

'The global food system is broken. It's not just drought. Or famine. Or a bad harvest. A whole host of factors such as climate change, land grabs, food price spikes and intensive farming are stopping nearly 900 million - that's 1 in 8 people - worldwide from having enough to eat.'
Oxfam

Food for all

There is enough food to feed everyone in the world, but it is unfairly distributed across the globe. Local and global food systems are complex, unequal and contradictory so that although the world's food surplus increases each year, still more people go to bed hungry each night. Food does not reach war torn communities, those affected by disaster or those where land is used to grow food for others in affluent societies. Access to enough safe and nutritious food to maintain a healthy and active life is known as **Food Security**.

Over the past 20 years a movement has emerged from small-scale producers in the global south demanding change. The **Food Sovereignty** campaign is for a more radical overhaul of the current food production system going beyond food security to a system that would mean putting producers and consumers in charge of decisions over our food system, rather than powerful, unaccountable private interests.

Here are just some of the global issues which **Food** raises:

Who grows your food?

According to an EU Survey in 2003, in England for every farmer under the age of 35, there are ten over the age of 65; a ratio that has more than doubled since 1993. This holds implications both for farmers here and abroad. Employment in farming in Western Europe and the USA represents a very small proportion of the workforce, as increasingly large scale mechanised farming takes over.

A range of factors including changing lifestyles, increasing quantities of processed foods and ready-to-eat meals, work patterns, globalisation and 'modernisation' has led to domination of food production by four global food giants. The focus on food as a commodity like any other has resulted in farmers being squeezed and forced to diversify with off-farm income sources such as tourism.

The National Farmers Union and Farmers for Action continue to push for fairer pricing. How can it be sustainable for dairy farmers to sell milk to the supermarkets for less than it cost them to produce? The crisis in British dairy farming has raised the question of whether Fairtrade is something that could apply here in the 'developed' world as well as in the 'developing' countries.

Indeed, farmers all over the world are facing insurmountable problems. Farmers in the global south, meanwhile, are feeding most of the world's people – trade that could lead to growth and development in ideal circumstances. Yet many of the world's farmers are under contract to supply multinational agri-businesses, resulting in suppressed prices and an unfavourable trading climate for small producers. Such contracts tie farmers into supplies of sterile seeds, fertilisers, pesticides with prices determined by the multinationals for their benefit, a vicious cycle leading to debt and in some countries high levels of suicide. In India the suicide rate for farmers has soared over 40% higher than that in other lines of work

Who controls the global food chain?

'From the seed to the farm to the store to your table, corporations are seeking total control over biodiversity, land, and water. They are seeking control over how food is grown, processed, and distributed. And in seeking this total control, they are destroying the Earth's ecological processes, our farmers, our health, and our freedoms.'

Vandana Shiva, Indian activist

The journey of the food you eat to your plate is a global story, with four giant transnationals known as the ABCD group, **A**DM, **B**unge, **C**argill and (Louis) **D**reyfus, accounting for between 75% and 90% of the global grain trade. Never heard of these companies? It's not surprising. Because they do not sell directly to the public they lack regulation and public accountability. The wide global reach of Cargill includes being the largest poultry producer in Thailand, the biggest meat exporter in Argentina and the largest soya grower in Brazil. Soya that feeds UK hens that supply McDonald's Chicken McNuggets across Europe – the scale is breath-taking.

What impact does wealth have on diet?

As wealth increases in China and India eating habits are changing, with preferences for a greater consumption of processed foods leading to striking changes. The average height of a Chinese child has risen and malnutrition has fallen by 50% however, at the same time an increase in child obesity has taken place. In the Western world the cheapest calories are usually those heavily advertised, processed and least nutritious. People tend to eat the same volume of food regardless of the calorie content, hence high density foods such as fast food, fizzy drinks, sweets and snacks lead to weight gain. Food related illness is also on the rise due to over-consumption of sugar. The environment doesn't escape damage either, with animal-based foods requiring more water, energy and nutrient resources to produce.

How well-travelled is your food?

Over 50% of vegetables and 95% of fruit eaten in the UK comes from abroad. Processed food also involves long journeys, usually by ship, before reaching your plate. Scampi from Scotland may have been to China to be hand-shelled before making the return journey to be sold 'locally'. Food represents almost 30% of goods transported on Britain's roads, resulting in congestion, accidents, emissions and wear and tear – a bill picked up by society and the environment.

Too good to waste?

Up to 30% of food globally is never eaten, according to the 2011 Foresight Report put together by over 400 experts in 35 countries. Food waste occurs at all stages of the food supply chain, whether it is grain loss to pests, inadequate packaging, over production, over buying in homes or confusion about best before dates. One example for tackling this is the Gleaning Network where volunteers salvage un-harvested food on farms all over the 'developed' world. This food, deemed too ugly for supermarket shelves, is donated to food banks, an increasing presence in the UK, to bridge the problems of food poverty. Using what is available is viewed positively by farmers who do not want to see what they have grown go to waste and gleaners raise the profile of food waste offering a very practical solution.

Should we keep food for eating?

Food crops in the form of corn, sugar-cane and soybeans are increasingly being diverted to produce a range of non-edible products including fuel, compostable plastic and clothes. In the USA alone subsidies of US\$11 bn have led to huge increases in the production of food fuel as an alternative to crude oil, which is dependent on foreign supply. Meeting global plastic demand from corn would take two thirds of the harvest worldwide whilst filling an average family car tank with bio-fuel could take a similar amount of corn that could feed a person for a whole year. Not to mention the water, soil and land resources needed to grow corn destined for the production of a wide range of goods, from socks to containers.

No easy answers in a globalised world?

