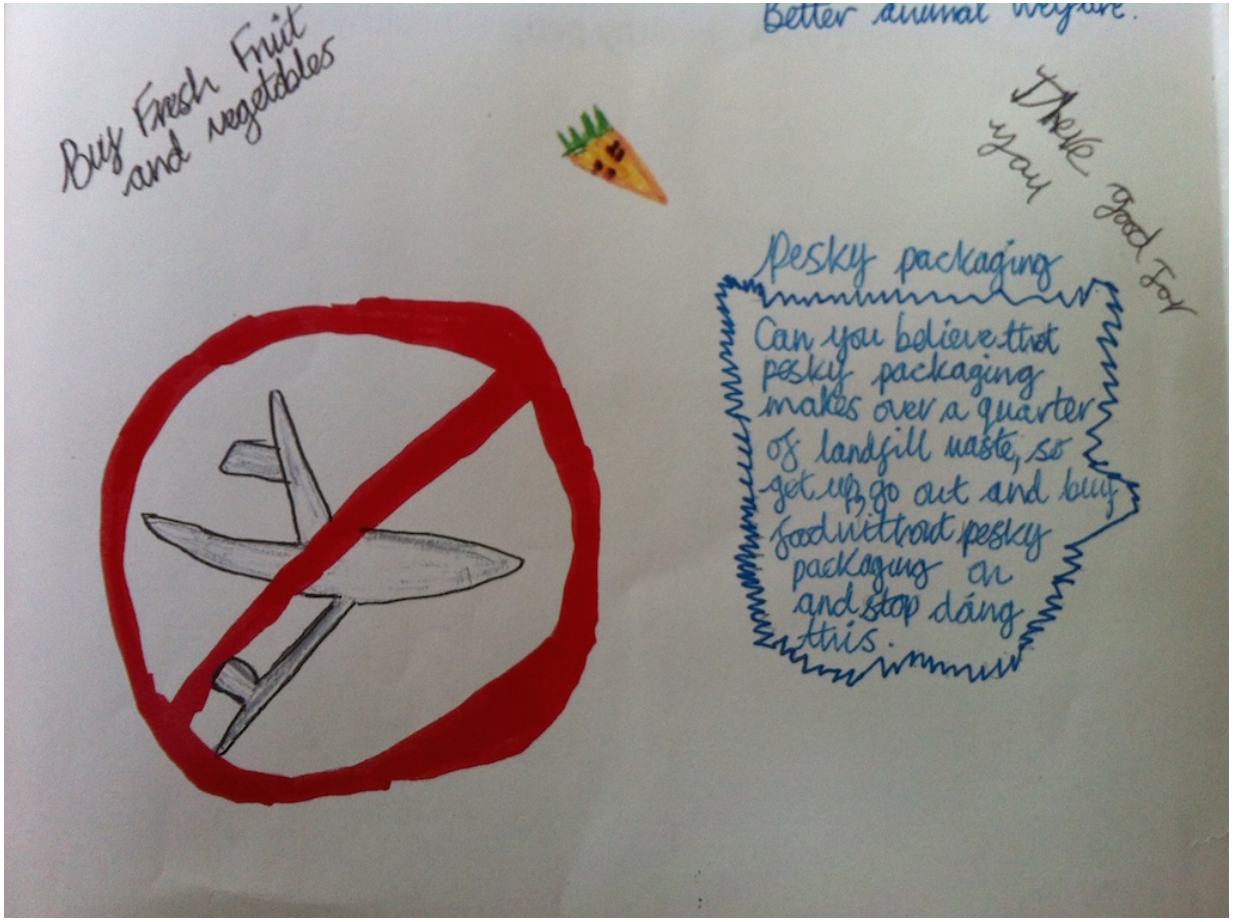
FEEDING OUR CHILDRENS' FUTURE: AN INTRODUCTION TO THE PROGRAMME

A food-web mapping project for children aged 7 to 11 from Transition Network



This resource for community groups and schools was developed collaboratively as part of the Schools in Transition programme between 2012 and 2015. It is aimed at children aged 7 to 11, their teachers, their parents and Transition or other community groups that want to work with schools on sustainability. It is intended to promote learning in the community as much as food security.

