



Re: The Senate Inquiry Food Production in Australia

Food production in Australia and the question of how to produce food that is:

- a. affordable to consumers;
- b. viable for production by farmers; and
- c. of sustainable impact on the environment.

The government is to be commended for undertaking the Senate Inquiry into food production in Australia. There are serious concerns regarding the impacts from the increasing urbanisation of peri urban agricultural land at the fringe of our cities, the on-going drought, and predicted climate change which will influence food production.

Food security is fundamental for human health & should be incorporated in comprehensive long term planning to ensure that Australia is sustainable, and that it caters for diversity of cultures.

The Sydney Food Fairness Alliance (SFFA) is an organisation working towards food security for all, and sustainable food systems. We are a network of over 200 people linking health, welfare, charitable and community organisations with community gardeners, organic suppliers, permaculturists, primary producers, academics and farmers networks.

SFFA believes that the key concepts of *food security* and *food supply* should be incorporated into all government planning, at the local, state and national levels of government. The health of any rural community and /or urban environment relies on its ability to produce locally grown and nutritious food.

In general terms, to ensure food security, there needs to be:

- Clear definition of the roles and responsibilities of each sphere of government regarding sustainable food production and environmental management in Australia.
- Legislative, policy and regulatory guidance
- Information and data provisions
- Trial initiatives and demonstration projects
- New funding and investment strategies and
- Monitoring and evaluation projects

With regards to Sydney, it is important that biodiversity & sustainable agriculture is protected in the Sydney Basin, with its fertile soil, access to water, transport, & in close proximity to Sydney, to ensure that Sydney can become a sustainable city nourished by a healthy fresh local food supply. We believe that Sydney can make a leading contribution to the wider Sydney region by promoting sustainability within its own boundaries.

Prices of food staples have skyrocketed globally: there is panic buying in many countries and food riots in others. Australians have been insulated from the worst impacts, but Sydney is experiencing increasing food prices, which are not just the result of drought. This is a serious concern in Australia, where only 10 per cent of the world's driest continent is suitable for growing food.

We would like to offer the following submission to the Senate Inquiry.

1 Promotion of Food security in Sydney

2 Promotion of food production within the Sydney region

3 Contribution to planning in the wider Sydney Region to promote a Sustainable Sydney

1 Promotion of Food Security in the Sydney

Food security is defined as access at all times to sufficient food for an active and healthy life. (Kendall A, Kennedy E. Position of the American Dietetic Association, 1998, 98:337-342).

Food Security is essential to provide the fresh food supply for a Sustainable Sydney.

While cities are the centres of power in our society, it must be recognised that the city is dependent on, and a collaborator with rural communities. Cities are dependent on food supplies from external sources. We need to re-establish our social and cultural connections with the food supply on which we depend, and we need to consider how we can better support our local food suppliers.

These issues are increasingly important with rising fuel and food prices. The time for complacency has gone, and there is, we believe an increasing uncertainty in the wider "community"

In addition, lack of access to affordable and nutritious food is a real issue for many low-income people in Sydney, with severe long-term health implications. Research in 2004 in three low-income areas of Sydney found a prevalence of food insecurity of over 20%; this rose to 50% for particular groups such as single parents. (Nolan et al. HPJA.2006)

Since that time, food prices have risen sharply, along with petrol prices, rental costs and interest rates. Many working in social services are aware of an increasing demand for food assistance. Those who have most to gain from healthy food can least afford it.

These pressures mean that strategies to improve access by all to healthy foods must be supported. Examples include community and school food gardens, farmers markets, local co-ops, provision of emergency relief & social enterprise.

FARMERS MARKETS facilitate producer-consumer alliances, raise awareness of the ways in which food is grown, and of the importance of agriculture in cities where people have become less engaged with the importance of a clean local food supply. They provide opportunities for the sale of heirloom & organic produce, and markets such as the Farmers Market at Warwick Farm & Flemington Markets provide access to cheap fresh nutritious produce, of particular importance for those on lower income.

