, to be finalised after input from butchers and farmers, will be the foundation for talks with the State Government and varied stakeholders, including MLA and abattoirs.

Farmers in the South-East have formed a steering committee which has begun broad discussions with AMIC's SA Retail Council chairman, Trevor Hill.

And plans are being discussed for a meeting of interested butchers, and possibly later meetings between butchers and farmers.

Trevor and Richard Gunner are architects of the plan, which was revealed in the last

MBL News (*online at www.mblsa.com.au*)

The plan aims to wrest back some control of the supply chain to the benefit of participating butchers and farmers.

Central would be online carcass auctions, running 12 hours overnight and based on overseas models.

Participating butchers would access quality beef at fair prices, working with farmers to get the grade they want and being able to tell the full "story" of the meat to increasingly inquisitive customers.

Farmers, now being price squeezed by supermarkets, would get fair prices for superior quality as specified by butchers, and have no stock agent fees.

"The response has been positive. Lots of

key points

- Butchers form a buying group, liaising with selected farmers
- Farmers supply carcasses to an abattoir for MSA grading
- Carcass details including weight, rib fat and colour are posted online
- Butchers bid for individual carcasses in 12-hour overnight auctions
- Beef is delivered from the abattoir to successful butchers next day

people are saying it's a great idea and now it's time to get going," Trevor says.

"We need to talk further with butchers and farmers who want to participate and contribute, so a discussion paper can be prepared for the government and other possible stakeholders.

Continued page 4

Showroom, warehouse, offices:
203-215 Hanson Rd, Athol Park SA 5012
PO Box 46 Mansfield Park SA 5012

Orders ph: (08) 8417 6000
Orders fax: (08) 8417 6001
orders@mblsa.com.au

Admin ph: (08) 8417 6002
Admin fax: (08) 8417 6003
www.mblsa.com.au

Butchers rush MBL machinery

MBL's machinery department has had one of its busiest trading periods, sparked by the \$20,000 tax break on new equipment.

The new tax break came into effect on Federal Budget night on May 12 – seven weeks before the end of the 2014-15 financial year.

Many butchers, bakers and others moved quickly to gain the tax benefit for 2014-15. The tax break will continue until June 30, 2017.

Small business operators can claim immediate tax deductions for every business related purchase of up to \$20,000.

Any number of purchases for under \$20,000 each can be made, and each can be instantly written off.

"We were rushed off our feet until the end of June – the

demand was amazing," says MBL Machinery Manager Chris Mountford.

"As but one example, we sold all nine Henkelman benchtop vacuum machines we had here at MBL and we took orders for more...

"The good news is the tax concession will continue, and we'll be going out of our way to continue offering great deals."

MBL's generous interest-free payment terms for approved Members can make it easy to upgrade equipment to improve and increase production while saving time.

Chris says providing quality service is a priority.

"I aim to treat people as I would like to be treated, and this means doing everything to ensure we maintain a high level of service," he says.

Chris, who took over as MBL Machinery Manager late last year, has visited interstate manufacturers and suppliers to introduce himself and "talk turkey".

He has visited vacuum machine and vacuum fillers supplier Multi Vac in Melbourne, and will visit machinery manufacturers Thompson in Queensland and Hall in Sydney.

"When it comes to manufacturers and suppliers, I'm like a bulldozer – I'll push and push to get the best deal to pass on," Chris says.

"I ask lots of questions. Nothing ventured, nothing gained."



Gary Cimarosti with his new \$65,000 sausage machine.

Gary's dream machine

When a butcher of 45 years' experience describes his new sausage machine as "fantastic", take it as gospel.

Gary Cimarosti, pictured, of Cimarosti Brothers' Colonel Light Meat and Smallgoods, recently purchased a \$65,000 Handtmann VF608 Vac Filler and Linker on an MBL payment plan.

Standing 1.6 metres and weighing 600kg, it makes a breeze of sausage making.

Gary says, "It's fantastic – I went to see one of these machines at Bruce's Meat and I was very impressed.

"When I got back here, I told the boys, 'I'm buying a big new sausage machine' – from MBL, of course."

With the old sausage machine, an apprentice could load it with 27kg of meat and then call Gary for the next step.

"Sam now loads 100kg at a time into the new machine before he calls me to come and fill it out," Gary says.

"The automatic linking also saves us time; everything comes out at the same size and weight; and the automatic counter saves us having to count."

Gary says he has been buying equipment from MBL for years, benefiting from easier repayment options – "and the annual rebate, too."

"I'm always happy to deal with MBL," he says.

