

Title:

Buy Local Food To Reduce Food Miles

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Summary:

I have to admit, I am becoming obsessed with checking where my food comes from and this is driving my partner mad. Whether you are in the local market or a supermarket, it says South African apples, Israeli pears and peppers from Chile. You would think that the UK and USA does not produce any food, if this is the case then where has the billions of pounds gone that our two governments pay in farmers subsidies?

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Article Body:

I have to admit, I am becoming obsessed with checking where my food comes from and this is driving my partner mad. Whether you are in the local market or a supermarket, it says South African apples, Israeli pears and peppers from Chile. You would think that the UK and USA does not produce any food, if this is the case then where has the billions of pounds gone that our two governments pay in farmers subsidies?

By buying food from abroad, developing countries get to market their produce world-wide and we get out of season food all year round. Everyones happy except the environment. Food transportation across the globe is making a significant contribution to climate change. Just look at the following examples:

Food in the UK travels 65% further than it did two decades ago

Heinz ketchup eaten in California is made with California-grown tomatoes shipped to Canada for processing and returned in bottles

In one year, the port of New York City exported \$431,000 of Californian almonds to Italy, and imported \$397,000 of Italian almonds to the US

Examples are from <http://www.newint.org>

What is local food and how can it help?

For many, local food is interpreted as unprocessed food, to be transformed by the consumer or a local shop rather than by the food industry. The food originates from as close to home as possible such as on a regional or national level. As such, local food reduces or eliminates the costs of transport, processing, packaging, and advertising. The go local food movement is currently flourishing with over 15% of people buying food locally and this number continues to rise as the number of farmers markets and local vegetable box schemes increases.

The benefit of locally grown fresh food is that it can be consumed almost immediately after production leading to an increase in food quality and taste as it may be sold fresher and usually riper. Also, the need for chemical preservatives to artificially extend the shelf-life can be reduced or eliminated.

Buying local food does not necessarily mean giving up all food coming from distant countries, but rather favoring local foods when available. Why buy apples from South Africa when you can buy British apples? But often buying food produced abroad can be cheaper (yes, cheaper) than locally produced food due to the subsidies the farmers receive and economies of scale from these large plantations.

It is also argued that national borders should preferably not be used to define what is local and instead measurements made in miles. The growth of Sat Nav systems maybe able to help in calculating the exact number of food miles that food has undertaken. For people living in, say, the south of England, food produced in northern France is more local than food produced in Scotland as it is closer. The local food movement in the European Union has been further complicated and hindered by EU rules requiring items produced in the EU, including food, to be marked as products of the EU, rather than as products of any particular country. The instinct of customers to buy nationally produced food in the name of patriotism was deemed to be a barrier to free trade and anti EU.

Studies need to be undertaken so that people can have faith and knowledge that the food that they are buying is actually reducing their carbon footprint on the earth. For example, we need to assess whether it is likely to be more environmentally friendly for tomatoes to be grown in the hot climate of Spain and transported to the UK than for the same tomatoes to be grown in greenhouses in the UK requiring huge amounts of electricity to light and heat them.

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