

Routes of Food

Grade Level: Adaptable for 3-6
Total Lesson Time: 30-40 minutes



Lesson Overview

This is a role-play activity that engages students in thought and discussion about local, regional, and national food systems. The lesson addresses the questions, where does our food come from, and how does it get to us? Students will consider the environmental, economic, and nutritional impact of agricultural production and food transportation through role-play of three food system scenarios. You may want to invite a farmer to run this lesson in the classroom.

Objectives

Students will:

1. Discuss food origins and the systems that supply our food (Agricultural Education A.4.1, Language Arts C.4.3)
2. Understand the environmental, economic, and nutritional impacts of food choices (Social Studies D.4.6, D.4.7; Environmental Education D.8.5; Health A.4.3)
3. Identify consumer options related to local, regional, and national food systems (Environmental Education D.4.5, D.8.1; Personal Financial Literacy E.4.1)

Preparation

1. Write out character names (as listed in materials) on appropriately sized paper for name tags. You may want to use different colors to represent different characters. Punch holes in the top corners of the tag and attach a string so students can wear the tags around their neck.
2. Photocopy the attached Currency props and cut them out, or use another item to represent money.
3. Copy the attached Routes of Food Chart for students to use.

Materials

Food

Fresh fruits or veggies to exchange

Supplies

Character Name Tags for Role Play:

- truck drivers (3)
- farmers (3)
- grocer (2)
- warehouse workers (2)
- customers (3)

String for name tags

Currency:

- Carrot "coins,"
- play money,
- or animal crackers

Dry erase or chalk board

Routes of Food Chart

Writing utensils

Wisconsin Homegrown Lunch is a joint project of:



REAP Food Group:
www.reapfoodgroup.org

UW-Madison Center for Integrated
Agricultural Systems: www.cias.wisc.edu



Procedure

Introduction

Explain to students that they will participate in an activity that requires actors and audience members. There are three different scenarios to be acted out involving growing, selling, transporting, and buying food. Each scenario will require three different groups of actors. Select 13 students to play the roles listed above in the Materials section and distribute their name tags.

Briefly discuss the fact that food producers have options of how to grow, produce, and sell food, and as consumers, we have options when it comes to buying food. The role play will represent some of these options.

Activity

Local Food System

- Invite the *Local Food System Group* (Farmer and Consumer) to the front of the class to begin the role play. The *Local Food System* represents one of the options we have for purchasing food. As consumers we can buy our food directly from the people that grow and produce it by purchasing food at farmers' markets or as CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) members. **See the attached list of benefits of buying local for discussion topics.**
- Discuss the environmental, economic, and social considerations that we have in relation to food.
- Identify some of the work the farmer has done in order to prepare to sell their food, including: preparing the soil, planting, weeding, harvesting, washing, and transporting food to the market.
- Ask the *Consumer* to give the *Farmer* ten dollars for the farm fresh food. Use a fruit or veggie, or other prop to exchange.
- Next, have students use their *Routes of Food Chart* to assess the farmer profit, freshness of food, and environmental impact.

Regional Food System

- Invite the *Regional Food System Group* (Farmer, Grocer, Consumer) to the front of the class and line them up according to the attached flow chart. Ask students why there are more participants in the *regional food system* and proceed as you did for the *local food system*.
- The *Consumer* should use all of their currency (\$10.00) to pay the *Grocer*. Then ask students to determine how to split the money between the Grocer and Farmer. Remind them of the time and work each is putting in. Use the *Routes of Food Chart* as you did in the first scenario.

National Food System

- Invite the *National Food System Group* (Farmer, Truck Drivers, Warehouse Workers, Grocer, and Consumer) to the front. Line them up according to the flow chart below.
- The *Consumer* should give the *Grocer* all \$10.00 in exchange for food. Again, allow students to discuss and determine the amount each worker should get. Perhaps the truck driver that drives the greatest distance should receive a bit more pay. Discuss this system in comparison to the others. Use the *Routes of Food Chart* again and ask students which system seems best for all involved. Compare the farmer's profits from each scenario.

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Scenario 1:

Local Food System
Know Who Grows Your Food

Farmer
to
Consumer

Scenario 2:

Regional Food System
Grocer in the Middle

Farmer
to
Grocer
to
Consumer

Scenario 3:

National Food System
Many in the Middle

Farmer
to
Truck Driver
to
Warehouse Worker
to
Truck Driver
to
Warehouse Worker
to
Truck Driver
to
Grocer
to
Consumer

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Why Buy Local?

Taken from www.foodroutes.org

There Are Many Good Reasons To Buy Locally Grown Food

You'll get exceptional taste and freshness.

Local food is fresher and tastes better than food shipped long distances from other states or countries. Local farmers can offer produce varieties bred for taste and freshness rather than for shipping and long shelf life.

You'll strengthen your local economy.

Buying local food keeps your dollars circulating in your community. Getting to know the farmers who grow your food builds relationships based on understanding and trust, the foundation of strong communities.

You'll support endangered family farms.

There's never been a more critical time to support your farming neighbors. With each local food purchase, you ensure that more of your money spent on food goes to the farmer.

You'll safeguard your family's health.

Knowing where your food comes from and how it is grown or raised enables you to choose safe food from farmers who avoid or reduce their use of chemicals, pesticides, hormones, antibiotics, or genetically modified seed in their operations. Buy food from local farmers you trust.

You'll protect the environment.

Local food doesn't have to travel far. This reduces carbon dioxide emissions and packing materials. Buying local food also helps to make farming more profitable and selling farmland for development less attractive.

When you buy local food, you vote with your food dollar. This ensures that family farms in your community will continue to thrive and that healthy, flavorful, plentiful food will be available for future generations.

Buying local is this easy:

* Find a farmer, farmers' market, farm stand, or local food outlet near you, visit www.foodroutes.org/localfood/.

* Shop at your local farmers' market or farm stand for the freshest, best tasting food available. It's easy to find local food. There are over 3,100 farmers' markets in the U.S.—one is probably near you!

* Encourage your local grocery stores and area restaurants to purchase more of their products from local farmers.

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The Routes of Food Chart

	Farmer Profit	How Fresh?	Environmental Impact
Local			
Regional			
National			

\$

\$

\$

\$

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