

FOOD FOR THOUGHT:

What if your university could decrease environmental degradation just by giving you fresher, better-tasting cafeteria food?

It is almost certain your campus foodservice providers purchase your food from large corporate food providers. Unfortunately, however, the corporate food and agriculture system degrades the environment by contributing to greenhouse gas emissions, soil erosion, water pollution, and the loss of biodiversity.

- Only about 10% of the fossil fuel energy used in the world's food system is used in production; the other 90% goes into packaging, transportation, and marketing (*Geoff Tansey and Tony Worsley, 1995*).
- Agricultural run-off flowing down the Mississippi River has created an area devoid of life in the Gulf of Mexico – in 1999, this “dead zone” peaked at 8,000 square miles, an area the size of New Jersey (*EPA, 2001*).
- In a study of seed stock available in 1903 versus that available in 1983, the Rural Advancement Foundation International found that we have lost nearly 93% of lettuce varieties, over 96% of sweet corn, about 96% of field corn, more than 95% of tomato, and almost 98% of asparagus (*Andrew Kimbrell, 2002*).
- It takes anywhere from 20 to 1000 years for a centimeter of soil to form, yet in the 200 years since our country's founding we have lost fully a third of our cropland topsoil (*Osha Grey Davidson, 1996; Leo Horrigan, Robert Lawrence, and Polly Walker, 2002*).
- The average farm would show a \$29 per acre loss if the costs of soil loss, water contamination, and environmental harm from conventional farming were included (*World Resources Institute, 1991*).

Buy local to protect the environment

By supporting local farms, you are ensuring a more sustainable future and helping to protect and regenerate the natural environment.

- Small, independent farms can encourage biodiversity by diversifying the landscape. Such diversity also reduces soil degradation, decreases agricultural run-off into rivers and streams, and provides habitat for wildlife.
- Farmers practicing organic or sustainable farming techniques do not use harmful pesticides or fertilizers; instead, as stewards of the land, they work to improve the health of the soil, protect the wellbeing of livestock, and preserve local water quality.
- Buying locally decreases the distance food must travel. In doing so, it reduces carbon dioxide emissions from trucking and requires less packaging materials.

What can I do?

- Start a Farm to College project to get your university to buy food from local, sustainable farmers.
- Vote with your food dollar—*Buy Local Food!* Shop at a local farmers market, Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) farm, or farm stand. Also encourage your local grocery stores and area restaurants to purchase more of their products from local farmers.
- Visit www.foodroutes.org for more tools, tips, and resources and to find a farmer or local food outlet near you.

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