Recommendations:

- **Sydney takes a lead role in supporting 'food security' with other local government areas in the Sydney region**
- **Ensure that food security remains a basic objective, along with water, energy, housing and transport, for a Sustainable Sydney.**
- **Contribute to development of a Food Policy for Sydney (as in Toronto, Knoxville) and other cities & regions in Australia**
- **That Government Tender Policies include commitment to purchase foods for all services**

and use that are:

- fresh locally produced foods from the Sydney Basin
- ethically produced foods
- non GMO foods and/or
- Fair Trade foods from developing countries
- Identification of suitable buildings, such as warehouses, to accommodate food distribution centres for emergency food aid, at nominal rent
- That local & state governments develop planning instruments such as SEPPS & LEPs to make provision that food outlets selling essential food items, fresh fruit and vegetables, and/or food co-ops targeting those on low income, have priority in shopping centres and precincts.
- Planning instruments and policies be used to encourage Farmers Markets in town & city centres.
- That new developments and revitalisation of existing villages makes provision for the supply of accessible (i.e. walkable distance), affordable and nutritious foods for all residents, to prevent the creation of new 'food deserts' and pockets of disadvantage (SWAHS, 2005).

2 Promotion of food production within Sydney

Community Food gardens and urban farming

Although Sydney might not appear to have a role in food production, there are many opportunities for urban farming and growing food in cities & towns, and many examples of this both locally and internationally, with the opportunity to contribute significantly to local fresh food supply.

The provision of 'urban agriculture' as a permissible use under the LEP would allow the establishment of community gardens and city farms on land that is vacant and unproductive. This could include schools, hospitals, parkland, gaols, church grounds etc. This would provide urban agriculture with legislative recognition. It would also facilitate the establishment of community gardens and city farms which may be currently hindered by local planning laws.

- ❑ Within Australia there are many examples of urban agriculture (as community gardens and city farms) that are well established and already providing the many social, economic and environmental benefits that such land uses permit
- ❑ *NSW examples*
 1. Fairfield City Farm, Abbotsbury
 2. Glovers Community Garden, Rozelle
 3. Kooragang City Farm, Wallsend/Newcastle
 4. Woolloomooloo Community Garden, Woolloomooloo
- ❑ *Australian Examples*
 1. Northey Street City Farm Brisbane
 2. CERES, East Brunswick
 3. Collingwood Children's Farm, Collingwood
 4. Collingwood Community Garden, Collingwood
 5. West Brunswick Community Gardens, West Brunswick
 6. East Perth City Farm, East Perth

There are many examples from around the world where such zonings exist in high density urban areas and operate successfully within the urban context

□ *International Examples*

1. Greater Vancouver and Victoria, Canada – numerous community gardens established in these regions. Includes the provision for the establishment of gardens on ‘Parkland’ guided by a Park Board Community Gardens Policy. (ref: <http://city.vancouver.bc.ca/parks/info/policy/comgardn.htm>)
2. Copenhagen, Denmark - A debate in the Danish Parliament at the end of the 70's and a principle decision about protecting and extending the allotment garden areas have since meant that local authorities have an obligation to ensure the existence of allotment gardens. The attempted solution is to place the allocation of allotment garden areas into the jurisdiction of regional planning so that the Ministry of Agriculture buys up land, which is later let out to the allotment garden people on a long term basis. (ref: <http://cityfarmer.org/DenmarkHistory.html#historyCopen>)
3. Agricultural Zoning in Havana, Cuba.
State-run urban vegetable gardens developed in vacant lots here in the capital and in other cities and towns across Cuba. Recent planning laws have made the use of land for food production a priority.

Overall, the government estimates that 117,000 people work in urban agriculture and that the *gardens account for about half the vegetables grown in Cuba*. Officials said urban gardens are expected to increase production by more than a third next year, reflecting a policy of linking wages to productivity.

Many state enterprises, schools and hospitals grow some of their own food and raise livestock, while the government has helped thousands of families and individuals to set up home gardens, plant fruit trees and raise chickens and rabbits.

