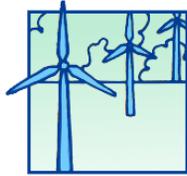
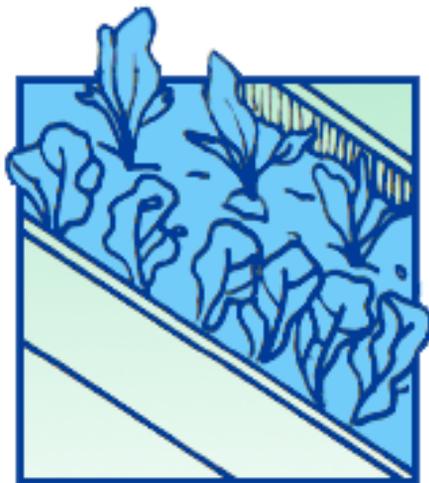


# 4. Eat local, eat well

TRANSITION



STREETS



Having a strong, local food system is essential if our communities are to be more self-reliant, less oil-dependent, and less exposed to the global weather and price fluctuations that affect how much we pay for our food.

In times of global shortage or local supply disruption, it's important that we are able to feed ourselves sufficient, nutritious food at a reasonable cost.

In the past, most of our communities were much more self-reliant. In fact, foodsheds around the U.S. were diversified with many regions around the country supplying grains, fruits, vegetables, meat, and dairy. This meant locally-owned farms and small businesses like grocers, meat markets, and bakeries were part of a local network rooted in community. However, the industrialization of our food system consolidated supply chains, while regional markets and distribution centers lost out to international agribusiness. Nowadays, we are disconnected from the origin of our food, which is brought to us by truck, ship or plane from countries around the world.

Investing in local food systems has multiple benefits. They create and protect local jobs while supporting, and even rejuvenating, local economies. Not having to ship food hundreds of miles means less truck traffic and less fossil fuel consumption, which of course means less carbon dioxide being emitted into the atmosphere.

When we grow our own produce locally, we can eat a great range of fresh, tasty, seasonal food often within hours of it being picked, with no [processing](#) or excessive packaging required. Fresher food often contains higher nutrient levels, which means local food can also be healthier. This doesn't mean that everything can be produced locally, or even regionally (bananas are unlikely to thrive in places that aren't tropical), but it makes a lot of sense to grow foods suited to your climate.

Thinking a little more about the true costs of eating bananas all year round makes them taste, well, a little less good.

Each of these actions can give you tasty, fresh food for less, cut CO2 emissions and other environmental and social impacts, and/or help build a strong local food system.

In your group, have a brief chat about each item and then decide which ones *you* want to tackle and when. Record your own action plan on the page at the end of this section.

- **Buy local, seasonal foods** (4.3)
- **Reduce food packaging** (4.7)
- **Minimize food waste** (4.9)
- **Try organic** (4.11)
- **Grow your own** (4.13)
- **Caring carnivores** (4.15)

### Food prices

While we all hear a lot about the rising cost of food for American households, we spend just 6.4 percent of our annual budget on food. <sup>[1]</sup> This doesn't mean food is cheaper in the U.S. than elsewhere in the world. Rather it means that the average amount spent on food by the average U.S. citizen, is less than in 83 countries tracked by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.



**Additional Resources:** Center for Food Safety's Cool Foods Campaign has a set of five principles that can help guide your discussion: <http://bit.ly/coolfoodsprinciples>

Cost: none

\$ Savings: low-  
med

Effort: low

CO2 saved: low-  
med

## Food challenge

Food is traveling farther than ever before. Throughout the U.S. family farms, local slaughterhouses, processing plants, local food distribution systems, and small shops have disappeared, unable to compete in today's global market. Over-centralization of food systems through [big box stores](#) has contributed to the demise of local business, heirloom seed varieties, and local food culture. Fortunately, this trend is beginning to reverse as the new generation champions local as part of the greater Food Movement.



