

Recognising the people who grow our food

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VALUED: Nick Ferguson, Gemma Cunningham, William Fee, 2, and Oliver Clements, 5, enjoy breakfast at Cameron Valley Stud, Stirling. *Source:* The Advertiser

The Australian Year of the Farmer 2012 will be launched today, as new research is released showing seven out of every 10 city dwellers visit rural Australia less than once a year and nearly a quarter never make it to the countryside.

The campaign aims to enhance the ties between city and rural communities.

Year of the Farmer chairman Philip Bruem said the campaign hoped to communicate to all Australians the importance of farming to our economic and social fabric.

"The Australian Year of the Farmer recognises what farmers do for all Australians," he said.

"It celebrates them for feeding the nation, for leading the world in farming techniques and innovation, and for sustaining the vital agribusinesses that underpin our economy. Farmers are the providers of our nation."

Despite Australia's rich farming heritage, the national research conducted also found city people spent an average of just 3.5 days a year in rural areas.

In South Australia, just half agreed that knowing the origin of food products had an impact on what landed on their dinner plates.

The research also found 83 per cent of Australians believed the nation's farmers deserved better recognition. Of the South Australians surveyed, 55 per cent agreed agriculture and farming made an important contribution to food supply in the state.

Mr Bruem said the Australian Year of the Farmer was particularly important because of the key role farmers would play in providing food to meet significant growing demand in Australia and abroad.

"By 2050 there will be 9.3 billion people in the world, up from seven billion today. Farmers globally will need to increase productivity by 70 per cent over the next 40 years," he said.

"It goes without saying that we need a strong, sustainable farming sector in Australia.

"In 2012, the Australian Year of the Farmer will encourage all Australians to celebrate and recognise the contribution farming makes to all of our lives."

Australian Year of the Farmer, a non-political, not-for-profit organisation, will roll out a range of events, initiatives and educational programs in 2012.

Nick Ferguson, who enjoyed breakfast at Cameron Valley Stud in Stirling, said the setting made him appreciate the origin of the food he consumed and value the dedication involved in getting it to the table.