

A Nurtured World Fact Sheet

Food: Opportunities for the Environment, Your Money and Your Health



Environmental Impact: Food is one of the top consumer impacts mostly through the use of water (agriculture uses nearly half of our water) and through runoff as one of the main sources of water pollution. Agriculture also impacts wildlife through habitat destruction and often involves the use of pesticides and fertilizers.

Health: We are what we eat. Eating more calories than you need, especially those at the top of the food chain, increase the risk of heart disease, cancer, and other diseases. Being overweight even increases the amount of fuel required to fly (costing the airlines an extra \$275 million in fuels costs through the 1990s!)

Impact on your wallet: The average consumer spends 14% of their budget on food. Contributing to this figure are actions like eating out daily, buying and throwing away extra food, and eating things we don't need.

What Can You Do? – Pick One Project Below and Take It On!

1. **Eat lower on the food chain** - food higher on the food chain is often more expensive, has more toxic chemicals, and higher levels of fat and cholesterol. For example, predator fish like swordfish are more expensive and contain higher levels of mercury. A pocket guide on fish that is good for you and the environment is available at: www.oceansalive.org.
2. **Eat food that moves** – if you eat meat or fish, go for free-range beef and chicken and/or wild fish. Food that moves is lower in fat and is often lower in toxic chemicals (farm raised salmon has much higher levels of brominated flame retardants than wild salmon).
3. **Eat moderately** – eating too much raises your risk of diabetes, heart disease, stroke, gall bladder disease and many cancers. A good web site for improving your diet and health is www.realage.com.
4. **Use smaller plates** – research shows that we eat based on the amount of food we see in front of us and the size of the container or plate.
5. **Buy organic** – organic food contains four to seven times more minerals, like calcium, potassium and iron (Source: Rutgers University) and doesn't involve the use of pesticide and chemical fertilizers.
6. **Buy local** - the average food travels 1,500 miles to your table. Buying local (< 150 miles) means you get fresher, healthier food at lower costs and with less environmental impacts. To find local food sources visit www.localharvest.org. Local food is often much less expensive and tastes better too!
7. **Take a shopping list with you** and don't shop when you are hungry!
8. **Eat out less** – you'll save money on gas and food and usually get a healthier meal at home.
9. **Throw less food away** by planning and using good storage practices (the average American throws away 15% of their food). See www.nsf.org/consumer for information on storage times.
10. **Use healthy activities** instead of food as a reward - take the kids roller-skating or read a favorite book!