## Solution

Local food is not just about “food miles,” it is also about food that is produced and distributed in ways that contribute positively to local communities. Ideally, communities should be easily able to buy as much locally produced food as possible. Locally organized food systems can help their communities to thrive by:

- Providing jobs and supporting business networks.
- Distributing food directly in our area, not sending it to distant supermarket distribution centers.
- Creating positive social connections while providing healthy, fresh, seasonal food for the community.

**Yes, but, ... some food can't be produced locally.** Trade is vital and very rarely can a local region be completely self-sufficient. Trade, if carried out in a fair way, also has many positive impacts, including education and improved quality of life. It's fine to buy things that can't be produced locally, but we can try to be sure the goods are produced fairly, wherever they come from.

### Your savings & benefits

Eating local food from a nearby farm is more likely to be healthy, fresh, and in season – when it tastes best!

Quality is likely to be higher than what you'd get at a big box store.

Local food can be cheaper, especially if it's in season.

Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) subscriptions save you time on shopping, and sometimes you can even have your CSA box delivered!

You get the joy of connecting with local farmers or market employees, and knowing you're contributing to growing a vibrant local food system.

Notes:

### Next steps, hints, & tips

- Begin with a small part of your food shopping —try the local butcher, fish, or cheese shops.
- Use the Local Food Guide —try local wine, cider, beer, and juice too.
- Have fresh, local food delivered to your door (see next page) or use a wheeled cart to help ease the shopping load.
- Support local, independent food markets. Ask them to stock local produce.
- Buy your food directly from the farm, farm stand, or farmers market.
- Visit a local organic farm and learn more about food production (a perfect outing for the entire family)
- Check which foods are in season and how to use them at <http://www.eatwellguide.org/>
- Ask for more local, organic food in your school, hospital, workplace, and whenever you eat out (a steady customer base helps local businesses thrive).
- Use local currency if available—it keeps money in the community and supports independent businesses.

### Community-Supported Agriculture (CSA)

Consumers interested in safe food and farmers seeking stable markets for their crops join together in economic partnership known as CSAs, a popular way to get access to fresh, local, seasonal foods. CSA farms in the U.S. currently number more than 4,000. Most are located near urban areas in the New England, Mid-Atlantic, and Great Lakes regions, with growing numbers in other areas, including the West Coast.

The majority sell only [organic](#) produce and generally vary from week to week depending on what is ripe enough to harvest. A few farms exclusively sell home-grown produce while others source additional stock from other local growers. And many CSAs ask for a list of up to three vegetables you don't like which they swap for something else.

CSA boxes are competitively priced, often coming in cheaper than organic supermarket produce. Some CSAs will deliver to your door, while others deliver to a central location for pickup.

#### Local CSA options:

- Use this section to list CSA options in your area:
- (include farm name, City, link to CSA information)

**Additional Resources:** To learn more about the **benefits of eating organic**, visit

[http://bit.ly/centerforfoodsafety\\_organic](http://bit.ly/centerforfoodsafety_organic)

**Local Harvest** is a great resource to explore to see what kind of CSA works for you and your family. Enter your zip code to sort by distance, price and, best-selling items. The site also gives you access to a wide variety of items in their catalog, including honey, preserves, seeds, dairy, eggs, meats, and syrups. Visit <http://www.localharvest.org/csa/>



When the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) began publishing the National Directory of Farmers' Markets in 1994, there were 1,755 farmers' markets. In 2014 that number had grown to 8,268, illustrating the growth of the Food Movement.<sup>[2]</sup> Increasingly, towns and cities offer spring and winter markets. Additionally, "pick your own" options (for blueberries, apples, corn, etc.) are popular in many regions of the country. Supporting agro-tourism is another way to support the financial viability of small, local farms.

### Local Farmers Markets

- Use this section to list farmers' markets in your area. Include location and days & time of operation. Note that many farmers' markets are seasonal, though some are year-round.

### Local Farm Stands

- Use this section to list any farm stands in your area (some farms, community gardens, or gardeners sell directly to the public through roadside or on-farm market stands). Include dates, times, and seasons of operation.