For all machinery inquiries, call Chris Mountford or Shane Reynolds at MBL on (08) 8417 6002

MBL NEWS

Publisher

Combined Industries Pty Ltd
ABN: 45 007 562 932

Editor

Peter Morgan
(08) 8251 2838

Advertising

David Curtis
(08) 8417 6013

Printer

Watermark Printers and Stationers
(08) 8333 3100

Disclaimer

This publication is distributed on the understanding that the publisher and/or its officers and contributors are not responsible for the results of any actions taken on the basis of information in this publication. The publisher expressly disclaims all and any liability to any person in respect of anything and of the consequences of anything done or omitted to be done by any such person in reliance, whether whole or partial, upon the whole or any part of this publication.



Holco's \$5 million Darwin expansion

With the expansion of its Darwin operations, Holco will become the Northern Territory's largest dedicated meat supplier.

Construction has begun on a \$5 million state-of-the-art cold storage and distribution centre to increase Holco's delivery capacity, give customers better access to products and diversify the product range.

Cold storage capacity will increase by 400% to 500 tonnes.

Managing Director Mike Rankin says the new facility will help better serve Holco's growing customer base.

It will support the delivery of fresh beef, chicken, lamb, pork, seafood, kangaroo and crocodile to mining sites, healthcare organisations, restaurants and supermarkets across the Northern Territory.

"Holco has maintained a strong presence in the Northern Territory and has served the region for more than 20 years," Mike says.

"Heath Wilson, our Food Service General Manager in the NT, has worked tirelessly to build strong relationships with our customers and drive further growth.

"Our Darwin operation, at Winnellie, has grown over the years and has become an invaluable part of our business today.

"Expanding our current facility will encour-

age further growth and help us lift the standards of meat supply across the entire industry."

Civil works have begun on the new site, with construction expected to be completed by this December.

Mike says the expanded Darwin processing facility could also serve as a platform for further growth opportunities in the future.



Mike Rankin... sees Darwin as a springboard into Asian markets.

"By broadening our footprint, we're also positioning ourselves to target export markets," he says.

"There's a burgeoning middle class market overseas, particularly in South East Asia, that's driving demand for high quality, affordable meat products.

"While our first priority is the local NT market, we plan to build stronger relationships with key trading partners in the coming years."

Mike says Northern Territory operations have made "a solid contribution" to Holco's overall business growth.

The company currently employs 18 staff in the Northern Territory, out of a total workforce of 370. Based in Adelaide, Holco also has operations in Brisbane and Coffs Harbour.

It has grown its annual turnover to around \$200 million, up from \$120 million five years ago.

Starting with a one-man butcher's shop at Dulwich in Adelaide's east, Mike began a company that acquired Holco in 1995.

In 2012, T & R Pastoral - now Thomas Foods International - acquired a 50% share of Holco, formalising an association spanning more than 30 years between the two SA family companies.

Record-high beef prices, which have risen by almost 50% this year to hit \$6/kg, are here to stay, says Trevor Hill.

Trevor, who owns Adelaide's three Bruce's Meat shops, says the price rose by about 25% over the months of May and June alone.

"I believe prices will never return to the level they were earlier this year," he says.

"Consumers are already pulling back from buying as much beef; they're buying more chicken and pork. Demand for lamb, being higher priced, is unchanged."

Trevor says the higher prices were challenging butchers.

"Farmers are getting such a good price per kilogram that they're growing their cattle

High prices to stay

out to larger weights, which then makes it even more expensive to buy in, so it's a double whammy," he says.

"So consumers who might have paid \$8 for a piece of porterhouse a few months ago are looking at the \$10 to \$12 mark."

Trevor says he could not see beef prices coming down until the Australian dollar improves.

"I believe these beef prices will last for about two years and until then, butchers will sell a lot more of the other proteins," he says.

"In the next six months, producers will be looking at their herd numbers and, with all the selling off at the moment, they won't have many stock to produce with.

"So they will hang on to that production stock, which will further inflate the price."

As reported previously in MBL News, the spectre of continuing high beef and lamb prices is driving fresh creativity from butchers.

Options include longer ageing of cheaper beef, stepping up value adding, and shifting focus to better promote chicken and pork.

FROM PAGE 1

"But while things are moving, there needs to be a lot of research and negotiations over how it all operates and how it's funded.

"The system would start on a small scale and would grow according to demand.

"If it eventuates, it may not be for another two or even five years. There is much to be considered and worked through, but it's well worth doing."

Richard Gunner says, "I've had quite a few calls from interested people after the story (in MBL News) and not everyone sees the idea in the same way.

"The conversations I've had involved different points of view - some people raised issues I hadn't considered.

"A discussion paper is the best starting point. Then all views and ideas can be put on the table and we can take it from there."

Trevor says securing funding of the system, including administration and mechanisms for online auctions, will be an issue.

"It's a great idea, but who's going to fund it and who's going to administer it?" he says.