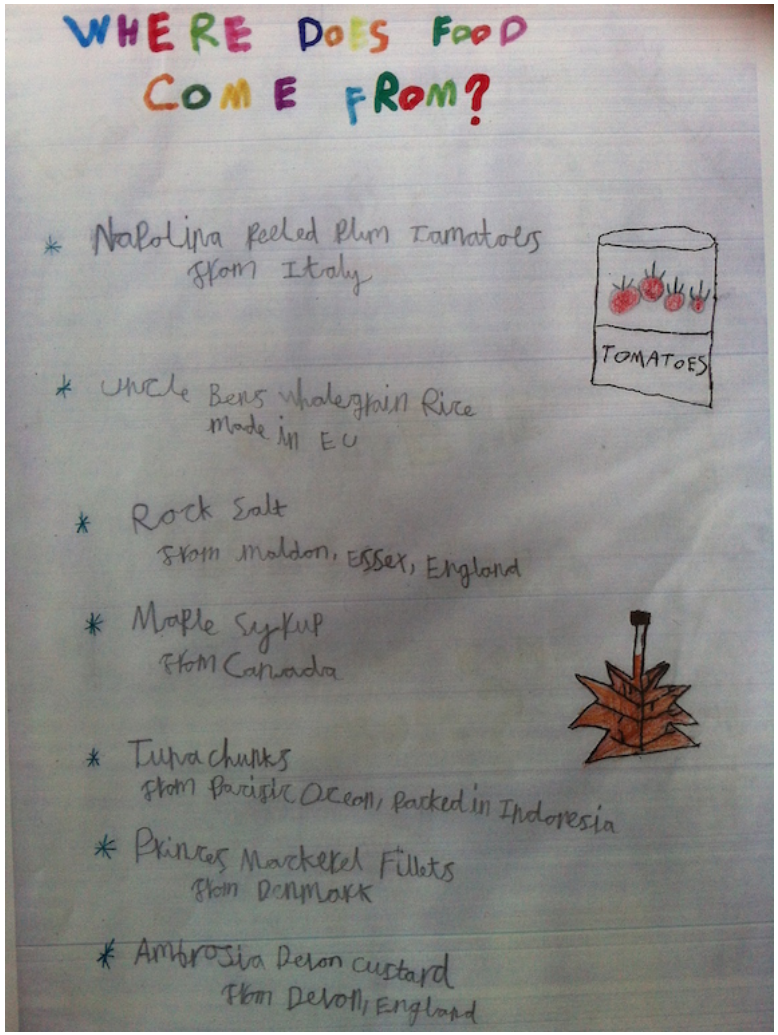
We want to help younger children develop their understanding of food: how it is produced and transported, what food miles are, how farming has shaped the area where they live and how they can support more local food growing. Through food we can develop children's understanding of the connections between what they eat and their local environment, between healthy nutrition and real-world problem-solving.

A local food web describes the links between local food producers, retailers and consumers. When it is strong, it is a building block of community resilience. We need to build community resilience to enhance food security. Declining food security is of growing concern across the world, caused by the shortcomings in global supply systems, climate change and the rise in energy costs. The school children of today will be the first generation to experience the likely impact of future disruption in food supplies. Food security comes from supporting local growers and producers.

Climate change is making harvests less certain due to extreme weather events. In order to prevent 2 degrees or more of global warming, and reduce climate chaos, we need to keep 90% of known reserves in the ground. (See the 2014 IPCC Synthesis report)
Fossil fuels and other non-renewable resources are becoming ever more expensive as what is left in the ground is more difficult to drill for and requires more energy to extract.
Our economy cannot continue to grow as worldwide we are running out of the raw materials (animal and mineral) on which it depends. For instance, the phosphates that industrial agriculture depends on have only 40 years of supply left.

