

Food



Food is a necessity of life for each member of our ever-growing global population. Agriculture is not only as an essential part of our livelihoods, but also a major influence on how our natural resources are used. For this reason, supporting and adopting sustainable food practices can reduce our overall environmental impact.

The Impact of Commercial Food Production:

- According to the Federal Government, **clearing land for agriculture accounts for about half of the deforestation** that occurs in Canada. Forests world-wide are cut down to provide room for farm land. Plus, the use of land for agriculture reduces the quality of that soil and alters the ecosystem, making the long-term use of land more difficult.
- When factory or large commercial farms grow a single type of crop year after year, **a loss of biodiversity, degraded soil fertility and increased crop susceptibility to disease occur**. Large scale animal farms are also major contributors to greenhouse gases and water pollution.
- While many aspects of food production and consumption require energy, it is the **creation of synthetic fertilizers that requires the most energy**.¹
- Natural gas is the main energy source for creating the high pressures and temperatures needed to create synthetic fertilizers and the **burning of this fossil fuel lead to the production of greenhouse gases**.²
- **Agriculture is the single largest human use of water in Alberta**, a phenomenon that is true for many countries worldwide³. In many agricultural centers, freshwater sources, such as groundwater, rivers and streams cannot meet the demand for irrigation in addition to all other human uses.

Did you know?

The production of one kilogram of nitrogen fertilizer requires more energy than what one and a half litres of diesel fuel would provide.

— Canadian Agricultural Engineering

Food Definitions

Organic

Organic farms do not use synthetic fertilizers, pesticides, growth regulators and livestock additives like antibiotics. These farms also promote biodiversity, work towards maintaining soil fertility and treat animals humanely. While many products claim to be organic, only products that carry the logo of a third-party certifier can substantiate that claim. Farms and products that are certified organic are held accountable to specific standards and guidelines for production and processing operations. This ensures the integrity of organic products for consumers and retailers.⁴ In Canada our certifying body is *Canada Organic* which requires foods to be composed of at least 95 per cent organic ingredients.⁵



Fair Trade

Fair trade is the broad concept of fairness and decency in the marketplace. It aims to secure fair wages and prices for producers and to create meaningful long-term trading relationships between producers and purchasing companies across countries. However, *Fairtrade* is the specific fair trade certification system that is run by *Fairtrade International* and its hundreds of regional member organizations, including *Fairtrade Canada*. This third-party certification system is used worldwide and ensures that certain criteria for environmental and social responsibility have been met.⁶



Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs)

A GMO can be defined as an organism, such as a plant or animal, that has been altered through human activities like controlled breeding or genetic engineering to enhance specific traits. Examples of preferred traits include increased nutritional value, increased resistance to freezing temperatures or pests. The long-term effects of GMOs on human health are unknown and much controversy exists. Some studies have shown concerns for the environment (*i.e. harm to other natural species*) and economy (*i.e. patented plant varieties raising the price of seeds*⁷).

**“You are not
Atlas carrying
the world on
your shoulder.
It is good to
remember that
the planet is
carrying you”**

– Vandana Shiva

Sustainable Food Practices

Eating Local and Seasonal

A food is considered to be local if it originates from a production system that is located as close to you as possible. Some people follow a 100 km diet, where they don't eat food products that originate more than 100 km away from them. This is not feasible everywhere. Appropriate distances vary by food type and region because in some places (*like Edmonton*) food cannot be produced year-round due to climate restrictions. No matter what time of year or where you reside, there are always local options for certain products such as eggs, meat or root vegetables.

There are many benefits to buying local, including:

- Supporting farmers as well as local community and economy.
- Reducing the food miles, or distance travelled by the product to reach your plate.

In addition to buying local, it is important to consider the season in which you buy food. The energy required to grow food outside of its season (*i.e. maintain a greenhouse or support cold production methods*) can be greater than the impact of transporting that food over a long distance. Both food miles and the method of food production should be considered when seeking to reduce the impact of your food choices.

Vegetarian and Vegan Diets

A vegetarian is generally considered to be someone whose diet does not include poultry, meat, fish, or seafood. A vegan is someone who does not consume or use any animal products or by-products (*i.e. honey, eggs, milk, etc.*). Some health advantages of being vegetarian or vegan include lower risk of chronic diseases, such as heart attacks or obesity. Choosing to reduce the amount of meat consumed or eliminating it altogether can reduce your impact on greenhouse gases, pollution and agriculture-related water use. Red meat production creates 150 per cent more greenhouse gases than the production of poultry and seafood because cattle require more grain to meet their dietary needs.⁸ Meat production also consumes a large amount of water.⁹

“ Don't eat anything incapable of rotting.”