He says the discussion paper will form the basis for funding

talks with the government through PIRSA, which makes regular grants to the food industry including a recent round totalling \$500,000.

"Another possibility is MLA on

money for a three month trial...

"Austral, which owns Strathalbyn abattoir, may consider putting in money and facilities if they see the scheme being good for them.



Trevor Hill... "lots of people are saying it's a great idea."

two fronts - through its MSA unit which wants to grow MSA, and through its agribusiness unit," Trevor says.

"MLA might say it will put up the

"Another possibility is local government funding, but these ideas all need exploring by butchers and farmers.

"Funding help aside, we'd need

a mechanism to run the operation and it will be up to butchers and farmers to contribute to it, possibly through an annual fee.

"Maybe it might cost butchers \$20 for each auction bid, or maybe we could have Foundation Members who tip in \$10,000 which entitles them to on-going benefits.

"It must be run as a business, not an industry-funded scheme, so it's only for people who are willing to put their hands in their pockets to get the rewards."

Trevor and Richard say butchers and farmers could initially meet in a "Speed Dating" format.

"We could get butchers on one side of the table and farmers on the other and they talk, finding out about each other and moving around looking for matches," Trevor says.

"It's about supply and demand issues, finding good matches between farmers and local butchers, and securing long term relationships."

After a preliminary meeting in Adelaide in mid-July, Trevor will soon go to the South-East to talk with a steering committee representing a group of interested farmers.

He says, "This whole idea revolves around supply and demand, and it may fall over, but at the end of the day it's conversation to make the industry better."

QUALITY MARKETING

Adelaide Hills loosens Salisbury's purse strings

Butcher Rik Carr has pulled off a marketing masterstroke by renaming his Salisbury shop Adelaide Hills Beef to reflect his new range of quality products.

With a name conjuring images of green hills and prime cattle, he has created a powerful mojo for his shop, next to Woolworths at Parabanks shopping centre.

And shoppers have opened their purses in an area which is perceived to be struggling to shake its low socioeconomic ranking.

"People will spend here if you provide quality. The response since we opened in February has been terrific – we battle to keep up," says Rik, pictured.

When Rik took over the shop, he began sourcing premium beef direct from Strathalbyn abattoir. Within weeks, he had doubled the old shop's turnover.

Previously, the shop's most expensive product was \$20kg scotch fillet.

"Now, I get quality scotch fillet from the Hills and it sells for \$40kg – and I can hardly keep up with demand," says Rik, 33.

Rik's story is poignant as butchers contemplate how customers will respond to beef prices continuing to rise.

His experience is that people, even in struggling areas, value quality beef backed by expert advice - and they are willing to pay for it.

The shop was long occupied by Springfield which moved out almost a year ago. It was taken over by the neighbouring greengrocer who ran it as a butchery for several months, hiring Rik as manager.

Rik says, "I'd only just settled in

as manager before I was offered the business. It hadn't been promoted properly, and I've always had good promotional ideas.

"I'd wanted to own my own shop inside a shopping centre, so I was keen to buy it and improve it, with high quality the key.

"Having worked here for a while gave me insights, and I was impressed by plans for an \$18 million upgrade of the centre."

Searching for a new shop name,

people try our products because of the name, it's all about the quality; they demand quality otherwise they won't come back.

"And they are coming back and there's good conversation about the meat, where it's produced and the best way to cook it.

"People often ask, 'What's best?' We'll always give them good advice because we want their trust.

"Supermarkets don't give

farmers, as featured in MBL News in April.

"There are similarities between what Chris and I are doing – providing quality Hills meat, with advice and service," Rik says.

"At some places I've worked, it was about getting the cheapest boxed meat you could and selling it for the cheapest you could.

"Increasingly, more people are caring about what they eat and they want quality meat.



Rik thought of Adelaide Hills Beef but dismissed it as "a bit too simple."

"But I came back to it because it gives a concise, clear message about the quality beef – and other products - we offer," he says.

"The name conveys the clean and green image of the Adelaide Hills which is seen as a producer of premium food and wine.

"It's not a gimmick – while

advice. In a sense, we have returned to years ago when people conversed with butchers and trusted them."

Rik was trained by Bronte Illsley at Stirling and Alan Bennett at Mt Barker. He was a meat manager for Woolworths for three years before working in several shops, including Three Little Pigs at Lockleys.

He also worked at booming Stirling Variety Meats for Chris Pfitzner who sources Adelaide Hills beef directly from local

"Now I have my own shop, I can implement my style."

Rik quickly knew he was on a winner when on the first Saturday, he sold out.

"Four of us worked flat out and we took three times the normal Saturday take of the old shop," he says.