### Pick Your Own

- Use this section to list any pick-your-own operations in your area. Include dates, times, and seasons of operation.

### Local Farm Tours

- Use this section to list any local farms that provide farm tours, and whether there is a cost.



# Transition Streets

## 4.7 REDUCE FOOD PACKAGING

The Practical Action Plan

Cost: none

\$ Savings:  
none-low

Effort: low

CO2 saved: low-med

Food challenge

Our shopping bags are bulging, trash cans are overflowing, and we're running out of landfill sites to dispose of it all. We're being swamped by packaging—and food packaging is a major culprit.

According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), food and packaging/containers account for almost 45% of the materials landfilled in the United States.<sup>[3]</sup>



Solution

By reducing the amount of food and packaging discarded, you can significantly reduce your waste stream and save money.

We can take responsibility for reducing the amount of packaging waste that we bring into our homes.

That which we cannot avoid, we can choose to dispose of through reuse or recycling rather than landfill.



**EPA Food Recovery Challenge:** To reduce food reaching landfills, save money, and help communities, the Environmental Protection Agency started the Food Recovery Challenge.

Read more here: <http://www.epa.gov/foodrecoverychallenge/>

### Your benefits & savings

Ready-chopped vegetables go bad faster, cost more, and create climate-harming plastic waste. Moreover, bagged salads have been found to harbor pathogens.<sup>[4]</sup> Buying leafy greens intact and washing and cutting them yourself can save money and reduce waste stream.

### Notes:

Many towns, cities, and even the state of California are banning single-use plastic bags!

Join them by saying “no” to plastic at the check-out counter. For more info : <http://zerowastehome.blogspot.com/p/tips.html>

### Next steps, hints, & tips

- Buy fruit and vegetables loose or in paper bags from local shops.
- Purchase dry goods (nuts, rice, etc.) from the bulk section. Bring your own containers (jars, bags, etc.) to fill.
- Take bags with you to the store (keep them in a place where you'll be sure to remember them, like a bike basket or the trunk of your car).
- Always carry a spare bag for spontaneous shopping!
- Choose larger sizes rather than individually packaged portions.
- Buy refills for things like laundry detergent and other cleaning products.
- Look for biodegradable packaging such as cardboard.
- Find out if there's a local milkman who will deliver in glass bottles.
- Look for products that come in recycled materials.
- Ask shop managers what they're doing to reduce packaging and insist they step up their efforts.
- Reuse or recycle all the waste packaging that you can—many containers make great seedling trays and plant pots!

## 4.9 REDUCE FOOD WASTE

Cost: none

\$ Savings: low-  
med

Effort: low

CO2 saved: low-  
med

## Food challenge

Food waste is a moral issue and a climate issue. Around a third of all the food we buy ends up being thrown in the trash and most of this could have been eaten. In the US, more than 65 billion pounds of food is thrown away each year, making food waste the single largest component of municipal solid waste reaching landfills and incinerators according to the EPA.

According to the Washington Post, “In 2012, the most recent year for which estimates are available, Americans threw out roughly 35 million tons of food, according to the EPA. That's almost 20 percent more food than the United States tossed out in 2000, 50 percent more than in 1990, and nearly three times what Americans discarded in 1960, when the country threw out a now seemingly paltry 12.2 million tons.”<sup>[5]</sup> And yet, globally one in nine people suffer from chronic hunger, and in the US 14% of families have trouble putting food on the table.<sup>[6-7]</sup>

Not only is good food not feeding hungry people, but food waste squanders precious resources like energy and fresh water. Wasting food costs the average family hundreds of dollars a year and has serious environmental implications. Food in landfills produces methane, a greenhouse gas with 21 times the potency of CO<sub>2</sub>.

## Solution

A number of issues lie at the heart of this problem:

- A lack of planning when food shopping: We buy more than we need, and then it goes bad (often seduced by “buy one, get one free” type offers).
- Poor food storage knowledge: Things go bad sooner than they would if we knew how to keep them fresh.
- A lack of confidence around cooking: How do we make tasty food from leftovers and gauge portion control?
- Confusion over food date labels: best before versus use by.

