



FOOD FOR THOUGHT

THINKING ABOUT WHERE OUR FOOD COMES FROM

There are many things to think about apart from the nutrients in our food - including where it comes from, how it gets to us, and what effects all this has out in the wider world.

Summary

Our food comes from many sources. It can come from plants or animals, be grown or hunted for ourselves, bought from someone we know, or made in a factory. It may come from nearby or far away. It could come from a market, a small local shop, or a big supermarket.

We might want to take time to think about what we can do to make sure our food has been produced in a way that's fair to others and our planet: it's called making "ethical choices". Examples include people like vegans and vegetarians who won't eat food from animals. We can also examine whether our food adds to pollution or climate change. We might consider whether the food we buy is improving conditions for people in poorer countries, or raising animal welfare standards.

What made it?

Most of our foods come from plants (and fungi) or animals:

Plants and fungi	Animals
Fruit and vegetables including nuts, legumes, seeds, nuts, fungi (mushrooms) Grain foods - breads, rice, cereals	Milk and dairy products from cows, goats etc. Eggs Red meat, poultry, fish, seafood (fish and shellfish)

Vegetarians don't eat animal flesh (meat); some may eat fish or chicken.

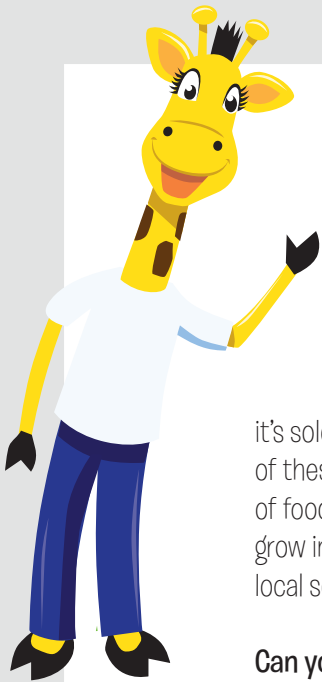
Vegans don't eat foods which come from exploiting animals (using them in a harmful or selfish way); strict vegans exclude eggs, dairy products and honey - but people have different ideas about what exactly "exploiting" includes.

What do you think?

Did we find, grow or raise it ourselves?

In NZ we can gather or forage for wild plants and shellfish, hunt for wild fish and game, or grow and harvest plants ourselves in home, school or community gardens or allotments (a plot of land in a shared space - usually for people who do not have their own outdoor space). Some people might keep (raise) a few animals like goats, bees or hens to supply them with food like milk, honey and eggs at home. These food sources are generally seasonal, local and small in scale. They're almost free, apart from the costs of finding or looking after the plants and animals. In some other parts of the world, small-scale farming, gathering and perhaps trading goods at local markets may be the main way in which people get food.





Did we buy it from a person, local shop or supermarket?

In NZ, markets and farmers markets are becoming more common as places to sell and buy local, fresh produce or home-made food. But most of us buy most of our food, especially processed food, from local shops or supermarkets. Fresh produce in supermarkets is unlikely to be as fresh as local or home-grown food because it's usually transported and stored before it's sold and it's probably been produced on larger farms. One advantage of these large shops that trade a lot is that they can offer a wide choice of foods at quite low prices. This includes imported produce we can't grow in NZ (like bananas) or which would go out of season if we relied on local sources only.

Can you think why else people shop at shops and supermarkets?



What are some of its effects on the environment?

Some people are concerned about the effects of the pesticides (something which kills insects and pests), fertilisers, or energy used to make their foods; or whether it has other impacts, like adding to deforestation (cutting down trees), Greenhouse Gas Emissions (GHGEs) or other pollution.

Organic food is grown without use of certain pesticides and fertilisers and produced or made in a way that aims to promote ecological balance and diversity. It often costs more to buy than standard food because producers operate on a smaller scale.

Locally Grown seasonal food cuts down on the energy needed to produce foods (like hothouse fruit and vegetables) out of season; it may also reduce GHGEs by minimising "food miles" (the distance food travels between where it is produced and where it is bought, which involves using energy, which can produce GHGEs).

What other impacts might food have on our environment? What can we do about them?

How fair is it?

People are thinking more and more about whether the way in which their food is produced is fair and right (“ethical”). This means considering not just its environmental costs, but also its animal welfare and social ones. Shoppers often chose to buy free-range eggs, chicken and pork – even if it means paying more because they would prefer to know that the animals were raised in a nice environment where there is more space to roam.

Fair Trade foods, like coffee, tea, chocolate, dried fruit and nuts, may also cost a bit more than standard ones. However, this is because it guarantees that people in some of the least economically developed (poorest) countries in the world are being paid a fair price for these goods. This can provide them with new opportunities to help improve their lives.

The SPCA Blue Tick and Fair Trade logo on foods are just some of the signs to look for that guarantee food and ingredients have been produced in an ethical manner.



Can you find any other types of ethical signs or products?

In the end, it's up to us to balance what we can afford and which food choices we feel are the best for ourselves, our families ... and the wider world.



USEFUL LINKS

FairTrade Australia New Zealand, n.d. Retrieved from: <http://fairtrade.com.au/>

Trade Aid, New Zealand, n.d. Retrieved from: <https://www.tradeaid.org.nz/get-involved/teachers/resources/>

Go SPCA Blue Tick, n.d. Retrieved from: <http://spcabluetick.org.nz/Go-SPCA-Blue-Tick>

World Wide Fund for Nature, January 2011. “Livewell Report”. Retrieved from: http://assets.wwf.org.uk/downloads/livewell_report_jan11.pdf 12 October 2017.



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Listener, 21 October 2017, “Future Food”: articles by Rebecca MacFie and Pellegrino on “Betting the Farm” and “For the Planet’s Sake”. Listener, 21 October 2017: 12–24.

The Conversation, 27 October 2014. “Official Healthy Food Plate Hasn’t Changed in 20 Years: Five Things That Need Updating”. Retrieved from: <https://theconversation.com/official-healthy-food-guide-hasnt-changed-in-20-years-five-things-that-need-updating-33265> 12 October 2017.

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