



## MODULE 11

Some facts and figures and answers to FAQs about our food products and their movement.

### **NB**

- 95% of our fruit and vegetables are imported.
- A typical shopping basket of 26 imported foods can have traveled as far as the distance of 6 times around the equator.
- A recent DEFRA report estimates costs of food at nine billion pounds per year. Half of which is due to road congestion.
- The amount of food being flown into the UK doubled in the 1990s and is predicted to rise further each year.
- In order of damage to the environment - Air freight is the worst, followed by road haulage and then freight by sea.

### **Some of the benefits of importing vegetables are:**

They are often cheaper for individuals.

We can access fruit and vegetables out of season e.g. strawberries in December.

We get choice of fruits and vegetables that are different to those we can grow in the UK.

It can provide a regular income for farmers in poorer countries.

### **The disadvantages are:**

#### **Energy used to transport the fruit and vegetables.**

The way the food is produced/processed that is imported i.e. there is heavier use of fertiliser in some places where fruit and vegetables are grown, cool goods are stored/transported in refrigerators which consume more energy.

#### **Pollution from transport vehicles.**

*Is there a problem if we only buy fruit and vegetables from our own country (e.g.: in the UK)?*

The centralisation of supermarkets mean that sometimes fruit and vegetables are collected from where they are grown, then travel a long way to a central depot. They are then sent out to stores – which can be very close to the place where they were grown originally.

Growing some fruit and vegetables in Britain can use a lot of energy e.g.: tomatoes grown in a heated glasshouse in the UK can cost more energy than tomatoes brought over from Spain where they have grown outdoors.

Use of fertilisers to improve crops in the UK may cause environmental damage through pollution.

The best option is to buy local, seasonal, organic fruit and vegetables - preferably from farmers markets where there is no packaging, and to compost any waste.

*How can British fruits and vegetables be available unseasonably?*

- Plants grown on under controlled environment e.g. heated glasshouse, lighting regimes etc.
- Fruit and vegetables stored in refrigeration units.

*Sustainability and food production is a complicated issue and there are many variables to consider. The idea here is to help children question the sustainability of their food and recognise there are alternative answers to how we source, produce and buy our food.*

**For more information:**

[http://www.bbc.co.uk/food/food\\_matters/foodmiles.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/food/food_matters/foodmiles.shtml)

[http://www.foe.co.uk/campaigns/real\\_food/index.html](http://www.foe.co.uk/campaigns/real_food/index.html)

<http://www.sciidev.net/News/index.cfm?fuseaction=readNews&itemid=3354&language=1>

<http://www.eta.co.uk/pages/FAQs-Food-Miles/FoodMiles/default.htm>

<http://www.bigpicture.tv/videos/watch/28dd2c795>

<http://www.vegsoc.org/environment/index.html>