



THE FOOD WE EAT

Personal global footprint – the food we eat

The IGC Award encourages young people to look at their everyday lives and the impact they are having, consciously or not, on people and planet. In working on their personal global footprint, food is an obvious place to start. By considering research about and the stories behind the food we eat we can become better informed and then consider how we want to adjust how we spend our money and what we eat. It is too easy, however, to latch onto a few simple mantras (like “local good, imported bad”) which do not reflect the complexities of some of the issues involved. A more informed and critical consideration of the issues associated with our food is necessary, even with younger students. Here are a few resources that may be helpful for exploring food within the context of the IGC Award. Some are produced for school use. Others are more general. In compiling this I have drawn on the excellent Global Dimension website, which lists and reviews many resources helpful in addressing matters global within schools <http://www.globaldimension.org.uk/>. While some of the resources are geared to the UK context, they can certainly be very helpful in other contexts too.

Resources are coded:

- G General, not produced for a school audience. Some of these resources may not therefore be suitable for use with younger students.
- 11-14 produced for use in schools with this age group
- 11-16 produced for use in schools with this age group
- 16+ produced for use in schools with this age group

Bottled water



The Story of Bottled Water video (G)

<http://www.storyofstuff.org/movies-all/story-of-bottled-water/>

The Story of Bottled Water shows how marketing has created a perceived need for a resource that is often readily available from the tap. It is produced by the people who developed “The Story of Stuff” video. Although geared to an American market, it is relevant to people who drink bottled water anywhere. In around five minutes, the film explores the bottled water industry’s attacks on tap water, its use of advertising and the associated plastic waste.

(The Story for Stuff website has a number of very good animated videos on consumer demand and related issues.

But the videos from The Story of Stuff organization come in for criticism. To get some balance look also at the video **The Real Story of Bottled Water (G)**, which puts the case for drinking it <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hwV2JpFnxWM&feature=plcp>

This video is developed by an organization called Bottled Water Matters (Website at <http://www.bottledwatermatters.org/>), where it argues the case for bottled water. Interestingly there is no About Us page on the website, and the organization is, apparently, financed by the International Bottled water Association. (See Huffington Post report http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2010/09/10/bottled-water-matters-new_1_n_711195.html)

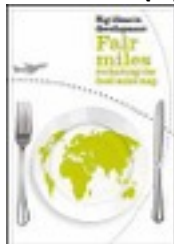
Food production and distribution

Food and Farming (11-14; 14-16; 16+) A short booklet (available as a pdf at http://www.foe.co.uk/resource/factsheets/food_farming.pdf) produced by Friends of the Earth UK. Although written for the UK context, much of it is more generally relevant. It argues that we should buy local, organically produced or fair trade food.

Some counter views on organic food are presented in <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/earth/earthnews/3326624/Organic-food-is-no-healthier.html> (G)

A recent report from Stanford University concludes there is little evidence of health benefits from organic food (see <http://med.stanford.edu/ism/2012/september/organic.html> (G) for a summary). But the authors note that there are other arguments for organic food such as concern over pesticide use and animal welfare in some farming methods.

Fair Miles (G)



This booklet by Oxfam and the International Institute for Economic Development gives an admirable consideration of food production and transport, focusing on food trade between Africa and the UK. It considers the concept of “food miles” to be an oversimplification, and presents a more comprehensive and inclusive view of “fair miles”. As it says “Food is more than a plateful of emissions. It’s a social, political and economic issue that involves millions of small farmers in poor countries who export produce to the North. They have built lives and livelihoods around this trade. By buying what they grow, you’ve clocked up ‘fair miles’.” Whilst not specifically aimed at schools, it is very clearly written and illustrated with clear, colourful diagrams. Probably most useful with participants **16 and above**. <http://policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk/publications/fair-food-miles-recharting-the-food-miles-map-115389>

Food Stories (11-16; 16+) is an interactive website that considers food in a broad context. This includes consideration of food production and consumer choice, as well as aspects of food which are less generally relevant to the IGC Award. Produced by the British Library, it includes recordings of interviews with people concerned with food and colourful graphics. There is also an accompanying teacher’s guide. <http://www.bl.uk/learning/resources/foodstories/index.html>

Sustainable Table (G) is a US website promoting sustainable food. There are general factsheets and information on a wide range of food-related topics, such as factory farming, food safety, local food and waste. There are special teachers’ resources. <http://www.sustainabletable.org/home.php>

Nourish (G; 11-14; 14-16) is a website promoting good healthy food and an awareness of the issues underling food. The website includes a number of short videos on topics such as Fairtrade food, how supermarkets get us to but etc. <http://www.nourishlife.org/>

Show R World (G) is an interactive website, which provides data in a visually interesting form on many features of global interest, such as population, education. It also gives information on production and consumption of certain key food animal and plant resources <http://show.mappingworlds.com/world/>

