Red beans (or adzuki beans) have been grown in Wandan Township in southern Taiwan since the 1960s. Initially, they were exported to Japan, but by the 1980s, it seemed that cheaper red beans from mainland China and Vietnam would replace Wandan red beans, and that red beans would just another boom and bust crop like bananas and watermelons had been. This paper discusses how a combination of state policies, local initiatives, and apparent coincidences have made Wandan red beans and red bean cakes famous in Taiwan, and what this case tells us about rural development more generally.