

Calculating your Food Miles Submitted by LifeCycles

"Food miles" (or "food kilometres"!) are the distance food travels from the farm to your plate. The concept is used to underline how far many foods are transported through global trade and the costs of this transport, in economic, social, and environmental terms.

When foods are transported long distances, they tend to lose taste and nutrient value because of the time and conditions in transit. Transport also consumes fuel and releases pollution. Freight transport is a key source of greenhouse gas emissions, which are a cause of global warming. Food kilometres for a particular product can be calculated by finding out all the locations a food is imported from along with how much comes from each location. With this information, along with the transport distance from each of those locations, you can calculate an average distance the product travels when it is imported. Combine this distance with information on greenhouse gas emissions (e.g., per tonne per kilometre) and you have a good idea of just what the pollution savings are if you eat locally!

Of course there is more to understanding about the "carbon footprint" than just how far food travels (such as: How was it produced? Was it in a field or a heated greenhouse? Or what energy inputs did that food require to grow and preserve? How much methane was created? Etc.) However, by estimating its transportation "costs" we begin to get a better picture of the sustainability of eating choices.

If you would like to calculate the Food miles of your latest meal, or learn more about Food miles, visit http://www.lifecyclesproject.ca/initiatives/food_miles/

Click below to return to the Making Food Matter newsletter:
http://www.communitycouncil.ca/crfair_nl/crfair_nl_issue3_index.html

