

Hawkesbury Food Program
Health Promotion,
Hawkesbury District Health Service Inc
Locked Bag 10,
Windsor 2756

May 20th, 2005

The Hon. Craig Knowles,
Minister for Natural Resources,
Level 33, Governor Macquarie Tower,
1 Farrer Place, Sydney NSW 2000

Dear Minister,

Re: The Metropolitan Strategy

I am writing on behalf of the planning committee for the Food Fairness Forum which was held on 5th May, 2005 at Liverpool TAFE. The committee appreciates the opportunity to submit the following comments to the Metropolitan Strategy & plan to make another submission when the next planning stage occurs. Sound long term planning to work towards a Sustainable Sydney is fundamental to our future.

The inaugural Food Fairness Forum funded by the South West Sydney Area Health Service, addressed food supply, equity & health matters, & brought together growers, academics, community agency workers & speakers included Prof Stuart Hill, Prof Julian Disney, Marilyn Wise, Rev Bill Crews & local farmers.

Our committee aims to form a food policy alliance or council to advise on a more equitable & sustainable food system for Sydney. Many people working in social services are aware of an increasing demand for food assistance, & strategies including community food gardens, social enterprise, & farmers markets are being considered.

The Sydney Basin supplies up to 25% of the state's agricultural produce including over 90% of Sydney's perishable vegetables, 100% of Asian vegetables, fruits, mushrooms, poultry and dairy produce, however, increasing urban encroachment threatens its sustainability.

The Sydney Metropolitan Strategy proposes to develop an area the size of Canberra west of Sydney, which could result in huge loss of biodiversity & agricultural land in key food production areas of the Sydney Basin. To ensure that Sydney can become a sustainable city nourished by an accessible, vibrant local food supply, then sustainable food production areas, on productive fertile soil, with access to water, transport, and proximity to the city must be thoroughly identified & effectively protected

It is important that the Metropolitan Strategy aims and develops and implements inter-sectoral, multi-strategies to adequately protect and enhance the regions natural resources. The strategies should be evidence-based.

NATURAL RESOURCES:

It is necessary for future life that strategies are introduced to better protect the regions natural resources, the following issues must be addressed:

- A 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.
- An undertaking that development in Sydney's west will not exceed the regions capacity to handle increased development and infrastructure due to salinity, food production capacity and water management constraints.

Successful implementation of the Metropolitan Strategy must involve strengthening mechanisms for natural resource protection on public and private land in Sydney.

FOOD SUPPLY AND FOOD SECURITY:

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

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

The Hawkesbury-Nepean catchment has contributed as one of the most productive agricultural areas of Australia. The catchment covers an area 2.5% of NSW, producing approximately 15% of the state's agricultural produce including fruits, vegetables, mushrooms, most of Sydney's leafy green vegetables, poultry, nearly a third of the state's oysters and some dairy produce.

There is increasing recognition of the value of agriculture, the tenuous nature of its sustainability. There is now urgent need to retain diverse agricultural activity within the Sydney basin through strict rural and agricultural protection zones, to provide the food supply for Sydney to enable it to be a Sustainable City. Small scale, sustainable diverse mixed crop farms should be encouraged.

There is much concern that imported fruit & vegetables are sold in Sydney, which may carry pesticide residue, pathogens, & introduce diseases that could contaminate existing local food sources. Our committee members would prefer that the government adopts strategies to support local growers & a vibrant diverse local food supply, rather than challenging it with competition from imported fruits & vegetables.

COMMUNITY FOOD GARDENS & URBAN FARMING

Urban farming, & areas suitable for growing food in cities & Community gardens are a viable option, using already cleared land in cities to complement the present food supply. Zoning could be used to designate & protect areas designated community food gardens & urban agriculture. Mapping of food producing trees in cities should be undertaken.

Farmers Markets facilitate producer consumer alliances, raise awareness of the ways in which food is grown, 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 should be encouraged in all major centres.

