

Reduce your food miles



Introduction

Food is one product we all buy and use every day. Food miles are a way to try to measure the distance that food travels from the farm to our plates. Energy is used to grow, process, transport and store food. We even use energy when we drive to the shops! This leads to carbon dioxide being released into the atmosphere which is causing climate change. By choosing locally produced, in season or organic food, rather than food that has been grown in a heated greenhouse or transported for miles we can make a difference.

Why not use your One Good Idea campaign to make people think about the distance their food has travelled, and the energy this uses?

Facts & tips

Did you know?

*More food is produced on the island of Ireland than is imported. **BUT** when we import carrots from South Africa they travel 6000 miles! That uses energy and produces carbon dioxide.*

Seasonal produce

Fruit and vegetables can have a certain growing season and will be ready to harvest and eat at a certain time of year. For example Irish strawberries, grown outdoors will be ripe in summer. Some fruit and vegetables are grown in heated greenhouses or imported from warmer countries so they are available during winter. This uses energy, so it's better to choose food that is 'in season'.

Food waste

One third of the food we buy ends up in the bin, which can cost the average Irish household around €700 each year.

Studies show that the most regularly thrown out foods include salad, fruit & veg and bread. This food usually ends up in landfill, and it takes energy to transport, treat and process waste. Rotting food in landfills create greenhouse gases such as methane. We can reduce our food waste by only buying what we need when we need it, by storing food properly, and by composting our food waste.

Packaging

Most products will have packaging to protect them and attract people to buy them. However, some packaging is unnecessary, and energy is used to make it, put it on the product and transport it from the factory, to the shop and to your home.



How can I influence others to consider energy use and climate change when they shop for food?

- Choose locally grown food that is in season (growing food in heated greenhouses uses energy).
- Buy certified organic food.
- Find out about your local farmer's markets.
- Talk to your local greengrocer, butcher and fishmonger and find out where their produce comes from.
- Could you grow some of your own fruit and vegetables in school or at home?
- Choose products with minimum packaging.
- Think before you buy; is there a more energy efficient low carbon option?
- Ask your target audience to try the 100 mile diet for one month!
- Leave the car at home and bring your own re-usable bags when going shopping.
- Try to buy what you need when you need it and store your food properly.
- Get composting!

Useful websites

- A web site to help the consumer understand food miles <http://www.foodmiles.ie/>
- Stop Food Waste has lots of information on reasons to eat local food, the most commonly wasted foods and how to compost waste food <http://www.stopfoodwaste.ie/>
- Try this online food miles calculator <http://www.foodmiles.com/>
- Check out tips from the Environmental Protection Agency on Living Green <http://www.epa.ie/livegreen/wasteprevention/>

Videos

- This video is a simple and visual way to understand food miles <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6KuHU2X7gQ0>
- Find out why eating local food is important https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DhaG_Zi6izU
- Grow It Yourself Ireland has video tutorials on how to grow your own fruit and veg <https://giy.ie/get-growing/>
- This video covers the journey of two journalists follow the trip of a strawberry across the America from field to shop <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a3T-uSjpxOg>

Teacher Lesson Plans

Use the [Energy in Action](#) resources and do the following activities with your class:

- C2 Activity 1: Food Miles
- C2.1 Worksheet B What's the Cost of your Shopping Basket

