

“Examining the total impact of any product involves a deep look into all of the resources used in production, transportation, use, and disposal”

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 *Latest in a series of posts on the environment* 

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Community Supported Agriculture, Part 2

In last week’s post we talked about the idea that buying local is the best way to help the environment. The United Nations even recommends it as a way to lower your carbon footprint. There are definite benefits of buying local, and we will cover those in this series, but lowering the transportation footprint of your food is not the biggest-impact decision you can make.

Life Cycle Analysis

Examining the total impact of any product involves a deep look into all of the resources used in production, transportation, use, and disposal. It is a complex process that involves a lot of data and/or assumptions. When I was in grad school, we had access to an incredibly sophisticated (and I’m sure incredibly expensive) Life Cycle Analysis software that would really

come in handy for this blog. (Santa, if you're reading this post, you know what to bring me for Christmas!)

Organizations with access to vast quantities of data to analyze on this subject can look at several stages of food production and their individual impacts. The website Our World in Data specifically examines the following . . .

- **Land Use Change:** aboveground changes in biomass from deforestation, and belowground changes in soil carbon
- **Farm:** methane emissions from cows, rice, etc.; emissions from fertilizers, manure, and farm machinery
- **Animal Feed:** on-farm emissions from crop production and its processing into feed for livestock
- **Processing:** emissions from energy use in the process of converting raw agricultural products into final food items
- **Transport:** emissions from energy use in the transport of food items in-country and internationally
- **Retail:** emissions from energy use in refrigeration and other retail processes
- **Packaging:** emissions from the production of packaging materials, material transport, and end-of-life disposal

continue on Alison's blog

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