"We distributed 2,000 flyers in letterboxes in the immediate area and we had a massive

Continued page 10

As increasing numbers of people tuck into John Watson's sumptuous turkeys, a handful of others are eating humble pie.

Doubting Thomases, including a sceptical bank manager, tried to dissuade John from starting a turkey production business 25 years ago.

But John's made of sterner stuff and he persisted, growing Pooginagoric Free Range Turkeys, near Bordertown, into a flourishing business.

"People said it wouldn't work, that it was a crazy idea. But we proceeded, stuck it out and we've survived," says John, 63, who runs Pooginagoric with his wife Robyn, 58, and nine staff.

"We're still here and demand keeps going up and up. It's been a pretty big effort ..."

Other turkey operations have folded but Pooginagoric is forging ahead, with production rising by 20% last year to top 30,000 turkeys for year-round supply.

(Pooginagoric is the only remaining grower and processor of turkeys in SA, following Inghams' closure of Aldinga Turkeys at McLaren Vale last December.

SA's only other commercial turkey grower is Almond Grove at Murray Bridge, producing some 4,000 turkeys for the Christmas market. Processing is off-site.

There are no turkey growers left in WA and Tasmania, with national production dominated by Inghams and Steggles in the eastern States).

John was a shearer but needed a new job after badly injuring a knee. His brother, a butcher at Loxton at the time, mentioned quality turkeys were in short supply.

This prompted John to attend an alternative farming field day at Seymour in Victoria, leading him to start Pooginagoric.

TURKEYS!

John defies sceptics as Pooginagoric keeps soaring to new heights



John Watson... "demand keeps going up and up. It's been a pretty big effort."

"We started by producing 300 turkeys but we either had to stop producing or start doing it properly, so I went to the bank for a \$10,000 loan to set up," John says.

"The bank manager was doubtful. He eventually gave the loan, saying, 'Here's your \$10,000 – go and spend it.' He was apprehensive as it was an unusual venture."

Starting free range production was not a choice, rather a financial decision.

"Our turkeys are free range because in the early days we couldn't afford sheds to put

them in – it was as simple as that," John says.

"We were classed as outcasts by the big producers. They just thought the way to go was to fill sheds with turkeys; it's quite ironic that they now produce some free range.

"Consumers are demanding free range from the overall poultry industry whether it's eggs, chicken or turkey, and the supermarkets have followed along.

"Coles and Woolworths push suppliers for free range as hard as they can, but there are biosecurity issues with poultry mixing outside with wild birds."

John says this was shown this year by North America's biggest outbreak of bird flu which led to the deaths of 48 million chickens and turkeys across the US and Canada.

"It's the nature of the beast; poultry is susceptible to disease. If unchecked, diseases can quickly take a big toll on a flock," he says.

The closure of Aldinga Turkeys has helped increase sales for Pooginagoric. A feasibility study is now being carried out by a consortium of small mixed poultry producers and farmers to reopen the plant as a Co-op. ➤



John says his "admin whiz" wife Robyn is the driving force behind the business.



➤ John says Pooginagoric's sales had already been rising by double digits before Aldinga Turkeys closed.

Typically, Adelaide's three Poultry Options stores, which have sold Pooginagoric turkeys only for years, enjoyed a 23% leap in turkey sales last Christmas.

Pooginagoric supplies turkey products across Australia, to hotels, pubs, butcher's shops and catering businesses, and has plans to supply aged care homes.

"Our customers in the 'accommodation' field range from the Hilton Adelaide to Mt Gambier prison, which buys weekly," John says.

"South Australians are loyal; they just like buying SA products. They supported Aldinga Turkeys because it was local, and our sales keep growing.

"We don't want to expand production. We're doing as much as we can do and what our plant can handle.

"We have good customers, like Barossa Fine Foods which has been with us from the start, and we want to continue to properly service them."



John recalls, in the early days, visiting Franz Knoll at his Fairview Park shop when Barossa Fine Foods was also starting out.

"With him were three very young sons – Dieter, Stephan and Andreas, I think – looking smart in uniforms and white boots. Franz proudly said, 'They're my tubbers and scrubbers.'

"Franz placed an order with me for that first Christmas 25 years ago and the orders haven't stopped – Barossa Fines Foods has placed an order every single week ever since.

"I've always highly valued support from loyal customers. We make customer service our priority; we pride ourselves on it – it's everything."

John pays tribute to his wife Robyn, who handles the administrative side including handling orders, for helping build customer loyalty.

"Robyn is the brains of the operation - I can't even turn on a computer, although I have ambition to learn," he says.

"She keeps the books immaculately and her systems for accounts and orders are terrific; such is her efficiency, all our customers trust her..."

"She's a city girl but in the early days, she had no worries getting her hands dirty. Now she drives the business, allowing me to handle the turkey side."