(ref: <http://www.cityfarmer.org/CubaGreen.html>)

For the first time, in the "General urban and land-use plan for the city of Havana" (December 2000), urban agriculture is explicitly mentioned and zoned as an "agricultural corridor" around the urbanised area of Havana. The goal is to “Create the urban and land-use conditions that contribute to reach the goals set for agricultural production and commercialisation.” (Reference : http://www.ruaf.org/no4/30_31.html)

Recommendations:

- **Identification and mapping of potential food-growing areas within Sydney**
- **Listing 'urban agriculture' as a permissible use under LEPs to allow establishment of community gardens and city farms on vacant and unproductive land. This could include schools, hospitals, parklands, gaols, church grounds etc.**
- **Promote opportunities for community food gardens, urban agriculture, food distribution centre, food co-operatives , farmers markets and social enterprise**
- **Planning instruments such as SEPPS, SEPP 5s, LEPs, DCPs and protection zones could be used to protect areas designated as ‘common land’ for community food gardens & urban agriculture.**
- **Develop guidelines for Green roofs for food growing**
- **Identification and mapping of food producing trees in cities,**
- **New street tree and parkland planting to incorporate fruit growing trees as occurs in Athens. Council could maintain the trees through Parks & Gardens program**
- **SEPP5s and multi unit dwellings to incorporate food growing areas**
- **Consider rate rebates for food producers within the urban area**

3 Contribute to planning in wider Sydney Region to promote a Sustainable Sydney

Current situation and food supply

The SFFA believes it is useful to raise the concept of "Greater Sydney" and to highlight the interaction between the centre of Sydney and its hinterland; indeed this is increasingly being recognised by the Western Sydney and Macarthur Regional Organisation of Councils (WSROC and MACROC) and other Sydney based organisations.

Since European settlement the Hawkesbury-Nepean catchment has contributed as one of the most productive agricultural areas of Australia.. Covering an area 2.5% of NSW, it currently supplies up to 25% of the state's agricultural produce including fruits, vegetables, mushrooms, over 80% of Sydney's leafy green & perishable vegetables, 100% of Asian vegetables, poultry, eggs, nearly a third of the state's oysters and some dairy produce.

Sydney Basin contributes to the security of Sydney and NSW food supply, a sustainable Sydney, a viable local economy and the the economic and social livelihoods of farming communities & workers in related industries.

It is estimated that agriculture in the Sydney Basin is worth \$1B per annum at the farmgate with a multiplier effect on related industries to over \$4.5B annually (Gillespie, Mason 2003). Sydney Basin agriculture is the largest industry in Western Sydney employing around 12,000 people. At least 30% of the workforce come from culturally and linguistically divers backgrounds, with about 90% of those in the vegetable industry.

Increasing pressure for housing development and urban sprawl threaten the sustainability of agriculture and food security for the Sydney region. There is increasing recognition of the value of agriculture, the tenuous nature of its sustainability and the need to retain diverse agricultural activity within the Sydney basin to ensure the city's local food supply. (The Sydney Metropolitan Strategy advises that 640,000 residential building sites will be required in the next 30 years, 30% of these in greenfield developments in the Hawkesbury Nepean catchment).

Proposals to develop a land area the size of Canberra, will result in loss of biodiversity & some of the most productive agricultural land in Australia.

Food security includes social, health, economic, environmental, equity and cultural issues; the need to encourage and facilitate diversity, and to re-establish peoples' connection with their food source. Food is integral to our lives at every level, including nutritional, health, with increasing recognition of its social and cultural importance; the importance of the contributions, skills, knowledge, culture and livelihoods of food producers, the people who grow our food.

Food Security and Climate Change

There is increasing evidence of climate change and recognition of the need to reduce food miles. Sydney Basin has one of the highest rainfalls in NSW, and as climate change progresses, it is predicted that the drought will continue west of Sydney.

In terms of food production our ecological footprint is huge, with external costs resulting from cleared land, transportation, water supply & soil health.

