

## **FARM GATE ROUNDUP Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> April 2008**

**David Mason: 4588 2144 (W); 4572 1337 (H); 0411 128 456**

**Interviewer: Simon Marnie**

### **What's happening on the FGT this weekend?**

Pick your own is going well Simon. I was speaking with Bev Caruthers of Nutwood Farm at Mt Irvine the other day and she said that over Easter they were inundated with visitors from all over Sydney who had come to pick their own chestnuts. Bev said that there were four of them working flat out weighing what people had picked and every time she looked up there were cars pouring through the front gate. The walnuts at Nutwood Farm are almost ready to pick at the moment however just around the corner the walnuts on Bill and Ruth Scrivener's farm Kookatoonga are ready to pick.

### **Is the maturity difference due to different varieties?**

It can be Simon but in this case it is due mainly due to a difference in the climatic conditions between the two farms.

### **I thought the farms were close to one another.**

They are quite close but they both have their individual microclimates. Nutwood Farm is slightly higher on flat ground whereas Kootatoonga is lower down flanked by hills – two beautiful but different settings.

### **This is one of the beauties of Sydney's agriculture isn't it – the range of climates, soils and landscapes**

Indeed and I will give you another example. At the first HH Farmers and Fine Food Market at Rouse Hill two weeks ago Adrian Maguire was selling gala and fuji apples that are grown in suitable microclimates on his farm and he was also selling mangoes grown in a microclimate at Kurmond a few kilometres way by a farmer with whom he directly networks.

### **Mangoes!! What were they like?**

They were a larger variety and their skin was quite dark. However the flesh was sweet with a full strong flavour. Adrian was saying that the feedback is that people really liked them. He said they are not something you would find in the supermarket mainly because of the dark skin which does not meet visual standards.

### **Comment on looking beyond appearances, followed by – How was the Rouse Hill Market?**

It was great Simon. The weather was appalling yet despite that the majority of the stallholders said that it was good for a first market. It takes time to build a local market culture and it augers well for this one.

## **When is the Rouse Hill Market?**

The fourth Saturday of the month which for this month is the 26<sup>th</sup>. Also just a reminder that the Castle Hill HH Farmers and Fine Food Market is on next Saturday which is the second Saturday of the month.

## **What else is happening?**

I am delighted to tell you that due to demand from the local community HH is extending the FGT into the Wollondilly Shire. This means that the FGT will extend from the mouth of the Hawkesbury near Brooklyn down to south of Picton, which is part of the Hawkesbury Nepean Catchment.

**So the Farm Gate Trail will extend right around Sydney – that means it is in the Hornsby, Baulkham Hills, Hawkesbury, Penrith and Wollondilly LGAs - not bad for an organisation that started out 8 years ago with 13 destinations in the Hawkesbury Valley. Tell me more about Wollondilly.**

Alan Eagle and I spent a day there last week talking to prospective farmgaters in the area. Alan now has seven people signed up including an olive farm, a barramundi fish farm, a vege farm, a farm stay, an orchard and an organic farm. They and anyone else who meets the requirements will be on the next map which is being compiled at the moment. Alan can tell you more about the map when he next talks to you. It will very different to the one we are using now and is based on one that is used in the Loire Valley in France.

Alan and I were visiting an apiarist in Wollondilly and while we were there a fellow by the name of Ray Tyson called in. Now I am going to cause you to reminisce Simon when I tell you that Ray used to own Tennessee Orchard.

## **Reminisce!!**

Ray retired and left the orchard in 2005 but what he told Alan and I was that he used to have a program on his farm where people could rent a tree.

## **Rent a tree - how did that work?**

One or two people would rent a tree for the year. Ray would look after it on their behalf and when the fruit was ready to pick the renters and their families would go to the orchard and pick their fruit. The people could also be involved in looking after the tree under supervision if they were inexperienced. Ray said he had about 80 trees rented out. This could be the Australian version of community supported agriculture (CSA) which is strong in countries like Japan, Holland, USA and Canada.

**All very interesting David – where can people find out what we have talked about today and other things happening on the FGT?**

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