John says he has overcome "the Christmas turkey syndrome" by enticing people to eat turkey all year round.

"It mystifies us why many butchers only want to know about turkey for two weeks at Christmas. Maybe chicken is so easy and consistent in size," he says.

"We grow broad breasted turkeys to 20kg

A 25-year connection with MBL continues

John Watson is one of MBL's biggest fans, saying the Co-op has played a big role in Pooginagoric's growth over the past 25 years.

"We deal only with MBL – I've never considered anyone else," he says.

"We get everything from MBL, from all equipment including tenderisers and mincers through to ingredients and things like aprons, knives and tubs.

"Last week, there such big demand for schnitzel that we ran out of crumbs. We called MBL and a day later, the order was in Bordertown for collection.

"It's reassuring to know that if we run out of something, all we have to do is pick up the phone to MBL."

In the early days of Pooginagoric, John visited MBL to pick up crumbs and was given advice that has provided invaluable ever since.

"MBL developed a crumb mix for our schnitzels and we still use it all these years later. We now make eight tonnes of schnitzel a year," John says.

"On that first visit, MBL also suggested I buy a tenderiser. I didn't think I could afford it but after seeing one being used, I got one on time payment.

"It was a fantastic investment; before, we had to beat out schnitzels with a hammer and it was really hard yakka.

"So in just one day, MBL did a lot to set us up - and the service has been great ever since.

"The reps who visit monthly have been fantastic - Daryl Reynolds, Martin Arbon and now Dale Rowe.

"Dale knows exactly what we use after coming here for so long that he could do his own stocktake and make up our order for us!

"And on top of all this, there's the extra bonus of the MBL rebate..."

Continued page 10

Jimmy's giant strides in smallgoods

Continual improvement, as judged by competition results, brings a well-deserved smile to Jimmy Chirgwin who, at age 27, has the smallgoods world at his feet.

He says he never stops learning, combining hard work and patience with an "instinct" for the art of making smallgoods.

In his latest triumph, Jimmy won the shortcut category of the 2015 SA Bacon Awards with his beechwood smoked bacon, ahead of Franz Knoll from Barossa Fine Foods and Aaron Reddy of Balhannah Junction Meat.

"I'm naturally very pleased, after finishing third last year," says Jimmy, pictured, who heads Newbury and Watson, a brand of Richard Gunner's Fine Meats, based at Mt Barker.

"We've been refining our processes to improve the product, culminating with this award."

Across a number of industry awards, Jimmy's continual improvement has captured plenty of attention.

He had moderate success at AMIC's 2013 Smallgoods Awards and made good his promise to improve, bagging 15 medals in the 2014 competition, including gold for his boneless ham.

In the 2014 SA Ham Awards, his boneless ham won him top honours and he was runner up in the bone-in section. He also won medals at the Sydney and Melbourne Fine Food Shows.

Richard Gunner says, "I take my hat off to Jimmy. He's only in his mid-20s and he is doing very well.

"Making smallgoods is an art.



The recipes can be basic but it's all about technique and touch. You need to do it over and over to get it the way you want. Jimmy does this.

"He did all right in his first year of the AMIC awards in 2013 but he wanted to do better and he worked hard to do it, winning 15 medals in 2014.

"We give him good meat to work with and Jimmy does the rest."

Jimmy says, "I've only been making smallgoods exclusively for five or six years and yes, it is an art.

"You must always think that there is more to learn, otherwise you let new things brush you by. If you are open minded, you're open to new ideas and you can progress."



Jimmy began his apprenticeship in Richard's boning room. He was transferred to the Feast! shop at Norwood for the final two years of his apprenticeship.

He then set his mind to learning about smallgoods and joined the accomplished Anthony Skara at Skara Artisan Smallgoods.

"I had to learn a whole new set

of skills – it was all part of the wider learning experience," says Jimmy, who won the SA WorldSkills title in 2011.

"Winning WorldSkills was an invaluable experience. I got the chance to talk with many people in Sydney and get a feel for the scope of the national industry."

After three good years with Anthony Skara, Jimmy returned to the Richard Gunner fold to head Newbury and Watson in 2013.

Richard says, "We've always been seen as a supplier of fresh meat but I wanted to make smallgoods for my shops and for others, including butchers who no longer make their own.

"We didn't want to brand it as Feast! ➤

'If you are open minded, you're open to new ideas and you can progress' – Jimmy Chirgwin

➤ because nobody wants to promote someone else's shop.

"We thought of Chirgwin and Gunner but it didn't sound right, so we chose our wives' maiden names..."

Jimmy's wife was Leigh Newbury and Richard's wife was Liz Watson, so Newbury and Watson it was.

