

CLIMATE MASTERS™ OF NEW MEXICO

Shrinking your climate footprint and motivating others to do the same thing

FOOD RECOMMENDATIONS

The Environmental Protection Agency's most recent greenhouse-gas inventory shows that agriculture accounts for a whopping 7.4% of emissions in the United States. And that does not even account for food-related transportation, manufacturing, storage and cooking, nor the emissions from producing the food we import from other countries. Modern agriculture relies on large inputs of fossil fuels in all levels of food production and distribution: plowing and fertilizing fields; transporting crops to storage or distribution centers; storing, processing, and packaging; and transporting to the consumer's home (where further energy is used to store and prepare the food). At every stage of this process food is wasted and thrown away; those emissions were for naught.

Glossary of Terms

Food miles = The distance and mode of transportation involved in moving your food from its point of production to your home. These miles, of course, have greenhouse-gas emissions associated with them. Don't be fooled into thinking distance is the only consideration. Food shipped from across the world might result in fewer emissions than food flown from a closer point.

Organic = Food that is grown without the use of chemical pesticides, fertilizers, herbicides, or growth hormones. Any type of food that can be grown and produced organically, including fruits, vegetables, meats, dairy products and grains.

Recommendations: Food

1. **Reduce your food miles** by buying local and in-season foods. The average meal travels 1,500 miles from the farm to your plate, burning fuel and emitting greenhouse gasses all the way. Many foods must also be refrigerated or kept frozen as they travel. By eating food that is in season in New Mexico, we increase the chance of finding that product grown locally without major fossil fuel inputs to warm the soil and the plant. However, in some cases, food can be produced more efficiently elsewhere, making up for the transportation emissions.
2. **Avoid food that traveled by plane.** This food emits more greenhouse-gases than food traveling by rail, truck, or ocean barge. The transportation emissions are fifty times greater to fly a pineapple from Hawaii versus shipping one from Costa Rica. Ask at your local market for this information.
3. **Walk or ride your bike** when you buy groceries. Riding the bus, carpooling, and combining errands are other ways to reduce these emissions. This leg of your food's journey from farm to your house can be the least efficient in its life cycle, since we don't pack our personal vehicles as efficiently as the trucks, boats, and trains that transport food to the store.

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4. **Grow your own food.** This can save up to one ton annually of CO2 equivalent emissions. Greenhouse-gas emissions from food come from fertilizers, machinery, transport, refrigeration or freezing, processing, and packaging.
5. **Eat less meat.** Eating just one less quarter-pound hamburger per week saves 0.33 pounds of methane just for the meat alone. Methane has a global warming potential twenty-one times greater than that of carbon dioxide. Cutting one burger per week reduces your annual greenhouse-gas emissions by 360 pounds of CO2 equivalent annually.
6. **Buy organic food** when you can. Organic farming uses one-third less fossil fuels than conventional farming; it increases soil carbon content from 15% to 28%, and organic soil retains up to 30% more nitrogen than conventionally farmed soils. (This includes organic meat. Animals raised organically don't ingest manufactured chemicals, hormones, or antibiotics – similar to organic produce.)
7. **Buy fewer processed foods.** 2.5% of total fossil-fuel energy used in the world is consumed for food packaging. Eating less processed food will benefit your health as well, as processed food tends to be high in sugar and sodium.
8. **Cook food more energy efficiently** using the following tips
 - Test the oven's thermostat to make sure it's accurate.
 - Clean the reflectors under the top burners so they reflect more heat.
 - Clean and seal around the oven door and check for cracks.
 - Don't open the oven door frequently when cooking; the temperature drops 25-50F each time the door is opened.
 - Use glass or ceramic baking dishes and reduce the oven temperature by 25F.
 - Thaw foods in the refrigerator rather than the microwave.
 - Use the lowest heat setting to maintain boiling.
 - Let food cool before putting it in the refrigerator.
 - Don't preheat the oven for more than ten minutes.
 - Cook with lids on pans. This saves as much as two-thirds of the energy.
 - Put extra coffee into a thermos instead of leaving the coffee maker on.
 - Use a microwave instead of a stove whenever possible. This can save up to \$47 annually for the average household and cut your greenhouse-gas emissions by 594 pounds per year.
 - Cook larger amounts of food at one time then use the microwave to reheat.

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9. **Plan shopping trips** and the number of trips out of the house as efficiently as possible. This can include combining trips for multiple errands and driving the shortest route possible. The less times you drive the less your carbon emissions will be. Bring your own bags when you shop. This will reduce or eliminate the need to take home plastic or paper bags from the store, which emit greenhouse-gasses in their production and transportation.

<http://lospoblanosorganics.com>

Mother Nature Gardens—a small demonstration farm in ABQ
<http://www.mothernaturegardens.com/demofarm.html>

New Mexico Farmers Markets:
<http://farmersmarketsnm.org>

10. **Avoid bottled water.** Bottled water uses unnecessary resources, including plastic bottles, other packaging, production, and transport. It also creates unnecessary waste. If the water in your area is not suitable to drink, either for quality or taste, buy a water filter. This can be as simple as an attachment for your faucet or a filtering pitcher to keep in your refrigerator.



RESOURCES

Food Routes Network—where does your food come from?
<http://www.foodroutes.org>

Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture
<http://www.leopold.iastate.edu>

Local Harvest Community Supported Agriculture.
<http://www.localharvest.org/csa>

Local / State / Regional:

Los Poblanos Organics—16-acre farm in Los Ranchos de Albuquerque

A program sponsored by the New Mexico Environment Department