



HD What's up Doc?

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Every year thousands of people, many from the city, flock to the Scenic Rim in south-east Queensland to celebrate 'eat local' week.

PIP COURTNEY, PRESENTER: As we saw recently with our story on a NSW tomato grower, bringing customers to the farm can pay off big time.

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A Queensland farming community has taken the idea in a different direction, with an Eat Local Week. Every year, thousands of people, many from the city, flock to the Scenic Rim Region in the south-east of the state, and one of the star attractions for kids is not a rollercoaster ride or wild exotic animals, but rather a carrot farm.

The Scenic Rim, an hour south of Brisbane, is as productive as it is beautiful. Ringed by mountains, the valley's alluvial soils sustain a diverse range of agriculture.

Worth more than \$400 **million** a year to the region, the council decided local farms and farmers were cause for celebration. So for the last three years, it's hosted Eat Local Week.

ALICE GORMAN, KALFRESH: I think it's amazing, the depth and range of produce that comes out of the Scenic Rim, which is one hour from the Gold Coast, one hour from Brisbane and I think a lot of people have absolutely no idea at just what is produced in that valley.

PIP COURTNEY: Held during the school holidays, locals and day trippers from Brisbane can take cooking classes, visit farms, dine at gourmet producers' dinners, before finishing up at the Winter Harvest Festival.

GENEVIEVE WINDLEY, SCENE RIM REGIONAL COUNCIL: The Winter Harvest Festival is the one event of the whole Eat Local Week that brings the whole of Scenic Rim producers into one spot and it's a celebration of food and farmers and our region and its beauty.

JOHN BRENT, LOCAL MAYOR: The value of horticulture, the value of agriculture is a little underestimated and it's been somewhat prostituted, if I could use that word, with \$1-a-litre **milk**. It's undervaluing our rural products and we're about trying to celebrate the good year that comes out of rural and regional south-east Queensland, and of course, Scenic Rim is a great place to start.

PIP COURTNEY: Part of the Eat Local calendar is the Kalfresh Field Day.

Kalfresh was a small family farm 22 years ago, but now it's a multi-**million**-dollar operation growing beans, onions, pumpkins and carrots, with the orange root vegetable the main game.

ROBERT HINRICHSSEN, KALFRESH: This year we're going to be nudging 20,000 tonnes of carrots. Our carrots go everywhere. They go all up and down the Eastern Seaboard, including Tasmania, and they **ALSO** go into South-East Asia, into Singapore and **Hong Kong**.

PIP COURTNEY: While co-owners Richard Gorman and Robert Hinrichsen run a state-of-the-art **business**, few of their customers knew this, let alone the basics of carrot growing. That's fair enough; Richard and Robert are farmers and businessman, not promotions experts.

But luckily, Richard married well. His wife, Alice Gorman, is a journalist who knows PR and marketing. Three years ago, she came up with a plan to let consumers know more about the most common vegetable on their plate after the potato.

ALICE GORMAN, JOURNALIST: I had some friends out from the Gold Coast, where I sort of grew up, and she brought her kids to one of the paddocks and we just got the shovel out of the car and started picking carrots and they absolutely had a ball, as did my sons, who see this every day.

RICHARD GORMAN, KALFRESH: The kids was the big thing, actually - to see our kids mix with these kids that they didn't know before and within two minutes, they're playing and jumping and running around and it was like a massive picnic and that was a lot of fun. Like, that was something we didn't expect.

ALICE GORMAN: Everywhere I go, people know I'm married to a vegetable farmer, and my city friends would say, "Oh, you know, how do you harvest the carrots? And how do you grow them?" I thought, "Maybe there's interest there. We should actually take advantage of that and see what we can do."

PIP COURTNEY: They held an open day and would have been happy if just a handful of people showed up.

ALICE GORMAN: We started at 9 and at about 8.30, people started turning up, and we're like, "Oh, OK, right," and it was great! And people came from the city, largely, but also some of the locals who live five minutes away, but just didn't have any idea about what it was that we did and sort of the size and scale of what we did and how their carrots got to their tables.

RICHARD GORMAN: Within 15 minutes, I'd rung Rob, who I'd already told to stay home, and said, "Mate, you better get down here." And within an hour, our whole car park was full. We couldn't move trucks, we couldn't bring product in or out and we were just astounded, absolutely astounded.

PIP COURTNEY: 100 people came to the first field day, and last year, attendance doubled.

ALICE GORMAN: I now have people who email me and talk to me on Facebook going, "I bought your carrots at my local supermarket," or, "I only ever look out for your carrots now." So, it's just really nice to have those sort of connections starting to happen and people telling their friends, "Oh, you should come out to this next year."

If we don't tell our stories, then, you know, you're relying on other people to tell it for you and that's not always the best thing. I think if you meet people and explain, "Hey, this is how we do what we do," then, you know, there's actually a conversation going on and I think it's beneficial for both parties in that conversation.