Richard says, "We have two very good quality control officers – we're using their names, so we'd better get it right!"

In the early days of the new brand, MBL's now-retired smallgoods whiz Bernie Steinhoff visited the Mt Barker factory several times to advise Jimmy.

Bernie says, "Jimmy is a good young smallgoods maker who is improving all the time; he has a bright future."

Jimmy says, "Bernie had a lot of great advice, and working with Anthony Skara was a great starting point.

"The new facilities here were good, with purpose-built rooms to slice and pack."

Jimmy's had most competition success with ham and bacon but his other products include pancetta, prosciutto, frankfurts, kransky, chorizo and haggis

"I like to produce what I like to eat; I don't make anything I don't like," he says.

"We don't have accreditation for fermenting products but we're seeking it now and hopefully it won't be too far away."

Meanwhile, one of Jimmy's co-workers at Mt Barker continues to star with his pies, which are sold at Feast! stores.

Chef Al Bence, who was featured in MBL News last year after winning a series of pie awards, won gold with his chicken and leek pie at the 2015 Australia's Best Pie Competition.

At the same competition, he won two silver medals and a bronze for other pies.

JASON'S BACK!

Bacon hat-trick, now Sausage King beckons

Jason Mathie has won the crown for SA's best full rasher bacon for the third year in succession - and now he's back for Sausage King.

After a forced two-year ban because of his dominance, Jason is back in the full swing of Sausage King, reaching the upcoming SA final in six categories.

But first things first, and Jason remains elated at the bacon success achieved by his small team at Mathie's Meat Shoppe, Clare.

"Winning the SA Bacon Awards three times is very pleasing. Our score has been just about identical in each of the three years," he says.

"After our success with sausages, the boys here still had the competition 'bug' and we worked further on our bacon.

"We only make full rasher smoked bacon – we don't do any shortcut - and we wanted to produce a good, consistent product.

"We make about 150kg of the bacon each week – we make it every second day and supply a lot of restaurants and cafes around the Clare Valley."

Jason won the 2015 full rasher award ahead of Franz Knoll and the Barossa connection - Schulz Butchers at Angaston was second, with Barossa Fine Foods third.

After winning three consecutive national Sausage King titles in Traditional Australian, Jason was



Jason Mathie...bringing home the bacon.

inducted into AMIC's Sausage King Hall of Fame in 2013.

He became SA's second Hall of Famer, joining Sandom founder Stan Ciechanowicz. (*Stan died recently; his obituary is on page 11*).

Jason, because of his dominance, was barred from entering the Traditional Australian category at any level for two years, in 2013 and 2014.

His ban now expired and inspired by the enthusiasm of apprentice Josh Tilbrook, he entered seven categories of this year's Mid North and Yorke Peninsula competition, winning six.

Each regional winner progresses to the SA final, with the winners to be announced at The Big Night Out on August 22. State winners progress to the national final.

Jason won his three national awards in 2011-13 in the Traditional Australian section with Saltbush Hogget sausages but this year these sausages are in the Australian Lamb category.

He says sourcing local beef, lamb, pork and saltbush hogget is important to his business, keeping both locals and tourists to Clare coming through the door.

"When we took over the shop about seven years ago, we wanted to make sure we sourced as much local meat as we could," he says.

"About 90% of the meat stocked in the shop is sourced locally, but it's getting harder and harder to source local beef.

"Local beef is going overseas; there's no big supply of it. It's getting scarcer to source and when you can, you pay well for it.

"We were told today beef was going another \$1.20/kg to take it over \$6.

"You have to do things differently – make different things and hope people buy them. If they don't buy, you have to try something different again.

"Having success in sausage and bacon competitions helps create your reputation and has been of huge benefit to us."

Jason's many trophies are proudly displayed on a long shelf on the wall behind the counter, acting as advertisements for his products.

HANDY HAHNDORF PACK

1 KG BEEF MINCE
10 BBQ PATTIES
6 CHICKEN SATAYS
8 BBQ SNAGS
\$25-00

BLACKWOOD BBQ PACK

6 BBQ SNAGS
6 BBQ PATTIES
6 BBQ STEAKS
6 BBQ SATAYS
\$25-00

QUALITY MARKETING

From page 5

opening response. The momentum has continued.”

Rik now sources Adelaide Hills lamb as well as beef.

To add to the Hills theme, he has named assorted meat packs after Hills towns using alliteration, such as Oakbank Oven pack, Echunga Extra pack, Crafters Chicken pack, Handy Hahndorf pack and Mylor Marinated pack.

Rik, with help from butcher Michael Booby and a casual, makes about a dozen varieties of sausages on the premises, along with burgers and patties.

His partner Tanya prepares ready meals from stirfrys to beef, lamb and chicken roast packs with vegetables.