In practical terms this learning model involves understanding where our food comes from, looking to see what could be sourced more locally, mapping local suppliers and shops and seeing how they are linked, setting a challenge to grow, buy, cook and eat more local food, and creating a directory for parents, the school and the local community. Schools can choose to bring in any part of the primary curriculum from geography to art, from history to science, to demonstrate how the combination of many skills is part of what is needed for our future. Community groups and parents can also take the lead and offer this programme into a local school, with connections to food growers, producers, shops, eateries and chefs who are committed to local food.

Producers are local farmers, growers, and makers of food and drinks
Retailers are the retail outlets and businesses they supply who sell local produce, including local food shops, farmers' markets and box schemes
Businesses and institutions buy local produce and use it to provide food as meals for their clients and customers, including caterers in pubs, restaurants and cafés, hotels and guest houses and providers in institutions such as hospitals, schools and prisons
Consumers are the people who buy and consume local food and drink. In a strong local food web these different components are interconnected, dependent upon each other and mutually beneficial to each other.



The concept of the local food web goes beyond simply understanding the way in which food gets from A to B – it also tries to capture the social, economic and environmental dimensions of these relationships.

Thriving local food webs have many advantages for people, places and the countryside.

A thriving local food web can help to:
- Create new jobs and small businesses
- Ensure that more money is spent and stays in the local economy
- Reduce food miles and food related waste
- Provide a viable living for farmers and growers
- Secure better access to fresh, healthy, affordable food
- Provide a greater choice of where to shop and what to buy

Mapping local food webs helps to promote the benefits to the local community. The information gathered from mapping local food webs can be shared and used to promote the benefits of sustainable local food production, shopping for food locally, and fresh, affordable, high quality food. This will encourage policies that secure local food networks.

This piece of homework is by a Year 4 pupil at Ashley School. The task was to check out the store cupboard at home and work out where some of the food had travelled from.

Feeding our Children's Future is a powerful way for children to learn about climate change and how it is likely to affect their lives; become more connected to place and in particular locally-grown and processed food; understand the arguments for shopping and eating locally and how to use them to shift behaviour in their families; and produce a local food directory of that is shared in the community.

When working with our pilot schools we started by looking at what they already had in place. We asked if there was:

- Existing information about sources of local food?
- A forthcoming teaching module that could lend itself to this work?
- Already food growing taking place in the school grounds?
- The opportunity to come into the school to lead two sessions with pupils or help the teacher to do that?
- Link with a school abroad?

We then shared our Lesson Plan with them and offered to help with any outside contacts they might need for school trips to see organic growing or food selling, or people they could invite into the school to give a talk. If you are a Transition or other community group you are likely to have many contacts and a significant amount of expertise you can offer to the school.

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The project partners*:* This Schools in Transition programme was developed in collaboration with the Apricot Centre (in Essex), the CPRE (Campaign to Protect Rural England) and Ardleigh and Ashley primary schools (in rural Essex and the London suburb of Walton-on-Thames respectively). Together we designed, tested and now offer these new materials in the form of simple lesson plans and case studies. The programme was led by Isabel Carlisle, Education Coordinator for Transition Network.

Transition Network is based in Totnes in Devon, England where the Transition movement started in 2006. It then went viral, spreading to over 1000 communities in around 45 countries (and growing). It is a grassroots response to the need to regenerate local economies as we reach the limits to growth and climate change. Transition Network

CPRE (Campaign to Protect Rural England) developed the concept of food webs and between 1998 and 2006. They have since worked on mapping food webs across England, on persuading policy makers to support local food webs and developing a free toolkit of resources for local communities to engage in understanding their local food networks. CPRE

The Apricot Centre is based on a small organic farm near Manningtree in Essex and has expertise in working creatively with children around food, both on the farm and off site in schools, and integrating this into the curriculum. The Apricot Centre has strong links with Transition Network. The Apricot Centre

The case studies of the two schools (see separate PDFs) show how they integrated the programme into existing modules of work in creative ways. At Ashley School, Year Four (ages 8 to 9) studied the Tudors as well as asking "When is food at its best?" At Ardleigh School the food web mapping was combined with an exploration of living systems theory.