– Michael Pollan

Eliminate Food Waste

About one quarter of household waste is organic food waste¹⁰. Because landfills are built to be air tight, it can take decades for organic food waste to break down. Therefore, it's important to compost organics instead of throwing them in the trash.

Tips for reducing food waste:

- Decide what meals you will eat for the next week before you shop.
- Make your shopping list based on the meals you plan to eat.
- Create standard grocery lists for recipes that you use often.
- Cook appropriate portions and pay attention to how much your family eats.
- Store your food properly.
- Use your leftovers.

BYO Container

Another way of reducing the impact of your food consumption is by bringing your own (BYO) reusable beverage or food container. Not only does this reduce the waste created, it can also save you money. An eco-discount is a discount given to people who bring their own mug, plate, or container to the following locations on campus:

In SUB

Java Jive *any size personal coffee mug for \$1.65; other beverages five cents off a 10 oz. cup*

L'Express *20 cent discount with personal food containers; Tupperware dishes available for sale for \$15.00 with a free first meal*

Taco Time *20 cent discount with personal food container*

Edo Japan *25 cent discount with personal food container*

Marco's Famous *25 cent discount with personal container*

Cram Dunk *25 cent discount with personal mug*

Subway *25 cent discount with personal container*

Juicy *10 cent discount with personal container*

Did you know?

In fast food restaurants, takeout packaging and utensils account for 26,560 tonnes of waste in Canada per year.

– Environment Canada

In HUB

Java Jive \$1.65 flat rate for coffee when you BYOM, five cents off other drinks

Cookies By George 20 cents off when you BYOM, or 55 cents off when you buy a Cookies By George reusable mug

Bar Teca 40 cent discount when you BYOM

In ETLC

Tim Horton's 5 cent discount when you BYOM

Reduce Packaging and Processing

Packaging

In Canada, packaging from food items makes up about 30 per cent of the waste going to landfills.¹¹ There are many simple ways to reduce packaging waste, such as choosing un-packaged products and bulk items. If packaging is unavoidable try to choose options that can be recycled or that are made from recycled materials. Many common packaging materials, such as polystyrene (styrofoam) and plastic wrap, can't be reused and don't break down easily.

Processing

Close to 75 per cent of the food we consume has been processed in some way meaning that substances which do not occur naturally may have been added to the food.¹² These usually take the form of preservatives that have been added to extend the shelf life of a product.¹³ Products are less sustainable if they are processed or frozen because these techniques use a lot of energy.¹⁴

In order to minimize the amount of processed food you consume, consider these tips:

- Shop the outer edge of the grocery store for fresh produce, dairy and meats.¹⁵
- Choose fresh options over their frozen alternatives (i.e. fresh vs. frozen vegetables).
- Avoid items with ingredients you can't pronounce.

Did you know?

The average food item travels over 2000 km to reach us.

Some travels more...
a banana from Costa Rica travels about 5,900 km to get to Edmonton.

– University of Wisconsin

Become your own producer

Start your own garden or join a community garden! This way you know exactly where your food is coming from and the conditions under which it was grown. It also creates a connection between you, the earth, and your community, as well as providing therapeutic and physical benefits. Why not customize your garden by planting all of your favorite produce?¹⁶



Gardens at UAlberta

At our university, there are multiple community gardens – including the **Campus Community Garden**, the **Green & Gold Garden** and **Campus Saint Jean’s Community Garden** – that you can get involved in. On North Campus, you can join the **Adopt a Flower Bed (or Planter)** program, which encourages students and staff to get involved in our landscape. Campus community members can adopt a flower bed or planter where they can grow either flowers or edible plants such as herbs, kale, lettuce, tomatoes, etc. Further information can be found in the *Active Living for U* section of the the University of Alberta’s Virtual Wellness site at virtualwellness.ualberta.ca

Food Resources

Campus Food Bank distributes food items and toiletries to members of the University of Alberta community. It provides resources to learn about food security on University of Alberta’s campuses.

campusfoodbank.com

Edmonton Food Bank works collaboratively with other agencies to collect food items for their distribution free of charge to people in need and seeks a solution for the causes of hunger.

edmontonfoodbank.com

Sustainable Food Edmonton builds community and a better regional food system by raising awareness, engaging community in shared growing/gardening/food experiences, and initiating and supporting projects and programs.

sustainablefoodedmonton.org

Farmers’ Market

There is a bi-weekly Farmers’ Market on campus that was launched in September 2012! Operated by Sustain SU, a student-run service of the Students’ Union, this farmers’ market brings local food options to SUB every second Thursday of the school year, from 10 AM to 2 PM.

