

# Food Systems

Suggested Grade Level: 7 - 8



## The Big Idea

Students continue to explore where their food comes from and develop a deeper understanding of food systems. Students continue to explore the effects the food system has on the environment and how we can balance human needs with environmental impacts.

## Activities

*Total Time: 1 hour*

- |  |                   |
|--|-------------------|
| · Introduction: Brief discussion             | · 5 minutes       |
| · Activity 1: Video and discussion           | · 20 - 25 minutes |
| · Activity 2: Photo analyses                 | · 10 minutes      |
| · Activity 3: Compare and contrast           | · 15 minutes      |
| · Activity 4: Environmental impacts response | · 10 minutes      |
| · Wrap-up and Review                         | · 5 minutes       |
| ·  |                   |

## Preparation

Download associated resources:

- *"How our Food Systems Impact the Environment"* video
- *"Hungry Planet, What the World Eats"* presentation
- *"Growing Chefs! Ontario Local and Global Food Systems Definitions"*
- *"Growing Chefs! Ontario Food Systems Map"*

## Learning Outcomes

- Students will investigate political, social, economic, and environmental issues; their impacts and responses by the global community.
- Students can demonstrate the ability to make connections that relate to health and well-being – how their choices and behaviours affect both themselves and others, and how factors in the world around them affect their own and others' health and well-being (D3: Healthy Living).

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## Introduction

Facilitate a class discussion using the ideas:

- Why is it important to know where your food comes from? What can be gained from being more informed about where your food comes from and how it gets to you?
- Share some ideas of why this is important: community and personal health, environment, cost/access, jobs, and social equity are all great suggestions).

## Activity 1: How does our Food System Impact the Environment Video

- Watch the *"How Our Food Systems Impact the Environment"* video:
  - Were any of our ideas represented?
  - What impacts were listed that we didn't discuss?
  - Did the video bring up more questions? Encourage students to share their questions.

## Activity 2: "What the World Eats" presentation

- Watch "What the World Eats" photo presentation. Examine each photo and give students time to make observations and connections. Direct students to look for and identify:
  - **Types of food/food groups**
  - **Packaging:** amount and type, brands
  - **Presence of whole foods:** Does the diet contain whole foods or processed foods or both?
  - **Appliances, food storage, and/or cooking utensils:** What impact do you think the available appliances and food storage options have on each families' diet?

## Activity 3: Compare and Contrast

- Break students into groups and provide them with chart paper or another note taking medium to record their discussion.
- As a class, review the definitions of Global and Local Food Systems.
- Assign each group two photos to compare from the slide show.
- Have each group compare and contrast their two photos with regards to:
  - Types and variety of food
  - Quantity of food

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## Activity 3: Global and Local Food Systems Pros and Cons

Ideas for comparison:

- Preparation and cooking equipment
- Setting
- Cost
- Where do you think the food is coming from or purchased (global or locally sourced?, both?)
- Packaging
- Fresh whole foods vs. processed foods
- Which of the two pictures would you assume has a bigger environmental impact and why?
- Which diet looks healthier and why?
- How is the consumption stage different? How is the food eaten and shared different for each family?

Have groups present their observations to the class.

## Activity 4: Environmental Impacts Response

Food systems are dynamic and complex. In North America, many more people exist as consumers than producers. This divide can lead to consumers not being aware of the far reaching negative impacts that food systems can have. Have students work in small groups to identify and articulate three actions or adjustments in behaviour they, as a consumer, could take to lessen the negative impacts that their food choices may have in a variety of areas.

Provide the following prompts to help facilitate discussion:

**Environmental Impacts:**

- How can you lower the amount of food waste?
- How far is your food traveling?
- How is the food packaged?
- If you increase the amount of local foods in your diet, how would this affect the variety of foods you have access to?

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## Activity 4: Environmental Impacts Response

### Economic impacts:

- Where does the money that is spent on groceries go? Does it stay inside your community, or move outside of your community?
- Who benefits from the money used to purchase food? Farmers, store owners, store employees, delivery drivers, business owners, etc.

### Social impacts:

- Does everyone have equal access to food? Why not and what can be done?
- Do workers involved in the food system receive fair pay for their labour?
- If you don't know the answers, or what questions to ask, where can you go to find out?

## Activity Notes

Students may have encountered associated lesson plan resources in previous grades. Consider checking with students and if necessary, framing resources, including videos, as a review.

Food systems represent a collection of dynamic and complex processes. Understanding our place in these systems is integral to making informed choices that not only benefit ourselves but everyone involved in a food system. The complex nature of food systems can lead to frustration and confusion. Encourage students to stay positive and curious as they develop their understanding of what impacts food systems have, and how as an individual they can participate in these systems.

Be sure to foster a safe and inclusive space for all students during discussion. For example, consider food access, cultural background, varying definitions of healthy food, and ensure that food is discussed in a positive manner without judgement.

To help students begin their research:

- Food Secure Canada, [foodsecurecanada.org](http://foodsecurecanada.org)
- Government of Canada, [canada.ca](http://canada.ca)
- Food equity initiatives in your local community
- Local food policy and or national food policy
- Grocers typically have information in store regarding where food comes from, which is also typically available online

Consider finding local field trip opportunities, resources and programs in your area to use as extension activities, such as cooking programs, farmers market/grocery store tours etc. Be mindful of associated cost and potential impact on access and student participation.

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## Additional Resources

- Book: "What the Word Eats" by Faith D'Aluisio and Peter Menzel is available for purchase online and makes a great resources to include food literacy and food systems in your classroom.
- Growing Chefs! Ontario YouTube channel

## Learning Goals

- Students will assess pros and cons of global and local food systems from a variety of perspectives.
- Students will analyze photos and draw conclusions about impacts that food systems have on people and their surrounding environment.
- Students will think critically about managing environmental impacts from large and small scale food systems.

## Success Criteria

- Students demonstrate understanding through group participation and discussion.
- Consider establishing more specific success criteria by reviewing grade-specific Healthy Eating curriculum expectations (D3. Making Connections for Healthy Living, D3.1 Healthy Eating).