

## **FARM GATE ROUNDUP Saturday 14 July 2007**

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**Interviewer: Simon Marnie**

### **To Market to Market**

Simon it is a very brisk morning this morning at the Hawkesbury Harvest Farmers and Gourmet Food Market here at the Castle Hill Showground.

### **A bit different to the conditions at the last month's market**

Yes indeed. We have been lucky as that was the only market in five years where we have had to cancel the outside stalls – it was just too wet. We still had stalls inside the Harvey Lowe Hall. The last time I saw weather like that was about 8 or 9 years ago when the Glebe Chamber of Commerce had to cancel their trial Farmers Market due to an absolute downpour. I think it broke the organisers hearts as they had put so much into it.

### **Well let's hope that we have beautiful weather next month for the 5<sup>th</sup> birthday Market**

It's hard to believe that it was 5 years ago that we kicked off. At that time the HH Board thought we would give it a go and it has just got bigger and better.

### **Comment about the ABC broadcast on the day**

### **And there are more Hawkesbury Harvest Markets in the pipeline**

Our next one will be as a partner with Lend lease and GPT at Rouse Hill and that Market will start in March of next year. We also have another one and possibly as many as three in the pipeline as well.

### **The Farmers Markets concept is a fast growing form of direct marketing**

It is and it has many advantages Simon including:

- The food is local from the Sydney region and if not local then from neighbouring regions such as the Central West and the Hunter
- The food is fresh – we are talking yesterday or at the most 48 hour fresh not 4-5 day fresh
- It enables the grower or the person who value-adds to set a reasonable price for their product - **the grower becomes a price maker and not a price taker**
- It enables the customer to meet the person who grows the food or value adds the food and they can share ideas one on one. This has a spin off effect of increasing the health status of people who start to take

more of an interest in the food they eat, where it comes from, how it is grown, who grows it and what is the best way to eat it.

- It contributes to the viability of small areas of land such as found around cities and towns that can be used for agriculture
- And the Farmers Market sales volume is growing

### **You mentioned health - the public health/local agriculture relationship is one of the international trends you highlighted in your Churchill study tour report**

It is Simon and next Wednesday at the Faculty of Architecture, Design and Planning, Lecture Theatre 1, Wilkenson Building, University of Sydney (opposite Victoria Park) between 6pm and 7pm people can attend a free seminar to hear Dr Kami Pothukuchi associate professor of urban planning at Wayne State University in Detroit talk about it.

Dr. Pothukuchi's research examines the links between local food and the health of communities and regions, and local food policy's contributions to community development, and roles of urban planning agencies in building more sustainable food systems.

Recently, she co-authored a policy guide on community and regional food planning that was formally adopted by the American Planning Association.

### **How's the citrus season going?**

It's going well. Demand is high but this weekend we are seeing one of the results of the extreme weather conditions we have experienced over the past year. It will be the last weekend for picking mandarins at Fords Farm.

### **That's an early end to the season**

From Sunday night they will close for the season. And it is due to extreme drought conditions of the last 12 months and the recent flood at Wisemans Ferry. A lot of people don't know but the Macdonald Valley through which the Macdonald River flows and joins the Hawkesbury River at Wisemans Ferry was declared a major flood disaster area at the same time as the floods in the Hunter. The water from the Macdonald river came up to the front door of the Settlers Arms at St Albans after it rose 9 meters, half a meter less than the 1949 flood.

However our other suppliers of local oranges still have plenty of fruit. That is as a result of having access to water for irrigation – security of water – an absolute resource necessity for sustainable agriculture.

### **What else is on the agenda at the moment?**

One of our long time members Andrew Phillips of the Coffee Warehouse and Edible Gardens at Kurmond has taken an interest in green tea. He is looking for people in the area between Kurmond and Lapstone who would be

interested in assisting with an experiment in growing green tea. Andrew has approximately 450 green tea plants which he obtained from the NSW DPI's Horticultural Institute at Gosford to be used in the trial. Green tea was one of a number of crops identified as having potential for industry development in a project for which the Hawkesbury City Council was the proponent. The objective of the project was to retain the agriculture in the Hawkesbury region through the development of a diverse range of cluster industries. If any of your listeners has space to plant 20–30 plants and has the time to manage a small experiment Andrew would like to talk to them. The trial will go from about two years at the end of which it will be determined if it is worth moving into larger scale plantings. Andrew's vision includes a cooperative arrangement for the growing processing, packaging and marketing of the tea. For details go to the HH website and click on 'Latest News'

### **Comment**

One final thing close to your heart Simon

### **What's that?**

You will be delighted to know that the Hawkesbury Knitters who meet every Friday between 10am and 12noon have knitted over 500 squares so far for the 'Wrap in Love' 702 Sydney Knit In on 27 July. Great excitement in the Hawkesbury – lots of clicky click noises as the knitting needles crash against each other with gusto!!

**For all the information on what is happening - go to**

[www.hawkesburyharvest.com.au](http://www.hawkesburyharvest.com.au)