

Defining a Food System

Advance Preparation:

Write the three questions on a poster at the front of the room. Print food systems definitions and cut out each one.

The purpose of this activity is to come to a common understanding of the food system.

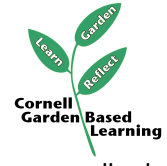
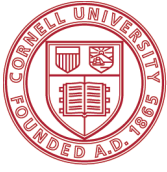
Activity:

1. Break into small groups to discuss the following questions. Use the italicized answers for your own reference.

1. What is a system?
 - a. *A set of interdependent parts forming a complex whole. A set of principles or procedures according to which something is done.*
2. What is a food system?
 - a. *The path that food travels from field to fork and beyond. Including the **growing, harvesting, processing, packaging, transporting, marketing, consuming, and disposing** of food. It includes the inputs needed and the outputs generated at each step.*
3. How do each of us, as individuals, fit into it?
 - a. *There are many ways. For example, as consumers, where we spend our money has an impact. Where and how much of our food we dispose has an impact. What types of foods we choose to eat has an impact. See how many you can list!*

2. Come back together to discuss our findings and come to a common understanding of the food system.

3. Pass out food system lingo terms. Ask for volunteers to read the definitions, pausing for thought after each definition. Ask if anyone has any questions? Anything they would like to share? Was anyone surprised by one of the definitions?



Food Systems Lingo Sheet

Food Security: The state of having reliable access to a sufficient quantity of safe, affordable, nutritious food.

Food Justice: The right of communities everywhere to produce, distribute, access, and eat quality food regardless of race, class, gender, ethnicity, citizenship, ability, religion, or community.

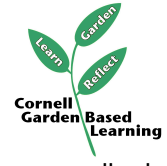
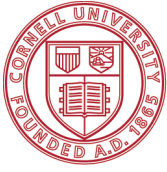
Food Desert: An area in which it is difficult to buy affordable or good-quality fresh, nutritious food.

Local Food: Food and other agricultural products that are produced, processed, and sold within a certain region, whether defined by distance, state border, or regional boundaries. The term is unregulated at the national level, meaning that each individual farmers market can define and regulate the term based on their mission and circumstances.

Organic Food: Food that is grown without the use of man-made fertilizers or pesticides, growth regulators and livestock feed additives.

GMO (Genetically Modified Organisms): Plants and animals whose genetic make-up has been altered to exhibit traits that they would not normally have, like longer shelf-life, different color, or resistance to certain chemicals. In general, genes are taken (copied) from one organism that shows a desired trait and transferred into the genetic code of another organism.

Food Waste: Food that is discarded, lost or uneaten. Causes are numerous and occur at the stages of production, processing, retailing and consumption. In the United States, 30-40% of the food supply is wasted.



Carbon footprint: A representation of the effect human activities have on the climate in terms of the total amount of greenhouse gases produced.

Community Garden: A plot of land that is gardened by a group of people to produce fruits, vegetables, flowers, and sometimes chickens for egg production. Community gardens exist in a variety of settings, urban and rural, on vacant lots, at schools or community centers, or on donated land. Food may be grown communally, or individuals or families may have individual garden plots or beds.

Fair Trade: An organized social movement and market-based approach that aims to help producers get better trading conditions and promote sustainability. The movement advocates the payment of a higher price to producers as well as higher social and environmental standards.

Food Miles: The distance food travels from where it is grown or raised to where it is ultimately purchased by the consumer or end-user.

Locavore: A person who exclusively or primarily eats foods produced within a predetermined radius from his or her home.

Free Range: Free-range, free-roaming, and pastured imply that a product comes from an animal that was raised unconfined and free to roam. “Free-range” claims on beef and eggs are unregulated, but USDA requires that poultry have access to the outdoors for an undetermined period each day.

Farmers' Market: A common facility or area where several farmers or growers gather on a regular, recurring basis to sell a variety of fresh fruits and vegetables and other locally-grown farm products directly to consumers.