Some food waste is unavoidable, but home composting ensures the environmental impacts are minimised. Composting is a great way to avoid methane emissions from food waste, and when compost is applied to soils, it improves soil quality, which encourages plant growth and carbon sequestration in plants and soil. Composting is a “climate-smart” activity!

### Your savings

The average family can save money on their food bill by following these simple steps:

Notes:

**Additional resources:** For more great tips and ideas for reducing food waste, visit <http://foodshift.net/>

### Next steps, hints, & tips

- Measure portions more accurately.
- We often waste carbs: rice, pasta, potatoes, and bread. Keep bread in the freezer and take out half a loaf at a time. Too much soup or risotto? Freeze it for a lazy day.
- Use the online portion calculator at [www.lovefoodhatewaste.com](http://www.lovefoodhatewaste.com) (a great site from the UK).
- Plan all meals for a week and write your shopping list accordingly. You will save time and spend less.
- Keep essentials in the cupboard, fridge, and freezer and you will always be able to make a meal.
- Keep an eye on dated produce and eat it in time or freeze it.
- Always follow manufacturer's storage instructions.
- Ensure your fridge is cold enough to keep your food fresh.
- Learn how to love your leftovers. Make (and freeze) stock from vegetable trimmings or chicken carcasses. Add one fresh ingredient to leftovers and repurpose them into a tasty stir-fry. Turn old bread into croutons or soak in water and feed to your chickens. Find more leftover ideas on sites like Pinterest.

Cost: none-med

\$ Savings:  
none-low

Effort: low

CO2 saved: low-  
med

Many people buy organic food because they instinctively feel that food without synthetic, toxic pesticides designed to kill insects and weeds are healthier for humans—and they're right. A new study in the *British Journal of Nutrition* analyzed 343 studies published in scientific journals and found that statistically significant differences exist between organic and nonorganic crops. Those differences are due, in large part, to the four-times-higher frequency with which pesticide residues are found in conventional (i.e. non-organic) crops.<sup>[8]</sup> Non-organic leafy greens, potatoes, and strawberries are sprayed particularly heavily with chemicals, and washing cannot remove all the residues.

Organic food has higher amounts of minerals and vitamins. Organic food is not genetically modified, and it avoids controversial additives including aspartame, MSG, and hydrogenated fats. Organic animals are not subjected to routine use of antibiotics. There is mounting evidence that antibiotic use inevitably leads to the development of antibiotic resistant bacteria and decreases the effectiveness of drugs to combat infections.<sup>[9]</sup>

Organic farming is much better for the climate: it uses on average 30-50% less fossil fuel than conventional farms.<sup>[10]</sup> Organic farms support on average 34% more different types of species than conventional farms, and up to 50% more different species of pollinators such as bees.<sup>[11]</sup> Organic farming relies on wildlife to help control natural pests rather than harmful chemicals, so bugs, birds, and bees flourish.

**Yes, but ... it's much more expensive.** Organic food does often cost more, depending on what you are buying and when. The reasons for this price difference have to do mainly with subsidies, which are geared toward large-scale, intensive commodity agriculture, which passes on its true costs to society.



## Food Challenge

The real cost of our food is disguised; it's not as cheap as we think it is. So who is paying the real price? According to the Organic Farming Research Foundation:

*“The cost of organic food is higher than that of conventional food because the organic price tag more closely reflects the true cost of growing the food: substituting labor and intensive management for chemicals, the health and environmental costs of which are borne by society. These costs include cleanup of polluted water and remediation of pesticide contamination. Prices for organic foods include costs of growing, harvesting, transportation and storage. In the case of processed foods, processing and packaging costs are also included.*

*Organically produced foods must meet stricter regulations governing all these steps than conventional foods. The intensive management and labor used in organic production are frequently (though not always) more expensive than the chemicals routinely used on conventional farms. There is mounting evidence that if all the indirect costs of conventional food production were factored into the price of food, organic foods would cost the same, or, more likely, be cheaper than conventional food.” [12]*

## Hints & tips for paying less for your organic food

- Bulk buy with friends or neighbors (or your Transition Streets group).
- Buy a weekly vegetable/meat share from a local organic farmer (see section 4.6 on community-supported agriculture).
- Grow some of your own organic food (see next page for ideas).
- Offer free labor to a local organic farmer in exchange for produce.