Climate change, if left unchecked, stands to reduce Australia's agricultural productivity by up to 27pc over the next 75 years. US economist William Cline of the Peterson Institute of Institutional Economics in Washington, estimates that global warming will cut agricultural productivity worldwide by between

3pc and 19pc by 2080 (The Age, Sept 2007).

Stabilising the atmosphere would require cuts in greenhouse gas emissions of about 80% on current levels, to avoid dangerous climate change, as supported by Professor Garnaut in the Interim Climate Change Review.

Presentations at a recent Planning Institute of Australia Congress indicated that 18 per cent of New South Wales food production comes from the Sydney fringe where development is encroaching through growth corridors.

Peri and Urban Agriculture

Securing a clean fresh food supply within close proximity to the city of Sydney is essential to reduce fuel consumption, transportation costs & to reduce food miles travelled.

The importance of **peri urban agriculture**, defined as agriculture on the fringes of cities (WHO), is being increasingly recognised worldwide. It is important in the maintenance of food security and the supply of fresh, perishable food, but also in terms of its social and cultural value, its aesthetic value, promoting open space, and for the urban population, providing a closer 'connection' with the food supply, and knowledge and understanding of a different lifestyle and diverse landscape, and agritourism (Parker 2004).

Peri urban agriculture influences public health from many perspectives:

1. The positive benefits to the general community through the maintenance of a sustainable healthy city from the landscape, food production, and the potential to use rural lands for waste disposal
2. Through the livelihoods of farmers (Parker 2004) and the local community.

Extracts from "Farm the City" by Jac Smit (1996)

Urban agriculture produces three to 15 times as much per hectare as common rural methods. It is more organic and sustainable because urban waste - which is 70 per cent organic - is more abundant than rural waste, while the urban farmer's labour-intensive methods use less land and water per unit of production than industrial agriculture. Using waste reduces pollution and enriches the soil while regenerating its biodiversity, while urban agriculture reduces the city's 'ecological footprint' and so conserves the rural environment. Its intensity and proximity to habitation, however, will require new methods of regulation and monitoring. (ref: <http://www.ourplanet.com/txtversn/84/smit.html>)

Extracts from 'Urban and Peri-urban Agriculture and Urban Planning'

Discussion paper for FAO-ETC/RUAF electronic conference "Urban and Peri-urban Agriculture on the Policy Agenda" August 21 - September 30, 2000

Prepared by Axel W. Drescher, University of Freiburg, Germany

Urban planning should incorporate urban and peri-urban agriculture in order to:

- improve urban sustainability;
- enhance the urban food system, especially food security; and
- avoid or minimise conflicts between agriculture and other resource-use activities.

Transport and food supply

A safe efficient, integrated mass public transport system across Sydney is urgently required for social, economic and environmental reasons. Planning policies towards land use and transport, and in particular policies directed at equitable access to a secure local food supply are integral to these aims.

The 'food miles' travelled by the food consumed in Sydney, along with green house gas emissions, fuel

consumption and transportation costs need to be decreased not increased if Sydney is to become a more sustainable city. If Sydney's food supply has to travel a greater distance then not only will it lose freshness but also it will increase Sydney's 'food miles', external costs and contribution to green house gas emissions.

Recommendations:

- **Support planning and legislation to protect biodiversity & sustainable agriculture in the Sydney Basin, to ensure that Sydney can become a sustainable city nourished by a healthy fresh local food supply.**
- **Identification and protection of open space and/or arable land, and rural protection zones as essential land uses**
- **Maintenance a sustainable healthy city from the landscape, food production, and the potential to use rural lands for waste disposal.**
- **Support best practice environmental management in food growing areas.**
- **Work to secure a clean fresh food supply within close proximity to the city of Sydney, essential to reduce fuel consumption, transportation costs & to reduce food miles**
- **Develop holistic land use and transport policies directed at equitable access to secure local food supplies.**
- **Support comprehensive assessment of all private & public land in the region & clear directions how this may be allocated for the future water and food supply needs of the Sydney community.**
- **Taht the federal government works with State and local government to quantify the future food production and supply needs for the population of Sydney.**
- **Contribute to development of a legal framework for urban and peri-urban agriculture activities.**
- **Support long-term strategies to preserve and enhance the food production resource base of the Sydney Basin**
- **Regulate access to land and water as well as urban organic wastes and wastewater.**