A chef, Jessica Roberts, comes in on Saturdays to cook samples which she distributes to customers. She answers questions and gives advice.

OAKBANK OVEN PACK

1 LEG LAMB
1 BOLAR ROAST BEEF
2 ROASTING CHICKENS
\$45-00

MYLOR MARINATED PACK

6 MARINATED STEAKS
6 MARINATED CHOPS
1 KG MARINATED WINGS
6 SATAYS
\$35-00

Meat's the real star of SA food

Increased meat production drove the overall SA food industry's extraordinary growth of 30% over three years, says Food SA.

SA's overall food manufacturing revenue soared by \$2 billion in the three years to 2013-14, Food SA revealed at a recent food summit in Adelaide.

The meat sector enjoyed the highest growth of \$441 million, representing a \$237 million rise in meat processing and a \$204 million rise in cured meat and smallgoods production

Seafood's revenue growth was \$51 million.

Overall, the SA food industry grew by 30% to \$8.325 billion over the three years to 2013-14, while employment surged by 2,345 to 26,300.

Food SA produced the statistics to support its latest call for a strategic food plan, under which the State Government and the industry would unite and work towards the same goals.

It says the government must act to realise the food industry's huge potential by measures including streamlining compliance systems, improving planning laws and delivering better training for workers.

TURKEYS! John defies the sceptics



From page 7

for cutting into various family meals, and we now slaughter and process turkeys five days a week, every week of the year.

“Our factory looks more like a gourmet poultry shop than a turkey plant, with things like breast rolls, schnitzels, maryland, mince, thigh meat and fillets.

“But while our turkeys can be presented in many forms, we don't detract from the tradition of roasting a whole bird – there is a real sense of satisfaction for any chef bringing out a perfectly browned turkey out of the oven or Weber.”

John's turkeys are purchased as day-old poults from Sydney and are kept shedded and under gas

heating for about six weeks.

They are then turned out into a free range environment for 10-14 weeks until slaughter.

They have an incredible growth rate, starting at 60g when they arrive and growing to a live weight of 12kg, dressing out at 8kg of lean, fat-free meat.

John says, “Turkey can be a regular part of the family diet, but we need to improve the public's perception.

“Some people think it's a dry meat and have bad memories of old farmed turkeys from the past.

“Others think it's like putting a hand grenade in the oven – they think it will explode and start a fire!”

The meat industry has lost one of its true characters with the death of smallgoods master and Standom founder Stan Ciechanowicz, aged 69.

Stan passed away peacefully on June 7. He died in Cairns, his home of four years after selling Standom.

A self-made man of Polish heritage, Stan started "with not even a half-penny" as a lad of 13 who hated butchery, but his persistence shone as he worked his way to the top.

He celebrated 50 years in the meat industry in 2009 and in the following year, he became the first South Australian to be inducted into AMIC's National Sausage King Hall of Fame.

This honour was due recognition for his winning an amazing eight national Sausage King crowns across different categories.

In accepting the award, Stan said: "This is one of my proudest moments.

"I would like to thank God for giving me a special gift and placing me in Australia, which is still the land of opportunity for all people who have the will to work."

One of Stan's admirers and competitors was Barossa Fine Foods' founder Franz Knoll, Australia's most awarded smallgoods maker.

In a tribute on its website, BFF - which now owns Standom - aptly described Stan as "a pioneer and master of his trade."

Stan founded Standom with Dominic Betschart in 1978. Stan later bought out Dominic, building Standom into an iconic SA food company.

At its height, Stan employed more than 100 people and produced 25 to 30 tonnes of smallgoods weekly at his Hendon factory, supplying eight Standom shops plus interstate wholesalers.

Vale Stan Ciechanowicz

'A pioneer and master of his trade'

He once said, "I never dreamed that this would be the most successful smallgoods factory in South Australia."

He used his continuous competition success to advertise and grow the business. He was always a loyal and valued supporter of MBL.

He always began work at 4am and said his success came from hard work, plain and simple: "Seventy hours, seven days a week".

Born in Germany, he migrated

were too young to go to work."

So aged 14, Stan would wake at 2am daily to walk 7km from his Croydon Park home to Smyk Smallgoods at Prospect, in time for the 4am clock-in.

"My boss took me home one day to tell my family I was too bright to be a butcher and that I should go back to school," he said.

"I hated it but I had to keep going. I couldn't buy long rubber boots, my feet were wet all day. I could hardly stand it...

In time, Stan began to develop his own recipes in eastern European style.

At age 21, he borrowed \$2,000 from his father-in-law and bought a smallgoods business at Croydon for \$5,000. He paid off his debt in six months.

"It was very primitive," he said of his first factory.

