

Autumn 2011

Food miles

One of the biggest issues facing the world today is our foot print on the planet.

Each person on the planet needs to make a conscientious decision to reduce waste they contribute to the world, whether that be tangible waste as in sewerage, packaging or emissions from your family car we all impact on the planet and to its pollution far more than we ever did.

The implementation of the world's food highway and the relative ease we now move products in bulk round the world is a major contributor to wasted energy in the pursuit of profit and greed.

I use the word greed as like never before we want for foods that are not native to the season, the climate or the country in which we reside and through only our personal wish and affluence and the relative cost efficient ease we transport them worldwide we can enjoy them at our will.

But at what additional cost!

Did we take into account that the farmer in our own back yard may be growing or raising the same food stuffs but the fact that a developing nation can produce the same item with significantly lower input cost even once the transport component has been added to it we can purchase food stuffs at lower initial monetary cost than local alternative.

Is it cheaper?

Did you take into consideration the loss of the farmer's income and the government support he may now need just to feed his family?

Did you think of the impact to our planet with additional transport and packaging to ensure a product arrived in perceived perfect condition.

Did you consider the added cost of refrigeration and manufacture of containers to move these provisions worldwide?

I used the phrase preserved freshness previously as often the products are not as fresh and wholesome as we would be expecting.

The advent of nitrogen packaging and practices of flushing sealed containers with nitrogen to exclude oxygen as a method of preservation often hides the true age of the products we purchase.

Have you ever bought imported vegetables that looked perfect [too perfect] and wondered why they shrivelled and discoloured in a matter of days in your home refrigerator?

The answer is that the enzymes that decompose them still were slowly generating their gasses while in transport but were suppressed with the exclusion of the oxygen needed for the bacteria to develop.

Food loses its nutritional value every day its shelf life is extended and that perfect item from overseas may just have a margin more food value than its packaging by the time we eat it.

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What should we consider?

An alternative would be support local growers of meat and vegetables, dairy and other foods.

You often can legitimately trace a foods history if it came from a farmer in your area.

The likelihood of your purchase being more than just a day or two old is reduced and the only addition you make to the cost of producing that food to the planet is the short trip to purchase it.

I concede that the initial purchase cost may be higher however you will be eating better food with more essential nutrients and therein less food should be needed to maintain your health.

You can also feel good in the knowledge that your local farmer is contributing to the community and able to stay in business.

Australia produces some of the cleanest most ethically raised foods in the world it is myopic to think cost alone is a good enough reason to purchase imported product.

Thanks for taking the time to read my thoughts.

Matt