

What You Can Do to Support Oklahoma's Family Farmers . . .

OKLAHOMA FOOD COOPERATIVE

Join the Oklahoma Food Cooperative, a marketing network of farmers and their customers that can bring authentic local and regional foods to your family table. All items sold through the cooperative, from grain fed beef and eggs to artisan breads and tamales to soaps and sauces, are grown or produced here in Oklahoma and are sold directly by their producers. The three core values of the co-op are environmental sustainability, economic viability and social justice. See details online: www.oklahomafood.coop

FARMERS' MARKETS

Many Oklahoma communities provide farmers' markets for producers to sell their Oklahoma products directly to the consumer. See list of markets online: www.madeinoklahoma.net/

Additional resources are available here:
www.okfarmersmarket.org

COMMUNITY SUPPORTED AGRICULTURE (CSA)

Others use the term "subscription farming," which gives a hint as to what's actually going on. In a CSA, a farm's customers commit to buy a share of the season's produce. As members, they receive weekly baskets of that pre-paid bounty throughout the growing season. This arrangement lets the people who eat the food take on some of the financial risk of farming, literally putting their money where their mouths are when it comes to supporting family farms and sustainable agriculture in Oklahoma. See list of current Oklahoma CSAs online: www.kerrcenter.com



Additional Online Resources for Local Food and Sustainable Agriculture

www.oksustainability.org
www.foodroutes.org
www.localharvest.org/
www.growingformarket.com
www.oxfamamerica.org
www.newdream.org/consumer/farmersmarkets
www.sustainabletable.com
www.attra.org
www.foodsecurity.org
www.cast-science.org
www.cfra.org
www.iatp.org/foodandhealth
www.sustainableagriculture.net
www.organicaginfo.org
www.sare.org/publications
www.leopold.iastate.edu/
www.nal.usda.gov/afsic/agnic/agnic.htm

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www.growingformarket.com

How Your Food Is Produced . . .



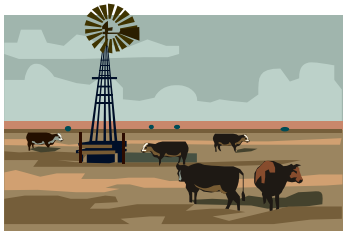
. . . Matters

Corporate farming is endangering Oklahoma's small family farms and our food supply choices

How Your Food Is Produced Matters

The Oklahoma Chapter of the Sierra Club supports family farms and local food distribution systems in Oklahoma. Following are some of the many reasons why we need them for our families, for our communities and for our future . . .

Locally grown food gives the consumer tasty and healthy choices. Before reaching your family's table, most American food moves over 1500 miles from the farm to your table. Fruits and Vegetables shipped these distances can spend many days in transit and storage before reaching the supermarket, and many types of produce are picked extremely under-ripe. Poor flavor is one of the many costs of this system. When we purchase locally-grown foods, we can be assured they will taste far better than their counterparts. Getting to know the farmers and ranchers who raise our food gives us the power to choose fruits and vegetables grown with a minimum of chemicals, and meats and dairy products that are grass-fed, as well as hormone and antibiotic free. Locally produced food ensures variety and flavor rather than the uniformity desired by industrial farms.



According to Jo Robinson in *Why Grass-fed is Best*, eating grass-fed meat and dairy products provides a wealth of health benefits: less fat, fewer calories, more omega-3 fatty acids, more beta-carotene and a lower risk for E-Coli.

Family farms are more likely to preserve the quality of the environment for future generations. The small-scale farm is usually filled with biodiversity from the varied and rotated crops . . . to orchards . . . to pastures and livestock. Nearby woods, fishing ponds and open fields also contribute



to this diverse environment. The farmer's commitment to long-term soil fertility is not as likely to be found on large farms owned by absentee investors. On small family farms, livestock is often free-range, where manure replenishes pastures naturally. Family farmers see their soil as irreplaceable natural capital that must be maintained for a healthy, productive farm. They wish to produce a variety of excellent foods, keep the soil in place, eliminate health hazards to field hands and neighbors, and encourage a soil that is teeming with life.

Small farms can be more productive. Data suggest that small farms are capable of sustainably producing far more food per acre than large corporate farms. Industrial farms tend to raise vast monocultures of plants or animals, which can lead to a number of pest, disease and waste problems. Smaller scale farm managers are more likely to intensively grow a diversity of crops, rotating them with livestock or cover crops. Composts and manures are also used to naturally replenish soil fertility and to interrupt pest lifecycles.

Small farms are better for community economies. Large-scale industrial operations often lose more jobs than they create, since mechanization allows fewer people to produce more. The profits of corporate agribusiness usually leave local communities. Less than 20 cents of every dollar spent on food returns to the farmer, with the remainder going to processors, marketers and input providers. However, when we purchase locally produced food directly from farmers and ranchers, they retain a much larger share of the food dollar, and in-turn spend that money on local supplies and services.

Family farmers are your neighbors, friends and family and are frequently invested in the com-

munity. Local farmers feel a sense of responsibility to their communities and the local environment. Large corporations have interests that lie elsewhere with many farms to prioritize. While local managers are often good people, they must make decisions based on profits rather than community.

A few other points that are also frequently emphasized in support of buying locally grown food include:

- Buying locally grown food helps conserve energy and reduces carbon emissions because of shorter food miles traveled.
- Cover crops used by good stewards of the land prevent erosion and replace nutrients used by their crops. These cover crops also capture carbon emissions and help combat global warming.
- Supporting local farms keeps the family farmers in business, thus preserving farmland and open space that would likely be opened up to development if sold.
- Food security is enhanced, because buying food locally helps reduce the vulnerability of our food supply to contamination or disruption.
- Not only do you know *where* your food was grown, you have the opportunity to learn *how* it was grown. Plus, it just plain tastes better!
- Local food preserves genetic diversity. In the modern industrial agriculture system, varieties are chosen for their ability to ripen simultaneously and withstand harvesting equipment, for a tough skin that will survive shipping, and for an ability to have a long shelf life. Only a handful of hybrids meet those rigorous demands.



Oklahoma is fortunate to have a variety of options for buying locally grown food. Find information about the Oklahoma Food Cooperative, farmers' markets and CSAs on the back of this page.