Rich nations are buying arable land in foreign, mostly low income, countries to ensure continued access to food in times of crisis thus leaving food-exporting nations more vulnerable to shortages and famine. In the past, although the UN World Food Programme is struggling to feed 5.6m Darfur refugees, Sudan has agreed to let Egypt grow and export 2m tonnes of wheat within its borders, whilst South Korea has leased huge areas of Madagascar, Libya is growing wheat in the Ukraine and Japan has secured over a billion dollars of land in the US.



Learning in a global context

Children are entitled to learn in a global context. They encounter world views from their families, cultures and communities. A school curriculum, set in a global context, deepens their understanding and engagement with the complexities of that world. Teaching about **Food** requires teachers to be familiar with global issues that affect all our lives and to impart knowledge, skills and values that will equip children to live and be active in an interdependent, globalised world.

Real, relevant, current issues

The global topic of **Food** affects pupils' daily lives and health past and present. Ethical food production and consumption requires us all to develop new ways of thinking, acting and living for a sustainable, equitable future. It gives purpose to work across the curriculum with rich data and real-life scenarios around universal themes of consumerism and current issues. It opens up debate around alternative ways to tackle extreme poverty and inequality and offers differing perspectives on poverty and wealth.

Social justice, not charity

Fundraising campaigns that aim to evoke sympathy may instil feelings of guilt, with limited educational value. Encouraging children to research and question global issues helps them understand that there are more effective ways for governments and people to achieve a more sustainable and equitable world than charity.

Broaden perceptions, counter stereotypes

No country is uniformly rich or poor: inequality exists within, as well as between countries, including the UK. There is much to be learnt from others, whatever their situation. Media coverage of people and places may reinforce common stereotypes. Adverts and images can imply dependency and uniform poverty in southern countries, especially in the diverse continent of Africa.

Thinking critically about Food issues

There can be **ENOUGH FOOD FOR EVERYONE IF...**

- we give enough aid to stop children dying from hunger and help the poorest families feed themselves,
- governments stop big companies dodging tax in poor countries, so that millions of people can free themselves from hunger,
- we stop poor farmers being forced off their land and grow crops to feed people not fuel cars,
- governments and big companies are honest and open about their actions that stop people getting enough food.

With this in mind work through these questions:

Self-reflective questions:

Focus - what do I think about this?

Why do I think like that? To what extent am I open to changing my point of view?

- ~ Do you have access to enough nutritious healthy food?
- ~ Do the children attending your school?
- ~ Are there foods you avoid buying because of the expense? Or food-miles and sustainability?
- ~ Have you ever gone hungry? If so, under what circumstances? How did it you feel?
- ~ Do you think hunger and malnutrition in other parts of the world have anything to do with your life and the choices you make?

Group Dialogue questions:

Focus - what do other people think about this?

How can I find different perspectives?

Analyse assumptions, implications and contradictions? And how can I engage with complexity, conflict, uncertainty and difference?

Discuss these questions with others:

- ~ How do you define poverty?
- ~ Is food poverty present in your locality?
- ~ Does your area operate a food bank? If so, what are the local consequences of this?
- ~ How can you talk to children in your class about this? What do they need to understand?
- ~ What are our responsibilities and actions as individuals in the face of others going hungry?
- ~ What are the responsibilities of governments and big companies?

Curriculum planning

Literacy, Language and Communication

- ~ Present, dramatise, debate and discuss learning on the theme of food, food choices or lack of food, or Fairtrade;
- ~ Select and use appropriate register to communicate about issues, e.g. writing letters about food banks or persuasive texts to encourage children to eat more fruit;
- ~ Analyse advertisements/ images/ media stories from multiple perspectives e.g. adverts for 'junk' food, or NGO adverts about poverty and hunger;
- ~ Use mother tongue and/or MFL to investigate vocabulary related to food or cultural traditions related to food, e.g. celebration events.

Physical

- ~ Within PE lessons and as part of science work, pupils learn about the importance of leading a healthy, active life
- ~ Pupils understand that proper nutrition impacts on health and the ability to perform well in sport
- ~ Pupils show through movement and dance how food chains and webs are interdependent

Personal, Social, Health, Citizenship and Economic Education

- ~ learn about the difference between wants and needs and that not everyone has their needs met in relation to food;
- ~ recognise the role of voluntary, community and pressure groups in relation to food and hunger issues, e.g. War on Want about local food issues
- ~ develop their sense of social justice and moral responsibility and begin to understand that their own choices can affect local, national or global issues: like food waste, food banks or the impact of a new supermarket on local shops

Knowledge and Understanding of the World

- ~ Environmental changes that affect the lives and activities of people, animals and habitats;
- ~ different ways people can both improve and damage the environment;
- ~ religions where fasting is part of a tradition within several faiths, e.g. Christianity (Lent), Islam (Ramadan), Harvest festival;
- ~ economic activity, trade and fair trade;
- ~ air miles, issues of sustainability and choice around buying local food ingredients;
- ~ climate zones, and which foods grow where

Creative

- ~ design, make and cook healthy nutritious foods, from recipes for a variety of occasions, with a range of produce;
- ~ investigate menus sourced on a theme, i.e. locally grown or vegetarian recipes, and demonstrate creativity through creating own menus for real or imagined events, such as a wedding banquet or a tea party for parents;
- ~ grow and cook foods from their own classrooms or school grounds, or set up a café for role-play.

Mathematical, Scientific and Technical

- ~ use mathematical vocabulary to explore real life global issues around food, food choices or lack of food, and gather, interpret and present data comparisons that display food choices, e.g. pictograms showing favourite fruits;
- ~ learn about habitats and how different animals and plants are adapted to their environment and interdependent e.g. through food chains and webs
- ~ explore examples of human impact (both positive and negative) on environments: e.g. palm oil is a cheap food ingredient but logging of forests destroys orang-utan habitats.

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