

7) HOW FOOD TRAVELS?

This activity explores the origins of everyday food products, emphasizing the environmental, economic, and ethical implications of global food supply chains. By engaging with a world map, participants visualize the distance food travels to reach their tables, fostering awareness of the impact of imported versus locally produced food. The game format encourages critical thinking and collaboration, while the subsequent discussion highlights the importance of supporting local producers, reducing the carbon footprint, and addressing inequalities in global food systems. The activity challenges participants to reflect on their role as consumers, encouraging more sustainable and conscious food choices. It demonstrates the interconnection between food production, environmental health, and social justice, promoting action toward fairer and more sustainable food systems.

Number of participants: 4 - 20

Duration: 30 minutes

Facilitator: youth worker, teacher

Materials:

- large world map
- pens
- packaging of the products from local store (cca. 50 different products)
- post-it notes

How to play/conduct the activity?

Participants should be divided into groups of 4–5, each group should receive 5 self-adhesive sheets and a felt-tip pen. Stick as large a map of the world as possible on the floor or wall. Participants should choose 5 products from all the products brought in (including the contractor's) and write each one on a self-adhesive sheet. When they choose their products, explain the rules of the game to them: The first group indicates the country of origin of the first product on the list on the map with a sticker or felt-tip pen. Other groups then guess which food product it is. In doing so, they can ask questions about the product, to which the group that marked the country can only answer with yes and no (e.g. is it vegetables? Do we usually eat this for breakfast?). The group that guesses the product first gets a point and a piece of paper with the name of the product is placed on the map in the country of origin. If they do not guess the product after a while, stop guessing and none of the groups get a point. Follow the other groups in the same order until all groups have used all the products. You can adjust the number of groups and the number of products to guess/choose according to the size of the group and/or the time available.

When you have finished the game, draw a line from all the marked countries to your country and look at the map with the participants—what is it like? Where does the food in our stores and refrigerators/cupboards come from? Is the majority of it local or imported? If you have time, calculate how many kilometers the food has traveled. Help yourself with an online map, e.g. Google Maps.

Conclude the activity with a discussion

- What exactly did this activity show us?
- Why is it important to buy and eat locally grown food? (For example, this supports local producers, reduces the carbon footprint, and locally produced food is fresher and more nutritious as the journey to the final consumer is shorter.)
- Could non-local map products be replaced with local ones?
- If you were responsible for buying food in your household, what would you change? How can you influence food vendors?

In the developed world, shops are well-stocked, consumers have practically all the goods available all year round, and they rarely think about where the food on the shelves came from (in Canada, food travels an average of 2,000 km!). Food often comes from countries where a large proportion of the population is poor or even undernourished, which is an additional paradox (they are not paid fairly for their work/food production, most food is exported and mass production harms the environment). Such a system causes economic and environmental problems, and the first step towards solving this is the promotion and use of locally produced food, which enables fairer food distribution, greater accessibility, and fair payment to the local population.

Competences:

- global and local awareness
- system thinking
- environmental literacy
- critical thinking
- collaboration and teamwork
- ethical reasoning
- decision making
- geographical literacy
- consumer responsibility
- communication and argumentation