(Ref: <http://www.fao.org/urbanag/Paper3-e.htm>)

Genetically Modified Organisms (GMO foods)

SFFA members advocate non GMO foods. We believe that current food shortages must address social inequity and food distribution problems rather than quick fix unproven technology. GMO have no proven health or public benefits

A small acreage of GM canola is being grown on a few NSW and Victorian farms this year but the rest of Australia will remain GM-free for at least another four years. NSW and Victoria should reimpose their GM bans before 2009. If GM contaminates our environment and food supply our right to choose GM-free may be lost.

Most Australians want Monsanto's Genetically Manipulated (GM) Roundup tolerant canola banned. They include: farmers; rural industries eg. beekeepers & grain harvesters; food processors eg. Goodman Fielder that uses 40% of Australia's canola crop; supermarkets (eg. Coles, that says over 90% of its customers want GM-free).

Local governments can work effectively for GM-free, both directly and symbolically. The why and how of GM-free Zones are explained: "Staying GM-Free: A resource kit for local action" at: <http://www.geneethics.org/resource>

The GM-free states say GM foods and crops - canola and cotton (grown in Australia), corn and soybean - pose unacceptable environmental, health, social and economic hazards and costs. GM-free offers new food production and marketing opportunities. As GM-free states grow over sixty percent of Australia's canola they will reap the rewards of priority access to all canola markets, here and overseas.

GM-free offers a more secure food supply in the coming oil-depleted and climate-altered world, to our great grandchildren and ourselves.

Recommendations:

To minimise the risks and win the benefits, local councils (both urban and rural) should also adopt and implement GM-free policies to:

- **protect their own constituents through local initiatives; and**
- **influence state and federal government GM-free policies.**
- **advocate GM-free food and farming systems, independent of patented high-tech GM seeds.**

FOOD LABELLING LAWS

Food products can be labelled as 'Made in Australia' even though they contain ingredients from countries with lower food standards or have been partly manufactured overseas. Without regulations that force full disclosure, manufacturers will inevitably source their ingredients from the countries with lax food laws in order to cut costs.

Recently, Food Standards Australia said it was taking seriously reports that fruit and vegetables grown in China and exported to Australia could be contaminated with melamine.

<http://www.smh.com.au/news/national/greens-decry-food-label-laws/2008/10/11/1223145699144.html>

Recommendations:

- **Review Food labelling laws to ensure full disclosure regarding country of origing labelling on all fresh and processed foods.**

SUMMARY:

Effective planning for and protection of natural resources, food & water security for a Sustainable Sydney is essential, in close proximity to habitation, markets, transport, & access to workers.

We need a national conversation to develop a food policy that looks at all aspects of the food chain, to promote health and equitable access to healthy food options for all segments of the population, encouraging the population to be interested in food, while contributing to a strong and environmentally sustainable food industry.

Governments should support and educate farmers to be custodians of the land, soil and water, and actively support efficient smallholders. The Department of Primary Industries should be reformed to provide leadership towards sustainable farming, and not leave this vital industry to market forces. The Sydney food basin must be protected to ensure that Sydney residents have access to fresh foods sustainably grown close to the city.

This needs control of urban growth in our food basin, complemented by planning controls and incentives to retain small farms on the city fringe. Governments can support small sustainable farmers with fresh food programs that give priority to locally grown fresh foods using fewer chemicals over processed foods that have been grown with high levels of mechanical and chemical inputs and transported long distances, with high greenhouse costs in food miles. The New South Wales Government must collaborate with the Commonwealth, local councils and the community to ensure long-term fresh food supplies for the Sydney Basin.

Yours sincerely,

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On behalf of the Sydney Food Fairness Alliance
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