"It was all mixing by hand and carrying everything on my back.

"It was a tough market when I started, very difficult. But



Stan Ciechanowicz pictured in 2010 with some of his Sausage King trophies.

to Adelaide from Poland with his family when he was 13. He was forced at an early age to work as an apprentice to keep his family from starving.

He told MBL News in 2009, "I really wanted to be a pilot. I was forced to go to work by my grandparents - we lived in their house.

"My parents could not get a job because they could not speak English and they had no trade and my two younger brothers

"I'd bring home for us to eat pigs' tails, brains and trotters, and broken black pudding they used to throw out."

One day he marched into his boss's office and demanded to be trained in producing smallgoods.

"The old smallgoods makers didn't take recipes to the grave and gave me the ingredients but it was all very rudimentary - three handfuls of this and a handful of that," he said.

eating trends changed over the years and more people appreciated smallgoods."

In 2011, Stan retired to Cairns but, lamenting a lack of smallgoods, he came out of retirement and opened a factory.

He told MBL News, "I was bored. I couldn't stand it anymore. Work is my hobby, my life. I need to keep active."

He made a success of this last venture, naturally.

'I couldn't buy long rubber boots, so my feet were wet all day. I could hardly stand it...'

Every day in his roles at MBL, Shane Reynolds calls on invaluable experience from working in butcher's shops for 36 years.

From clean-up boy to shop owner, he has seen it all and now he's happily utilising his experience to assist MBL Members and customers.

Shane, 51, first began working in a butcher's shop at age 15. More recently, he ran The Valley Chopping Block at Happy Valley with his brother, Daryl, for a decade.

Wanting a change, he joined MBL in February to lend his experience in the machinery department alongside Manager Chris Mountford, and to also help with shop sales.

"I've bought various machines and merchandise from MBL over the years; now I can use my experience to help others," says Shane, pictured.

"I've made smallgoods and sausages from my apprenticeship all the way through.

"It's experience you can only get in small shops.

"We've been flat out at MBL for the last few months of the sausage season; it's amazing what people ask and my butchering background helps.

"On the machinery side, we've been particularly busy with sales of new machinery, while some of the requests for parts for old machinery can test you.

"Overall, it's the variety that strikes me here at MBL – you never know what to expect and no two days are the same."

Shane did his apprenticeship at Mitchell Park with Brian Hughes, who is now at Glenelg.

"I went on to work at shops here and there, but I'm probably better known to butchers in the southern suburbs," he says.

Shane and Daryl, his older brother, followed their cousins into the meat game.

After working in shops, Daryl spent 11 years as a sales rep with Durant followed by seven years as an MBL rep.

In 2004, the brothers realised an ambition to work together in their own shop The Chopping Block, a relatively small shop in a Happy Valley shopping centre.

Shane's wife Annette and Daryl's wife Ann also worked in the shop, building a reputation for quality meat at fair prices backed by personalised service.

Shane says he has learnt that the key to

"Meat the Team"

Profiles on MBL staff members



running a successful small shop is to offer different products complemented by expert advice.

"You can't compete with supermarkets on price. If you do, you won't last," he says.

"If people want cheap cuts, they'll go straight to a supermarket so you need to offer quality, variety and friendly advice.

"At Happy Valley, we had competition from a big supermarket just down the mall and we built a loyal base by looking after customers.

"We were creative - if we couldn't sell a product in one form, we'd sell it in another.

"Annette and Ann made a range of ready meals – things that were not available at the supermarket.

"The shop was good to us and it was enjoyable, but after 10 years you get a bit stale and a little burnt out, so we sold the business."

Early this year with time on his hands, Shane took up a standing offer from MBL's Dale Rowe to inspect the Co-op's facilities at Athol Park.

"As Dale showed me around, he happened to mention MBL was looking for someone to work in merchandise and machinery," he says.

"I had an interview with Bexley Carman (MBL's Operations, Business Development Manager) and here I am."

Meanwhile, Daryl and Ann bought a caravan to tour Queensland and the Top End. At last report, they were in Darwin.

Q & A

Do you have a special interest or hobby? I didn't have time for a hobby when I had the shop, but now that I have weekends free, I enjoy watching my son Jack play footy for Macclesfield.

What would you do with a spare \$50,000? I don't mind a flutter and I enjoyed going to Las Vegas years ago. I'd like to go back with my wife.

If you were a car, what would you be? I drive an old ute, so I guess I'd be a souped-up ute.

What food can't you live without? I love meat and seafood.

If you could meet anyone, living or dead, who would it be? Elvis - I'd love to see The King live on stage in Las Vegas and meet him afterwards.

What's the best thing about working at MBL? There's plenty of variety in the work, and the people here are good to work with.