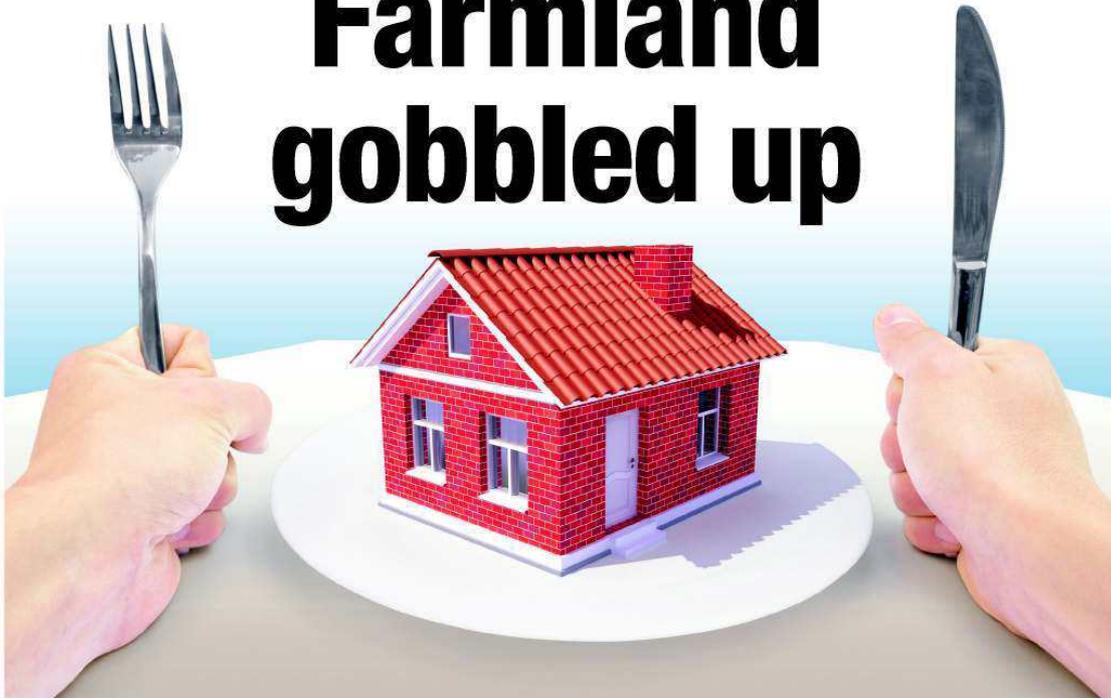




**Penrith City Star**  
**03-Nov-2011**  
Page: 1  
General News  
By: Roderick Shaw  
Market: Sydney  
Circulation: 55686  
Type: Suburban  
Size: 578.37 sq.cms  
Frequency: ---T---

# Farmland gobbled up



By **Roderick Shaw**

PENRITH'S remaining farmland and sources of fresh food are in danger of being swallowed by urban sprawl.

A forum in Penrith organised by the Sydney Food Fairness Alliance, "You can't eat your house", discussed the problem last week.

Ian Sinclair, a principal of a rural environmental consultancy, Edge Land Planning, said it was important to identify what land was needed to continue growing food.

"Land could be set aside for agriculture along development corridors," Mr Sinclair said.

But he said existing noise pollution laws would have to be amended.

"In rural residential areas, if a person complains that there's noise from a tractor, a pump or farm animals, the farmer can be asked by the council to change that," Mr Sinclair said.

"In urban areas you can close your windows, but if you're a farmer making a living you can be in breach of the law."

NSW Farmers' Association president Fiona Simson told the forum that many of her members confirmed that.

"It becomes increasingly difficult for farmers to operate, as neighbours complain

about fertiliser use and noise from machinery," Mrs Simson said.

"What is needed is strong government policy which recognises that for urban development to increase, so must food production, which means allowing urban farmers to continue operating."

The University of Western Sydney's urban research director, Phillip O'Neill, said if people wanted good quality food, they had to be prepared to pay higher prices for fresh, locally produced fruit and vegetables.

He said supermarkets usually offered cheaper, mass produced food, often grown

in remote places.

"No government can stop a supermarket from selling a bag of oranges for \$2," Professor O'Neill said.

"But we have to question whether long-distance food sourcing is sustainable. We, as consumers, have to reconnect with our food supply."

He said more market and community gardening might also help farming co-exist with growing urbanisation.

"Well-supported local food chains diminish the market power of large supermarkets and global manufacturers," Professor O'Neill said.

"They make healthy eating more fun as well."