Notes:

Cost: low

\$ Savings: med

Effort: low-med

CO2 saved: low-  
med

## Food challenge

By growing your own food you are starting to become less reliant on the big food conglomerates. Rising food costs, supply disruption, and valid concerns over food quality and safety all raise questions about the source of the food we eat. For example, if your community has an extreme weather event like the Polar Vortex or Hurricane Sandy and supermarket shelves quickly empty, do you have any means to supplement what's in your freezer and cupboards with fresh, healthy produce? As drought lingers in California and food prices continue to rise, can you help protect your weekly food budget?



## Solution

Anyone can grow their own fruit and vegetables, even when space is limited. [Pots, window boxes, and hanging baskets](#) can all be turned into mini food gardens and give you months of delicious produce. Plus, it's a wonderful, empowering feeling to eat what you have grown. It's not difficult to do and can save you money and build community. Here are 5 easy-to-grow food items:

- Potatoes—can grow in tubs or old sacks, top them up as leaves grow.
- Garlic—store what you don't eat for a year-round supply.
- Mixed salad leaves—"cut and come again" varieties are great.
- Strawberries—stick a few plants in a hanging basket.
- Runner beans—can climb up rails or trellises.

**Yes, but .... I do want to grow things but have no outside space at all.** Consider joining a local community garden or "yard-share" program (where landowners share yard space with landless gardeners in exchange for produce). Visit <http://www.pinterest.com/coolfoods/urban-gardening/> for tips on growing food in urban areas.

### Your savings & benefits

While growing your own fruit and vegetables is satisfying, there are some vegetable that are especially cost-effective to grow: <sup>[13]</sup>

- Lettuce
- Bell Peppers
- Garlic
- Winter Squash
- Tomatoes
- Broccoli

**Yes, but ... It's a lot of work!** Yes, it takes some effort to set up your kitchen garden (which can help you stay in shape!) but when designed well, it can also be very low maintenance. Research permaculture principles or Masanobu Fukuoka's "one straw revolution" for inspiration.

Notes:

### Next steps, hints, & tips

- For your family's health, grow everything organically.
- Learn basic skills online at sites like <http://bit.ly/organicgardening4beginners>
- Join a local organic gardening course.
- Get some seeds, plant them in healthy soil, water them, wait until they ripen, then eat!
- Visit local gardens and be inspired.
- Consider gardening with a partner or another family.
- Join or start a "Crop Swap" or "Produce Exchange," where fellow gardeners gather to exchange surplus produce—which can include items like fresh eggs or honey—for free. Crop Swaps can take place anywhere, but it is a good idea to establish a regular time and place. Most swaps are seasonal. Check out these examples to learn more:  
<http://cropandswap.blogspot.com/p/wh-at-ithe-crop-swap.html>  
<http://opengardenproject.blogspot.com/p/weekly-veggie-exchanges.html>  
[http://bit.ly/transitionberkeley\\_cropswap](http://bit.ly/transitionberkeley_cropswap)

## 4.15 CARING CARNIVORES

Cost: none

\$ Savings: low-  
med

Effort: low

CO2 saved: low-  
med

## Food challenge

Animals raised in concentrated animal feed operations (CAFOs) or “factory farms” are not only an environmental nightmare, but a travesty on many levels. CAFOs pollute the air with foul smells and gases, contaminate surface and groundwater, and overwhelm the ability of ecosystems to absorb waste. They are cruel to the animals and contribute to antibiotic resistance, as animals housed in close quarters are routinely given antibiotics both to accelerate their growth and keep them from succumbing to disease.

