

Media Alert – Can’t Eat Your House Development threatens Sydney’s food bowl

Urban sprawl & mining encroaching on food-producing land...

Sydney's important agricultural land, in the west and north west, is covered by coal seam gas licenses, and the new NSW Government needs to prioritise our food-producing lands, not just urban development, a forum will be held on Wednesday, 26 October.

The panel and Q&A, moderated by Costa Georgiadis and organised by the Sydney Food Fairness Alliance (SFFA) in the growth area of Penrith, will look at economic development and threats to food-producing agricultural lands.

SFFA President Elizabeth Millen says: “It's important to remember that some 80 per cent of the perishable vegetables we eat in Sydney comes from the Sydney Basin, and the Sydney region is also the state's most important area for producing chickens, ducks, turkeys and eggs. Lands on the fringe and coastal areas are important because of their good soils, climate and proximity to markets.”

Ian Sinclair, a rural Planning consultant with a focus on food, says “There is a need to develop a Sydney Food Plan that looks at preserving the land for food.” Mr Sinclair, who is also a regular guest lecturer at the University of NSW and has undertaken analysis of ABS statistics of food production for NSW, will stress: “We need to do a comprehensive survey of the food production areas and provide incentives for the farmers to stay producing.”

NSW Farmers President Fiona Simson will refer to a map of Western Sydney that shows coal seam gas exploration licenses covering the area. “Although laws do not currently prevent petroleum (CSG) companies from accessing our farming lands, farmers need to be aware of the legal rights they have when negotiating access to protect their assets, and hold these companies accountable for any possible damage caused,” Ms Simson says.

Alison McLaren, the President of the Western Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils, will talk about the results of WSROC’s “Urban Adapt” program and next steps. “The importance of access to fresh local produce at reasonable prices in tackling preventable illnesses such as diabetes should not be underestimated,” Cllr McLaren says.

Professor Phillip O'Neill, Foundation Director of the Urban Research Centre at the University of Western Sydney, says, "Supporting locally grown food makes sense in terms of household budgets and population health and wellbeing... As world population grows, there is much to fear from a loss of control of where food comes from and what happens to it before it gets to your mouth.”

What: Can’t eat your house – development threatens food bowl: forum and Q&A

When: Wednesday, 26 October 7pm for 7.30pm start, concludes 9pm

Where: Joan Sutherland Performing Arts Centre, 597 High Street, Penrith

Cost: \$15/\$10 SFFA members & concessions (*includes refreshments*)