(see under Planet)

Coffee

Just Coffee (G) is a 20 minute film produced by Consumers International. It looks at the processes involved and benefits of various coffee certification programmes (Utz Kapez, organic, Fairtrade, Rainforest Alliance). There are interviews with coffee producers, campaigning organisations, and international coffee organisations. The film is at <http://www.safeshare.tv/w/TzJiOfxbv>

Oxfam has a number of resources relating to coffee production and Fair trade. These include the **Coffee Chain Game (13+)** which explores the coffee supply chain and where money goes along the way. http://www.oxfam.org.uk/education/resources/coffee_chain_game/?31

Food Certification programmes

Consumers are becoming increasingly aware of the background to the foods they eat, and many are looking for indications that what they buy is grown and processed with proper regard for the workers and the environment. This has led to a proliferation in certification programmes, but also in the use of unverifiable claims – such as “sustainable”, “locally sourced” – sometimes examples of “greenwashing”.

If we wish to be ethical shoppers, we need to become more familiar with the various certification schemes.



Fairtrade is one of the best known, and applies to food and other products, such as flowers and cotton.

The international certification body is [Fairtrade International](http://www.fairtradeinternational.org), and there are local certification organisations in many countries.



UTZ certifies tea, coffee and cocoa. Its website (available in French, Spanish, Chinese, German and English) explains the certification programme and its benefits. <http://www.utzcertified.org/>

But some writers on ethical lifestyle have questioned the real benefits to producers of such certification schemes. See for instance William MacAskill's *Doing Good Better*, which argues that it is better to buy goods from poor countries than fairtrade goods, as it is only comparatively richer countries that can afford the certification process.

The case for and against vegetarianism/veganism

Why it's green to go vegetarian (G) is a 20 page leaflet presenting the ecological case for vegetarianism. Produced by the UK's Vegetarian Society. <http://www.vegsoc.org/document.doc?id=166>

The Benefits of Vegetarianism (G)

A Buddhist case for vegetarianism - based on care for animals
for older students 16+

<https://www.clear-vision.org/Schools/Students/Ages-17-18/natural-world/benefits-vegetarian.aspx>

Why Veganuary? There's a reason for everyone to try vegan

The charity Veganuary encourages people to try a vegan diet in January, and to extend this practice to the rest of the year. Consider the case for veganism, set out on the charity's website: <https://veganuary.com/us/why/>

Campaigning author **George Monbiot** has written several pieces about what we eat, as his views have changed over the years. His writing is vivid and persuasive.

In his 2010 article **I was wrong about veganism** (G) he renounces his own veganism, after reading Simon Fairlie's book *Meat: a benign extravagance*, which he summarises here. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2010/sep/06/meat-production-veganism-deforestation>

He has since changed his mind, and his most recent position is described in an October 2017 article **Goodbye – and good riddance – to livestock farming**.

In this he sets out a well argued case against meat-eating and in favour of a plant-based diet.

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/oct/04/livestock-farming-artificial-meat-industry-animals>

Videos

Support Ethical (G) is a short video (1:43) on the importance of food choices, produced by *how it should be* <http://vimeo.com/38400764>

The Way We Eat: Why Our Food Choices Matter (G) Prominent philosopher on ethics in everyday life and Harvard professor Peter Singer discusses. A lecture to a university audience - 53minutes. <http://vimeo.com/1760066>

Is local food more ethical? (G) A short video (2:10) from the Carnegie Council raises key issues about local food. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kBJqmKcw2p4>

For younger students

Oxfam has a number of food-related **resources for younger students**, including

Go bananas (7 -11) which traces banana from the Caribbean to the UK.

Making a meal of it (7-11) includes a number of lesson plans and activities on food, food supply and distribution. These include

Where does our food come from? http://www.oxfam.org.uk/education/resources/making_a_meal_of_it/files/lesson2_where_does_our_food_come_from.pdf

Unpacking the supermarket bag http://www.oxfam.org.uk/education/resources/making_a_meal_of_it/files/lesson5_unpacking_the_supermarket_bag.pdf

Food issues more generally

Consideration of our own food may lead us into a wider consideration of food supply and distribution more generally in the world. **A Healthy Diet. Who decides?** (11-14) produced by UNICEF UK includes case studies and activities on food in three countries. http://www.unicef.org.uk/Documents/Education-Documents/Resources-Documents/healthy_diet_who_decides.pdf

Oxfam UK has some excellent general education resources (**Food for Thought** (11-14; 16+)) on food production and distribution, although developed for use in a classroom context and as part of a larger project rather than by students independently - http://www.oxfam.org.uk/education/resources/food_for_thought_resources/

Global Eye – a website (not currently updated) overseen by the Royal Geographical Society – has some background information and links on world food production and distribution at http://www.globaleye.org.uk/secondary_autumn2001/focuson/index.html

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