The carbon and methane emissions associated with livestock production are significant contributors to climate change. It is often argued that because animals raised in confinement live shorter lives than animals raised on pasture, the former are more advantageous from a climate perspective. However, these arguments do not factor in the heavy greenhouse gas emissions associated with corn and soy feed production. In fact, 36% percent of the world’s crop calories are used to feed livestock (55% feed people directly, while biofuels and industrial products use the other 9%).<sup>[14]</sup>

According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the United States is the third largest per capita meat consumer behind Luxembourg and Hong Kong. The FAO states that "Evidence suggests that poor people, especially young children and their mothers in developing countries, are not consuming enough animal-based food... while other people, particularly in developed countries, are consuming too much." <sup>[15]</sup>



# Transition Streets

## 4.16 CARING CARNIVORES

The Practical  
Action Plan

Cost: none

\$ Savings: low-  
med

Effort: low

CO2 saved: low-  
med

Solution

Because our diet is too meat-rich, we should consume less of it. And when we do eat meat, we need to buy the highest quality.

Since high quality grass-fed meat is more expensive and seasonal, we should “eat less & eat better.”

When it comes to choosing animal products, the environmentally optimal solution is to support small-scale, diversified farms that integrate holistic livestock management practices.



photo credit <http://www.flickr.com/photos/ewanrayment/2825173460/>



**Yes, but .... I'm a vegetarian so I'm OK.** If you're a vegetarian, make sure that you buy organic dairy products and eggs from local producers. Organic animal products are healthier for you and for the climate.



### Your savings

In addition to money saved on your weekly shopping (from buying less meat), you can improve your health (and lower your long-term healthcare costs) by avoiding meats that have been raised with antibiotics, hormones and so forth.

A diet with less meat generally boosts the intake of fiber, fruit, vegetables, and generally lowers the intake of saturated fat. Evidence suggests that eating a diet rich in vegetables and fruits can increase longevity. This dietary pattern helps to reduce the risk of chronic diseases such as cardiovascular disease and some cancers.<sup>[16]</sup>

### Notes:

### Next steps, hints, & tips

- You don't have to give it up! Try one meat-free day per week, and gradually reduce the number of days you eat meat per week.
- Eat local pasture-raised meat. Not only is this meat more climate-friendly, it is from a source you can trust.
- Consider ordering meat directly from a producer you know and trust.
- Instead of making meat your main dish, use a little meat for flavor. In many cuisines, meat is used as a condiment.
- Move meat from the middle to the side of the plate. Move what you may have considered side dishes like vegetables, grains, beans and salads to the center.
- It is hard to know the story of your meat when you go out to eat. So, another tip is to choose the vegetarian or vegan option when you go out for dinner.

### **Additional Resources:**

Check out the site "Meatless Monday" for more info, inspiration, and recipes [www.meatlessmonday.com](http://www.meatlessmonday.com)

## 4.18 YOUR FOOD ACTION PLAN

Reminder

Possible actions:

- Buy local, seasonal foods (4.3)
- Reduce food packaging (4.7)
- Minimize food waste (4.9)
- Try Organic (4.11)
- Grow your own (4.13)
- Caring carnivores (4.15)

**What other ideas does your group have that aren't covered above?  
Add them below if you think they are relevant for you.**

My actions	Already done	When I'll do this	Notes

Group actions

How can you help each other out in your group? List team actions here (with named person and due date):



## Transition Streets

### 4.20 FOOD: THE BIGGER PICTURE DISCUSSION

#### Questions for discussion

We saw in the first action that buying local, seasonal, organic food from independent shops has environmental benefits and helps our local economies thrive.

However, many of us shop at major supermarkets. (For more about supermarkets see end of this chapter.)

- What benefits do these large supermarket chains offer us?
- What are the downsides?
- How important is a strong, local food system to our town and our community?
- How might you overcome some of the barriers to supporting local shops and buying organic produce?

Notes:

# Transition Streets

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