Ashley pupils visit the cows at Bore Place organic farm in Surrey as part of Feeding our Childrens' Future

Preparation work

If you want to chart the impact of the programme ask the children these base line questions at the beginning and end.

1. *When I eat my food, I know where it comes from because I ask questions*
2. *I know what food miles are and how to measure them*
3. *In the future we will need to grow more of our food locally because…*
4. *My family cares about climate change and understands how if may affect life here in Devon in the future*
5. *I know what I can do myself to help change the way people care for the planet*
6. *I know how to work in a team to solve a real-world problem here where I live*

The first session with the pupils is held in the school hall where a map of the local place can be chalked on the floor, with cardboard boxes for shops and other places (including food producers) marked in creative ways. You can bring in a sit-in toy car, a child's bike, a pretend boat and a pretend plane (seats and containers) for transporting food from producer to consumer. An average mixed bag of food shopping (some local, some imported) is emptied and laid on the map.

Discussion and Questions at this stage are:

- Name all the places we can get our food from (local village shop, supermarket, farmers market, box scheme, stalls by the road)
- What in the shopping bag is local and what comes from far away - sort into piles of walking, bike, car, boat, plane.
- Discussion of what is in these piles and why some of it comes from far away, i.e. it needs heat to grow, or it is out of season in the UK.
- What are the different ways in which we transport our food, depending on where it is grown? Discussion point: does it need to be transported quickly such as green beans from Kenya? So is it flown in, or can coffee come on a boat as it does not spoil?
- Can we measure the number of miles it has travelled to us? (Pre-prepared with sample items)
- Why does all this matter? What meaning does climate change have here?
- Why might we need to re-localise our food growing? Discussion
- What can't we source locally? Look at the pile that come by boat or plane — what could we use instead?
- How might life look like without tea or chocolate or bananas, or green beans from Kenya?
- Invite the children to come up with an inexpensive menu for one meal that can be sourced from the walking /bike pile

Homework could be:

Looking at our weekly shopping survey, how might we start conversations at home around sourcing food locally, and why this matters? What do parents say about this?

How might our lives change if we grew, bought and ate local food? What do we eat that is special that we can't get locally?

Is there any food that is part of our family food culture that we can't grow or buy locally? (For instance one parent could be half Dutch and still like to get Dutch food if they can)

Is there enough time to shop like this? Would it take more time to cook?

Does it cost more?

Would it change what we ate?

Do you grow your own food at home?

Perhaps food is already grown at school?

Invite the children to come up with an inexpensive menu for one meal that can be sourced locally. Take that home and ask parents if they would help with the project to get the food, cook it and then eat it. Write that up and take photos.

The second session is on making a local food directory. Gather up all the knowledge gained so far. Draw a map. Invite children to make drawings to illustrate the directory. Produce and print the directory, send it to parents, maybe even get a bit of local funding and put it in local food venues.

Discussion and Questions at this stage are:

- How can we change peoples' behaviour?
- What is the best way to have conversations and influence people?
- How did parents and family react to this project, what did they say, what did we say about why this is important?
- How can we make all this fun?
- How would we want the world we grow up in to be like?

Plan an **end of year celebration** at the school fete. Find someone to build a cob oven, and volunteer cooks to serve local food. Contact the partner school abroad (if there is one) and invite them to do the same project, and swap experiences.

Resources:

Use Batchgeo for making digital maps: http://batchgeo.com/

This programme for schools was inspired by the very useful "grown-up" Toolkit for Mapping Local Food Webs from the CPRE (Campaign to Protect of Rural England) that can be downloaded here:
http://www.cpre.org.uk/resources/farming-and-food/local-foods/item/3076-mapping-local-food-webs-toolkit

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Transition Network *is a charity based in the UK, catalysing, supporting and connecting the international Transition movement of community-led responses to peak oil, inequality and climate change.* Website:www.transitionnetwork.org/