PIP COURTNEY: They catered for 500 this year and gave up counting when numbers neared 600. \$5 bought visitors a barbecue, a packing shed tour and time in the paddock to dig their own carrots.

One of the main aims of the day was to show off the operation's high-tech equipment.

ALICE GORMAN: It's all quite technologically advanced and I think if we don't tell that story, then people sort of write farmers off as, you know, there's just country bumpkins and whatever and it's so far from the truth.

ROBERT HINRICHSSEN: I don't think the average person has a clue what goes into getting a one kilo bag of carrots. And it is quite involved and it's interesting. And, you know, we've never had people come out of our shed that haven't got their eyes open, going, "Wow!"

PIP COURTNEY: The packing shed fascinated young and old.

And the grading machine takes thousands of images a second so carrots are sent to the right line. Few are wasted. Some go to supermarkets, others to the pet food trade, juicing companies and food manufacturers who make pasta sauces and dips.

ROBERT HINRICHSSEN: The most common question I get is: "How do you grow straight carrots?" That's what I get all the time. And there's a simple answer, but I can't tell you on-air. It's a trade secret.

RICHARD GORMAN: It's also good for them to walk into a factory and see complete transparency and know that it's just water. We just bring them in and wash the mud off them and put them in a bag or in a box and that's all we do. I think people go away feeling good about that. They have peace of mind that they know, "Hey, look, these guys are really good people. They're doing the right thing. They're not out there hosing chemicals down into the river. They're out there just growing food and doing it really well so we can go and eat safe food when we buy it from the shop."

PIP COURTNEY: The carrots are cleaned, sorted, bagged and chilled down and within six to 10 hours are on trucks headed to stores and supermarkets around the country.

MAN: I was surprised by the technology and the - they use imaging and computer recognition and automatic sorting. So, I think it might make us more competitive.

PIP COURTNEY: And there's nothing like the magic spell tractors cast over all ages.

ALICE GORMAN: I think a lot of kids grow up in the city with their little toy tractors and things and they could come out to us and actually stand next to a massive one and get in and hoot the horn and things like that, which they absolutely love.

PIP COURTNEY: While the littlies loved the tractors and the wet and wild carrot fun park, their smiles and eyes broadened even further in the paddock.

GIRL: I liked picking the carrots and I thought it was really fun.

BOY: I have found massive carrots.

PIP COURTNEY: What about the machinery?

BOY: Awesome. I love machinery.

GRANDFATHER: We just wanted to have a day out and enjoy the day with our granddaughter.

PIP COURTNEY: Alice Gorman says field days like this will help bridge the disconnect between city and country. She was especially pleased to see Scenic Rim locals turn up.

LOCAL WOMAN: We're surrounded by carrot farms and onions and **dairy** farms around where we live. And, yes, I think it's very important that they know where their food comes from.

PIP COURTNEY: In the crowd were the two little girls who started it all - Scarlett and Daisy McKinley. They were the farm visitors three years ago who gave Alice Gorman the idea for the field day.

What have you enjoyed about today?

SCARLETT MCKINLEY: Getting dirty and having lots of fun and seeing where carrots come from.

PIP COURTNEY: What are you having for dinner tonight, do you think?

SCARLETT MCKINLEY: Carrot soup.

DAISY MCKINLEY: I like getting dirty and picking the carrots and looking for where the carrots come from.

RICHARD GORMAN: For a lot of people, it's their first touch. The kids take their shoes off and run around in the dirt and pull carrots out of the ground and they try to chase all the ones with multiple legs and they just have a blast.

PIP COURTNEY: Alice Gorman says visitors asked many questions and she hopes they left with a basic understanding of the work and costs involved in getting carrots to the shops and the pressures Australian farmers face.

ALICE GORMAN: There is often a lot of negativity among the farming sector and they are known as whingers and things and that's not always fair. But I think there is a tendency for farmers to sort of say, "Oh, you know, city people don't appreciate us and city people don't understand this." And, well, really, why would they if we never show them? And, I mean, 10 years ago, I wouldn't have had a clue.

And I think we have to, as farmers, be really proactive and say, "Hey, come out and have a look at how we do it. Let's talk about where your food comes from, what goes into growing it," and then I think people really have that appreciation and then they start changing their behaviour. So, I think, yes, I would absolutely encourage people to start telling their own stories and to, you know, embrace their customers and say, "Come and see what we do."

PIP COURTNEY: From the carrot farm, visitors headed to Aratula, 15 minutes away, for the Winter Harvest Festival. The big finish to Eat Local Week, it's become the highlight of the year for many producers.

RICHARD GORMAN: Often it's hard to stay motivated in a commodity-driven world. These sort of things help with motivation and I think we've seen a lot of other suppliers in the Scenic Rim jump on **board** with Eat Local Week and you give it a push and away it goes.

PIP COURTNEY: The festival is also a chance for the valley's carrot farmers to show what they're made of, with the signature event, the tractor pull. And yes, the Kalfresh team won. Clearly carrots aren't just good for your eyesight.

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