

C2 ACTIVITY 1: FOOD MILES

Background

Students are probably familiar with the phrase '[food miles](#)' but may not be sure what it means, especially in terms of energy and global warming. The term refers to the distance food is transported from the time of its production until it reaches the consumer. This is a factor used when assessing the environmental impact of food, including the impact on global warming. In this activity, the students select a number of food items, source their origins and then calculate the food miles using an [online food miles calculator](#).

What to do:

1. Start with a short brainstorming session to get the students thinking about the weekly shopping basket. Put the following questions to the class:
 - ① *Who takes part in grocery shopping for their home?*
 - ① *When choosing food to purchase, are they conscious of the country of origin or does price decide?*
 - ① *What is meant by the term food miles?*
2. Using **C2.1 WORKSHEET B: WHAT'S THE COST OF YOUR SHOPPING BASKET?** the students can compile their list at home, and verify the origin of the food from the food label. They can then calculate the food miles using [the online food miles calculator](#). This data could prove very useful to them when approaching the [One Good Idea](#) project.
3. Set students the task of investigating how many of the products are available nearer home. Then ask them to draw up a list of prices to compare locally available products with long-distance imported ones. It may be appropriate to introduce the ethical aspect of cash crops here. The following link may be useful for research on this issue: <http://www.sustainablefood.com/guide/Fairissue.html>.

C2.1 WORKSHEET B: WHAT'S THE COST OF YOUR SHOPPING BASKET?

Make a list of food items in an average weekly shopping basket bought by your household. Calculate their food miles using the food miles calculator found at www.foodmiles.com.

FOOD ITEM	COUNTRY OF ORIGIN according to its label	AIR MILES TRAVELLED (km)	ESTIMATED CO ₂ /CARBON EMISSIONS
e.g. Fairtrade coffee	Brazil	8,650 km	By airplane – 1,935 kg CO ₂ or 528 kg carbon emissions
Total air miles travelled/ Total CO₂ emissions of your shopping basket:			

Note: The food miles calculator does not take into account all factors involved in the production of the goods. It only calculates the distance travelled by the item from the country of origin to the country of destination. For instance, it does not consider the energy taken to produce the food, the pollution created, refrigeration level necessary, distance it had to travel from point of harvest to point of packaging, or the distance it travelled to get to your local shop after reaching Ireland.