

LESSON 7: HOW CAN WE EAT IN WAYS THAT REDUCE OUR ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT?

Understanding Goals

- Some foods have little impact on the environment while other foods have large impacts.
 - Some ways to eat green include buying seasonal, local foods; organic (except when imported from countries far away); sustainable seafood; fair trade goods (e.g., chocolate, coffee); eating less meat and cheese and eating more vegetables and beans; buying at a farmers market; participating in community-supported agriculture
 - Many individuals and organizations are now working to build sustainable food systems.
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Vocabulary: seasonal, local, organic, low-carbon, green, sustainable seafood, farmers' market, community-supported agriculture (CSA), fair trade, bird-friendly, grass-fed

National Science Standards, Grades 5-8

Personal and Social Perspectives

- Populations, Resources and Environments
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Thematic Strands in Social Studies

- People, Places and Environment
 - Production, Distribution and Consumption
 - Global Connections
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Note: This lesson can be linked with lessons on climate change and reducing greenhouse gas emissions. For lessons on climate change, check out Facing the Future's website at www.facingthefuture.org.

Advance Preparation

- Reserve a computer lab with an Internet connection.
 - Make sure students will be able to use the Low Carbon Diet Calculator, available from the Bon Appetit Management Company at <http://www.eatlowcarbon.org/Carbon-Calculator.html>. Students will be able to explore various meals and their carbon emissions or "carbon points."
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Lesson Plan

Part 1 (5-10 min)

Explain the importance of eating sustainably. Gather students' initial thoughts about what eating sustainably means.

Part 2 (10-15 min)

Ask students to look up the following terms online: (students can work in pairs and select a couple of words to look up)

- Seasonal
- Local
- Organic
- Low-carbon
- Green
- Sustainable seafood
- Community-supported agriculture
- Fair trade
- Farmers' market
- Bird-friendly
- Grass-fed

Discuss findings.

Part 3 (10-15 min)

Ask students to go to the Low Carbon Diet Calculator guide and have them play around. Tell them to record the meals they select and their corresponding carbon points. Ask them to consider and compare the features of a high-carbon meal and low-carbon meal.

Have students share and compare their meals.

Homework

1. What does it mean to eat sustainably?
2. What are some ways you can start eating sustainably?
3. How might eating sustainably be challenging?

Extension

- Teachers can arrange a field trip to local farms, farmers markets and/or supermarkets.
 - Teachers can invite farmers, food producers, supermarket managers to the classroom.
 - Students can research local and/or regional food efforts to reduce environmental impact.
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Resources for More Information

Interest in sustainable food systems has risen recently, and consequently, there are many efforts going on at the local, regional, state, national and international levels. It is difficult to list all of the current efforts, but a few notable ones in the US include: Growing Power in Wisconsin (growingpower.org), Shelburne Farms in Vermont (shelburnefarms.org), the Edible Schoolyard / Chez Panisse Foundation in Berkeley, California (edibleschoolyard.org, chezpanissefoundation.org), and the Food Project in Massachusetts (thefoodproject.org).

More information on the relationship between healthy food and sustainable food is available from the Center for Health and the Global Environment website at <http://chge.med.harvard.edu/programs/food/local.html>.