

Farm Gate Trail Round Up – 20 August 2005

**David Mason - Hawkesbury Harvest Board member - 0411 128 456;
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What's happening on the Farm Gate Trail today David?

There are no special events on this weekend Simon however the Farm Gate is very much in operation with a range of outlets for vegetable, fruit, plants, cut flowers, wine, gardens, galleries, accommodation and café's and restaurants open. The best day to do the trail is today, Saturday and people get a copy of the map by downloading it from www.hawkesburyharvest.com.au or getting a map from the visitors' information centres at Dural and Clarendon.

The FGT is a real success story David. What is its origins?

The FGT is one of a number of products that has been developed by Hawkesbury Harvest. HH resulted when three significant socio-economic developments intersected

1. At a global level was the Agenda 21 Healthy Cities Program that was an outcome of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development held in Rio de Janeiro in Brazil in 1992. Hawkesbury City Council and the Hawkesbury District Health Service adopted the WHO Healthy Cities Project based on the Agenda 21 principles and objectives
2. At a regional level was the Strategic Plan for Sustainable Agriculture – Sydney Region which was developed through an extensive community industry and government consultation process facilitated by the then NSW Agriculture and released in 1998
3. At a local level was the social research reports such as Our City Our Future that found that the major reason people wanted to live in the Hawkesbury was because of the rural amenity.

Well I guess you cannot have rural amenity without agriculture.

That's right Simon and for agriculture to remain as a land use it has to be viable. Old ways of doing agriculture were not providing viability. New ways have to be found and HH is the beginning of that process.

And the FGT is one of those new ways

That's correct - combining agriculture with tourism – agritourism

The Hawkesbury Harvest Farmers and Gourmet Food Market at Castle Hill is no doubt another

Yes and the successful Open Farm Day program which we have also developed is another

What we are aiming to do is offer growers and those who value add a range of options for the marketing of their produce and products. Those farms that are on the FGT have definitely increased their viability. HH has also acted as a business incubator. It has enabled people like Lee Etherington of Kurrajong Native Foods to begin on the trail, move into the Farmer's Market system and now he is exporting – all in a matter of a few years.

This whole issue of agriculture in an urban and urbanising situation is quite complex I imagine

It is Simon and yet not unsolvable. Agriculture west of the Great Dividing Range is largely broad acres of cropping and grazing animals. However in an urban situation like Sydney it consists of a whole range of forms of agriculture each with its own predominant benefit such as:

- back yard growing, community gardens, rooftop, school agricultural plots, historical, lifestyle/hobby, boutique/cottage, farm gate, agritourism, equine, flood plain and hi-tech controlled environment. Each as its own planning requirements so that the potential social, economic and environmental benefits that each is capable of providing to the quality of life of Sydney residents can be realised.

It appears that the Hawkesbury Harvest model of urban agriculture development provides a starting point for agriculture and associated agribusiness development in the Sydney Region.

Yes and if people would like a copy of the HH model they can request one by sending an email to info@hawkesburyharvest.com.au

Simon if time permits

Any major events that you would like to foreshadow before we go?

Hawkesbury Community Expo – Friday 16 September (schools) and Saturday 17 September (general public). UWS Richmond – Education and Awareness Activities

Forensic Sciences
Food for life- New smart foods
Horticulture - New plants from science
Agriculture - Small animal behaviour and training
Medical Science - DNA profiling

Education and awareness stalls and displays

Winery tours and taste testing
Guided Campus tours of Historic Buildings
Hawkesbury Earthcare Centre - Sustainability Fair
Live broadcast of ABC Simon Marnie Breakfast Show from Entertainment Program
Hawkesbury Harvest Food and Produce Stalls – open all day