BIO-SECURITY:

Bio-security and food security are critical issues. Problems of food shortages, are usually due to complexities such as lack of soil fertility, growing and climatic problems, water shortages or food distribution problems, and do not justify the need quick fix GMO.

GMO's are a departure from conventional breeding & introduce significant technology that enables the transfer of DNA between unrelated organisms or species; virus genes may combine with microbes creating new or more dangerous illnesses; foreign DNA may land anywhere on the genes of the host disrupting the genetic code of the plant or animal so it may produce allergens or toxins; contamination of non-GMO crops.

Many scientists, medical bodies and health workers have called for a freeze on GMOs because of the uncertainty and concerns for environmental and public health and sustainability. Until GMO technology can be proven to be safe, it is urged the government implements the precautionary principle and implements a moratorium on GM technology, and a freeze on the release of GMO's in the bio region of Sydney, and NSW.

While our committee is not opposed to research of GMOs, we are concerned by the evidence that GE may introduce new dangers & problems to health & biodiversity.

TRANSPORT & FOOD SUPPLY:

Planning for a future in which urban environments become both more sustainable and more livable is required. A safe efficient, integrated mass public transport system across Sydney is urgently required for social, economic and environmental reasons. Physical 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.

Securing a food supply within close proximity to the city of Sydney is essential to reduce fuel consumption, transportation costs & to reduce food miles travelled. This is particularly relevant with predictions of future oils shortages.

INFRASTRUCTURE, must be improved, adapted, and upgraded throughout the city & urban areas to cope with the increasing population before using land which should be designated for essential food production for present & future generations.

I have included the following documents:

- Agriculture in the Sydney Basin;
- Food Policy Councils information sheet;
- Food Security information sheet

Please reply to the committee to advise how you will address the issues raised.
Further inquiries: Gabi Martinez, Tel: 9780 2835

Yours sincerely,

Lynne Saville
On behalf of the Food Fairness Forum planning committee

SYDNEY BASIN INDUSTRY DETAILS

SITUATION

- The farm gate value of the food, landscape and floral agricultural industries in the Sydney Basin (Greater Western Sydney plus the Hornsby Shire) is \$1069+ million p.a. This figure does not include exotic industries such as deer and alpacas nor the trotting, thoroughbred and recreational horse industry which some believe could be worth at least half as much again
- \$1069 million represents 14% of the State's agricultural production. The area (including that utilised by urban, industry and associated infrastructure) represents approx 2% of NSW's total land area
- The economic activity in the Basin generated from the industries listed below is \$4.4+ billion p.a.
- The number of on-farm jobs associated with the associated industries is 11, 490+ consisting of 7295+ NESB people, 2580+ being first generation
- The Sydney community consumes the greater majority of the fresh food, landscape and floral products produced in the Basin. This represents a significant contribution to the 'food security' value which is fundamental to the 'sustainable city' concept
- Technologies, best management practices and education programs exist and are being improved upon through research and on-going revision that enable agriculture in the Basin to compete with other forms of land use on a triple bottom line basis. These technologies address the need for more intensive agriculture
- Distinct areas of lands in the Basin lend themselves to certain types of agriculture:
 - Turf and vegetable production on the flood plains
 - Small farm (home based small business) production, processing and marketing on the perimeter of Sydney providing for agritourism, regional industry development and marketing (including produce grown on the flood plains) as is happening with Hawkesbury Harvest
 - Land suitable for hi-tech industrial type agriculture
- Existing agriculture and the potential agriculture in the Basin requires a number of things for it to become sustainable and in so doing optimise its contribution to the quality of life of Sydney residents. It requires security of tenure (a fundamental principle of sustainability) to encourage investment in environmentally friendly practices (rather than through fear of prosecution). Security of tenure is also a prerequisite for investment in emerging agricultural technologies. The principle of equity (another fundamental principle of sustainability) for agriculture and the people involved also needs to be fully addressed. These two principles along with the principle of security of resource will ensure food security remains a basic element of the objective of Sydney becoming a sustainable city

(NSW Ag, Windsor)