

LOCAL CHOICE GLOBAL CONSEQUENCE

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Eating local food may indeed be the most delicious and enjoyable way to save the world. The choice is ours every time we decide whether to shop at the most convenient supermarket or to support our local farmers' market or community food store. Choose wisely. Eat sustainably. It's healthier for all.

Every year, millions of small farms and businesses are killed off in the march toward globalization. We rarely hear about these losses, and even when we do we rarely connect the dots to the choices we—you and I—make every time we shop for food. The fact is, however, that what we eat, where we choose to buy our groceries, and the kind of foods we consume, make a significant difference to the health and economic well-being of populations unseen by us—locally and in far-flung communities across the world.

In the modern industrialized world, food serves a very different set of purposes and agendas than it did for generations of humans reaching back millennia. Today, food has been reduced to a commodity in a volatile market, farming has become increasingly more specialized, capital-intensive, and technology-based; and food production and marketing are ever more globalized. These trends are proving disastrous to consumers, farmers, local economies, and the environment.

There is, however, a small but rapidly growing opposition to this system. A burgeoning “local food movement” in the United States and Europe is a key element in the renewal of food and farming. It is one of the most effective ways of reversing a range of social and environmental crises. The movement is sweeping the world, and gaining momentum every day.

Environmentally, as well as nutritionally, the benefits of shortening the links between farmers and consumers are enormous. Local food systems promote biodiversity

as well as production based on regional conditions. Unlike commercial food distributors who demand large supplies of single crops, local markets by their very nature create consumer demand for a wide range of products that are valued for their taste and nutritional content, rather than their ability to withstand the rigors of long-distance transport, or conformity to supermarket standards. Cucumbers need not be perfectly straight, nor apples perfectly round.

Diversifying production in this way reduces the need for expensive and harmful inputs such as artificial fertilizers and pesticides, making it easier to farm organically. Smaller-scale, diversified farms also provide better, more humane conditions for farm animals than do factory farms because there is less crowding, less dependence on long-distance transport, and less need for antibiotics and other drugs.

Further, with locally grown food, there is much less need for packaging, and therefore a reduction in the huge amount of non-reusable, non-biodegradable waste that is thrown away daily into landfills all over the world. Meanwhile, shorter transport distances mean a reduction in the use of fossil fuels, less air pollution, and lower emissions of greenhouse gases. Local food systems lead to stronger local economies by providing jobs, supporting local stores, and keeping money from being siphoned off by distant investors and corporations.

People are beginning to realize that relying on locally grown food is one of the most strategic and rewarding ways to ensure a safer, healthier future for all.



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