



CPRE Sussex Policy Position Statement

LOCAL FOODS

SECTION 1

THE SCOPE OF THE PROBLEM

It was Professor Tim Lang who coined the term “Food miles” to describe the distance our groceries travel to reach us from the farm to our plate.

Over the last 50 years there have been dramatic changes in the food production and supply chain in the UK. The most striking changes include:

- The globalisation of the food industry.
- The increase in food trade.
- The wider sourcing of food within the UK and overseas. Typically, supermarkets may have only 1-2% of their turnover from local food producers.
- The concentration of the food supply base into fewer larger suppliers. The 4 largest supermarkets now control 75% of British retailing.
- Major changes in the delivery patterns with most goods routed through supermarket regional distribution centres using mainly HGVs.
- The switch from buying food from local shops towards car-based weekly trips to the supermarket.
- The changes in the food processing industry which see ingredients being moved around the country from factory to factory before arriving on the supermarket shelves.
- The dramatic change from home prepared and cooked food to processed instant ready meals.
- The general public's desire to buy produce all year round instead of accepting the seasonality of fruit and vegetables.

These trends have led to a large increase in the distance food travels from farm to consumer. Since 1978 the annual amount of food moved in the UK by HGV has increased by 23% and the average distance for each trip increasing by 50%.

Agriculture and food now account for 30% of the goods transported by road. In 2006 cars, lorries

and planes emitted a record 18 million tonnes of Co2 transporting food around GB. This heightens the concern about the damage done by the supermarkets' policy of flying in products like sweet corn from Thailand, prawns from Ecuador or apples from New Zealand. It is now apparent that supermarkets and food producers are taking their products on huge globetrotting journeys, despite pledging to cut their carbon emissions. In order to take advantage of comparative labour costs, home - grown products are being transported thousands of miles overseas for processing before being put on sale back in GB. For example Scottish prawns are being hand-shelled in China, Atlantic haddock caught off Scotland is being prepared in Poland and Welsh cockles are being sent to Holland to be put in jars before going on sale in GB. Meanwhile, products grown overseas are taking circuitous routes to GB. African grown coffee is being packed 3500 miles away in India.

Increasing food miles has led to growing economic, social and environmental burdens – increased CO2 emissions, congestion, accidents and noise. There is a clear cause and effect relationship for food miles for these burdens. In general the higher levels of vehicles lead to larger impacts. Transport of food by air has the highest CO2 emissions per tonne and is the fastest growing mode producing 11% of food transport CO2 equivalent emissions.

Amid the rise of the supermarket chains and the all year round stocking of fruit and vegetable varieties, CO2 emissions from food miles have soared in the past decade – increasing 15% between 1992 and 2002. It has been estimated that food miles cost GB £9 billion a year (£5b from road congestion, £2b from road accidents, £1b from pollution and £1b from other factors.) If all foods were sourced from within 20km of where they were consumed, then GB would save £2.1billion in environmental and congestion costs.

It is not only how far food has travelled but how it has travelled that is important to consider. The positive environmental effects of specialist

organic farming may be offset by increasing transportation unless the food is produced by local farms.

SECTION 2 CENTRAL and LOCAL GOVERNMENT PLANNING POLICY

In 2006 the Government made a commitment in its "Food Industry Sustainable Strategy" to cut the social and environmental cost of food miles on 1990 levels by 20% by 2012. To this end they are working with food manufactures and supermarkets.

Both Sussex Councils are actively supporting local enterprise groups in their promotion of local food suppliers and processors. Sussex Enterprise is an example of such an organisation who in turn supports Taste of Sussex. Taste of Sussex was formed to provide a comprehensive support service to all Sussex based organisations involved in the food chain, including local producers and processors, to expand their markets and make their produce more accessible to the public. It aims to encourage the development of sustainable food businesses that contribute to the rural economy. It also aims to increase the awareness amongst the public and trade of the diversity and quality of the produce available in Sussex. Marketing and promotion of local foods is a further aim. It has published the Sussex Food Finder - a directory for businesses to source local food suppliers and organisations.

SECTION 3 CPRE SUSSEX POLICY STATEMENT

CPRE Sussex supports the following strategies to reduce the amount of food miles:

- Connect consumers with the origins of their food is a key element in building a more sustainable food chain. This includes developing coordinated action to educate consumers about where food comes from and how it is produced.
- Ensure that within the planning system Local Authority strategies secure and encourage local food economies. This includes setting limits on future developments of large supermarkets and the spread of supermarket chains in the high street under the guise of convenience

stores. The sequential test for the location of supermarkets set out in the Government's Planning Policy Statement 6 should be maintained but needs to go further. Regional and local plans need to put local retail first in towns and rural areas. PPS6 should be revised to support this. Where supermarkets are approved, planning consent should stipulate conditions on local sourcing of food. Policies should also recognise the huge benefits of rural diversification into food businesses and independent food retailing for the condition of the local farmed landscape. Councils should identify viable local food networks and survey and map them. Policies should be drawn up to protect, encourage and support them in the Local Development Frameworks.

- Persuade the government to impose VAT on fuel for aviation to increase the incentive to buy local produce.
- Buy as much food as you can from a radius of 20km/12 miles
- Press for legislative change to ensure clear, thorough and simple labelling to show the source/location of the food to enable consumers to make informed decisions about the food they buy.
- Support projects – like Sussex Enterprise and Taste of Sussex - that aim to develop local food economies and decrease the distance food travels. The local food economy underpins the economic viability of the countryside, its market towns and villages and the environment as a whole. The buoyant "virtuous circle" of the East Suffolk Food Web is of great public value as well as being a shining example of successful private enterprise.
- Lobby supermarkets to continue to cut the distances travelled by their lorries and to increase the sale of locally sourced food. Waitrose, Budgens and Marks and Spencers currently lead the way.
- Press supermarkets to remove unnecessary packaging, sell fruit and vegetables loose and increase the use of recyclable materials in their packaging.
- Policies directed at decreasing food transport should consider the wider social, economic and environmental effects and initiatives in other key areas such as rural development, agriculture, transport, environment, trade and international development.

SECTION 4

CPRE BRANCH CONTACT

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SECTION 5

“WHAT CAN YOU DO?”

In order to save the total amount of your food miles you could consider the following:

- Think about where your food comes from when you shop and eat out at a pub or restaurant. Ask politely where the food has come from and choose accordingly. Look more closely at country of origin labels on food products.
- Walk to local shops.
- Buy locally sourced food wherever possible.
- Use Farmers Markets and find a local fruit/vegetable box scheme.
- Buy fresh ingredients.
- Avoid buying over packaged food.
- Buy seasonal GB produce which helps to negate the need for artificial heating in greenhouses.
- Grow your own food!

Web Sites

BBC

http://www.bbc.co.uk/food/food_matters/foodmiles.shtml

www.naturalmatters.net

www.cpre.org.uk

www.eattheseasons.co.uk/foodseasons.htm

www.atasteofsussex.co.uk

www.buylocalfood.co.uk/default.asp

www.sussexenterprise.co.uk/foodfinder/docs/SFJune.pdf

Reading

CPRE report – The real choice – how local foods can survive the supermarket onslaught.
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