



FOOD & THE ENVIRONMENT

Calculation of the ecological footprint shows that the single largest component in our demand on the environment is food. Energy, water, chemicals, transport, packaging and manufacturing are required and greenhouse gases and waste produced.

Low footprint foods can be used in a range of delicious recipes. Low footprint food can be evaluated according to criteria of its value in the diet, and by the relevant environmental factors.

Environmental criteria include:

- seasonality
- land
- energy - cultivation, transport and refrigeration, duration of cooking
- water - rain-fed or irrigated with recycled water
- processing and packaging and reduction of waste

A selection of low-footprint recipes can be found as one of the Food Fact Sheets at www.sustainablecommunitiessa.wordpress.com.

The concept of food miles

The phrase *food miles* is a short-hand expression for the energy used and pollution produced in transporting food from farm to home. A simple measure of distance travelled by food is not the whole story. Other factors include farming methods, processing, refrigeration, the type of transportation used to deliver the food to market and the production costs, in terms of resources and fuel consumed, in producing and transporting the packaging it comes in. There are also human rights issues to consider in importing food from developing countries.

Guidelines

- Think how far it has travelled from the farm to you
- Consider whether this is the harvest season for this fruit and these vegetables
- Consider whether energy would have been used in production and transport, eg grown in a glasshouse; or possibly requiring refrigerated transport
- Take account of whether the crop would have been irrigated or rain-fed
- Give preference to food from plants rather than animals
- Investigate whether fish comes from a sustainable fishery
- Select products with minimum packaging
- Choose unprocessed food in preference to manufactured products
- Examine labels of manufactured food to see what additives they contain
- Use Fair Trade labelling to determine whether the people who produced the food have been treated fairly

What we can do

- Buy local - purchase food produced as close as possible to where you live
- Shop at farmers' markets
- Support small local shops that tend to source goods locally, particularly perishables
- If you can't find local produce then buy Australian owned and operated
- Choose unprocessed foods as far as possible, avoiding the energy and water used in manufacturing and packaging food
- Buy food with as little packaging as possible
- Reduce dairy and meat intake