Live Local is an Albertan not-for-profit organization that brings together groups and individuals who are committed to encouraging people to eat, dine, shop and experience everything our region has to offer. They have a list of local businesses, including many food stores as well as restaurants that support Edmonton's economy.

live-local.ca

Alberta Farm Fresh Producers Association is an organization dedicated to supporting the production of farm direct market vegetables, fruits, herbs, flowers, bedding plants, meats, poultry, eggs and other specialty items in Alberta.

albertafarmfresh.com

Alberta Farmers' Markets Association helps you learn more about local food markets across Alberta, and where they are located. Edmonton markets are in the North Central Region.

albertamarkets.com

Love Food Hate Waste is a British website that helps you to plan out meals (content and portions) as well as suggests how to use leftovers creatively.

lovefoodhatewaste.com

Vegans & Vegetarians of Alberta is a registered, non-profit society formed to serve people who are interested in learning about, adopting and maintaining a vegetarian or vegan lifestyle. This is a great source for current information on vegan and vegetarianism, health, environment and animal rights issues.

vofa.ca

The Organic Box is an Edmonton-based project that provides weekly deliveries of local and non-local organic produce that is bought from local farmers and Canadian distributors depending on the season.

theorganicbox.ca

Operation Fruit Rescue Edmonton is a non-profit organization with a mission to harvest, process, and preserve local fruit and to make it available to the people of Edmonton by fostering community involvement and knowledge sharing. If you have a fruit tree and do not have the time to harvest it, or it produces too much for you to handle, they will come and harvest it for you.

operationfruitrescue.org

Did you know?

On average, Canadians consume about 276 grams of meat daily, which is almost double the daily intake of 150 grams recommended by the Canadian Food Guide.

— FAO and Health Canada



QUICK GUIDE

Sustainable food around campus



Finding sustainable food options can be a challenge – luckily there are many eco-conscious restaurants and markets on- and off- campus that provide a diversity of yummy foods. All of the following restaurants were contacted and their management confirmed that they have sustainable food options including menu items that have local, organic, Fair Trade, vegetarian, vegan or celiac ingredients available.

Restaurants

The following restaurants near campus provide sustainable food options, according to their management's participation in our phone survey conducted in the Winter Term 2013:

Under \$10

Wild Earth Bakery 8902 99 St 780.425.8423

\$10 – \$15

High Level Diner 10912 88 Ave 780.433.0993

Noorish 8440 109 St 780.756.6880

Dauphine Bakery & Bistro 10129B 104 St 780.421.4410

Rosso Pizzeria 8738 109 St 780.433.5382

Elm Café 10140 117 St 780.756.3356

La Poutine 8720 109 St 780.757.7222

Famoso 11750 Jasper Ave 780.732.0700

\$15 and up

Narayanni's 10131 81 Ave 780.756.7112

Tzin 10115 104 St 780.428.8946

Sabor Divino 10220 103 St 780.757.1114

The Red Ox Inn 9420 91 St 780.465.5727

Café De Ville 10137 124 St 780.488.9188

Vendors at UAlberta

SUB

L'Express 780.492.2090

Juicy 780.492.2090

Cramdunk 780.492.2090

Lister Hall

Lister Market 780.232.7846

ECHA

Engrained 780.232.7846

EuroMarket 780.232.7846

Markets

Sustain SU's Farmer's Market

Every second Thursday of the school year
10 a.m. to 2 p.m.
Main Floor of the Students' Union Building
780.492.7134

su.ualberta.ca/services/sustainsu/farmersmarket

Old Strathcona Farmer's Market

Saturdays, year round
8 a.m. to 3 p.m.
10310 83 Avenue
780.439.1844

osfm.ca

City Market Downtown

Saturdays
Outdoors on 104th Street (north of 101 Ave)
from May Long Weekend to Thanksgiving
9 a.m. to 3 p.m.
Indoors at City Hall
from October 13 to May 11
10 a.m. to 3 p.m.
780.429.5713

city-market.ca

124 Street Grand Market

Outdoors on Thursdays
from late May to early October
108 Avenue & 124 Street
4 to 8 p.m.

124grandmarket.com

Grocery Stores

Blush Lane Organic Market

8135-102 Street
780.988.5655

blushlane.com

Planet Organic

7917 104 Street
780.433.6807

planetorganic.ca

Sobey's Urban Fresh

2100, 8215 - 112 St
104 10104 Jasper Avenue
780.429.9922

sobeyes.com

Safeway

10930 82 Avenue
780.433.6930

safeway.ca

Save On Foods

10180 109 Street
10368 78 Avenue
780.423.5678

saveonfoods.com



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