

Big success with specialty smallgoods

As large companies concentrate on producing smallgoods in great quantity, smaller companies thrive by supplying quality specialty products. **Celia Johnson** writes.

As the meat and smallgoods industry becomes dominated by mass production and big, multinational manufacturing companies, it might seem that there is little room for independent smallgoods producers.

Given a decline in herd size due to the drought, an increase in the consumption of meat-substitute products as consumers become more health conscious, and increasingly complex demands from the industry's retail food client base, the consistent decline in production over the past three years has put added pressure on large suppliers (IBISWorld).

Yet smaller businesses remain virtually unaffected.

Supply and demand

Starting off in the industry 30 years ago as a small butcher shop in Melbourne, Dino Fabbris is now a small manufacturing



The prosciutto that established Dino Fabbris as a smallgoods producer

company that specialises in prosciutto.

The owner, Dino Fabbris, thinks of his business as a hands on company; a selection of smallgoods are prepared and processed by hand rather than by machinery.

“Our ham and prosciutto – the top-end products – are more hand made than machine made.”

It is a case of the machine helping the man rather than replacing the man, Fabbris believes.

While supply and demand within the industry has made the move to mass production inevitable for many, and competition fierce

among Australian and overseas companies, Fabbris believes that longevity and reputation as a producer has enabled the company to hand make goods for a loyal following of customers, and remain out of market politics.

“The business is not easy and it is labour intensive, but we’ve been in the business a long time now and people have confidence in us.

“We have a reputation and respect among our customers.

“And I know there’s a great demand because we get rid of things so quickly that I can’t keep up with it!”



Exploiting a niche

Dino Fabbris achieved its success by specialising in a product that is not easily mass produced.

The processing of prosciutto can take as long as five months because of the many stages in the production process, including salting, curing, encasing in netting, placing in a resting room to ferment, and drying for months.

This lengthy and labour-intensive production left a gap in the market that allowed his company to thrive.

“That’s why not every company makes prosciutto and why we chose to specialise in that product,” Fabbris said.

Companies that supply specialty-goods makers with the tools they need for hand producing products are also profiting, while enabling smaller outfits such as Dino Fabbris to deliver a superior product.

Ennio supply custom-made casings and nettings for smallgoods, as well as a range of other solutions geared towards this industry.

“They have been fantastic for our

Hands-on production (above) yields a quality end product (below).



company because they can cater to the fact that all our products are different sizes and shapes,” Fabbris said.

Dino Fabbris, a company with a staff of 25, is faring well in a marketplace dominated by large manufacturers that can employ up to 5000 people.

With a loyal following of independent grocers, delis, hotels and restaurants across Australia and New Zealand buying its prosciutto, there seem to be plenty of advantages to being a smaller outfit.