

# Produce direct to public at Rouse Hill

WESTERN Sydney consumers are getting direct access to farm produce at the new Rouse Hill Town Centre farmers' markets, operating the fourth Saturday of every month.

Their expectations that the food comes fresh and direct from farmers are being met.

No stallholder is allowed to sell produce or product that has been purchased from the central markets at Flemington or from any other wholesale market outlet.

The farmers' and fine food market has been integrated on its own site fronting Windsor Road, into the town centre which forms part of the 120 hectare former agricultural land use site developed as The New Rouse Hill.

Hawkesbury Harvest, the original driving force behind the establishment of the farmers' market, is promoting a food chain culture that will enable small local and regional farmers to maximise their viability by direct marketing.

"As part of a self-regulating standard, Hawkesbury Harvest growers can sell their own produce and value added product," NSW Department of Primary Industries' urban agriculture leader, David Mason, said.

Mr Mason is a long-time champion of urban agriculture and the Hawkesbury Harvest model, now extending its reach as far as Wollondilly Shire, south of Camden, and into central Sydney.

Additional farmers and fine food markets are planned for Sydney in late August 2008 and Penrith early next year.

The Sydney market will be located in Cook Park behind St Mary's Cathedral.



Photo: Ron Aggs

## Worth the trip for buyers, sellers

**G**RANT Musker and Sharlet Swainson (right) drive every month to the new Rouse Hill Town Centre farmers' markets from Freemans Reach, about half an hour away.

"We couldn't be more pleased with the quality of what we buy," Mr Musker said.

While the notion of the farmers' market is to engage local producers and consumers, stallholder Katie Mitchell (left), deputising last month for her sister, owner of Trunkey Creek Bacon and Pork, says it's worth a three hour drive for them to promote the concept.

"As well as their own, growers at the markets are also entitled to sell produce grown and value-added by other farmers with whom they have a direct relationship," Mr Mason said.

"Relationships are the basis of farmers' markets - it's all

about trust and understanding."

Hawkesbury Harvest has established a strong relationship with The GPT Group that goes back to the early planning stages of Rouse Hill town centre.

"We don't regard Hawkesbury Harvest as a tenant - they are a

partner," the GPT Group's head of corporate social responsibility, Dr Caroline Noller, said.

The design of the town centre goes further than a commitment from GPT to reduce its impact on the environment.

Dr Noller says it also reflects a

strong social investment.

"Our partnership with the Hawkesbury Harvest Farmers and Fine Food Market addresses both requirements."

■ **Contact David Mason, Richmond, (02) 4588 2144, david.mason@dpi.nsw.gov.au**

# Local balance promotes food security

**U**RBAN agriculture needs to be considered as a strategic contributor to dealing with peak oil, global warming, the increasing occurrence of natural disasters, urban and city ecosystems, landscapes and designs, along with bio-security, pandemics, food terrorism, and water and waste cycles.

It has taken nearly 190 years for food security to again emerge as a political issue after Governor Macquarie established the five Macquarie Towns of Windsor, Richmond, Pitt Town, Castlereagh and Wilberforce.

Settled between 1810 and 1820, those NSW towns then functioned to service the districts that became the food bowl of Sydney.

Food security was then the major issue for the growing new settlement on the harbour at Farm Cove.

**DAVID MASON**  
Richmond

Soon extensive farming fed and clothed the colony, thanks to the wide range of fertile soils and microclimates of the Hawkesbury Nepean catchment.

Almost two centuries later, one of the major recommendations to come out of the Rudd Government's 2020 Summit was for a new government body to consider national and global food security.

Another was that the Government should survey the Northern Territory to determine its suitability as Australia's new food bowl, which, if established, would be (chronologically) Australia's third major food bowl, after the Sydney

Basin and the Murray-Darling Basin. However, food bowls, both in Australia and internationally, have not historically provided sustainable food security.

Today, establishing food bowls is essentially about bottom line commodity development.

Such development does not guarantee sustainable food security.

Indiscriminate subdivision and urban sprawl, particularly since the 1940s, has severely affected the Sydney food bowl.

The effect of poor water management and droughts on the Murray-Darling Basin food bowl is well documented.

Projected global warming impacts, including escalating cyclones and extreme weather in northern Australia, could compromise the food security capacity of any

proposed Northern Territory food bowl - witness the banana shortage and resultant high prices last year after a cyclone in northern Queensland.

Embedding local food production, processing, distribution and consumption into urban communities can play a significant part in achieving sustainable food security.

This approach is a consumer and community driven - not producer or supermarket driven - food culture.

Localised and regional food systems counter balance globalisation and play a strategic role in community health and security.

Food security has never been so critical to the future of civilisation.

● David Mason, NSW Department of Primary Industries' urban agriculture leader, has travelled South East Asia, Canada, the US and Europe, researching urban agriculture as part of a Churchill Fellowship.



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## Take Cuba, For Example

IN 1990, the Soviet Union was Cuba's chief source of food, farm machinery and chemical fertilisers.

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (UNFAO) estimated the average daily calorific intake of a Cuban citizen had fallen from 2600 calories to between 1100 and 1500 by 1993.

Cuba's nearly 10 million people were hungry and food security was a major political issue.

By 2002, nearly half of Cuba's 33,000 hectares of fruit and vegetable allotments were urban gardens producing 3.4 million tons of food.

Cubans once again had a daily intake of 2600 calories.

More than 200,000 Cubans worked in this expanding urban agriculture sector by 2003.

In dealing with food security, Cubans unwittingly insured themselves to reduce the effects of today's oil scares and associated rising food prices - something Australians now have to deal with.

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