



The ethical shopping guide

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The ethical shopping guide aims to help consumers navigate some of the more difficult issues that buying food in Britain can raise.

How and where you shop

- Before you even make your weekly shopping list, decisions about how and where you buy your food have an ethical implication.
- Walking is better for the environment than taking the car, so go to local shops little and often and cut back on trips to out-of-town superstores. You'll reduce your petrol bills too!
- Food can be overpackaged, leading to vast amounts of plastic waste. And only buy bogofs if you're sure you'll eat them – or your food will end up in landfill and your money down the drain.
- Walking's better for your health too, so get out of your car and walk to the local butcher or greengrocer.

- Larger retail outlets often put the squeeze on producers to provide their products at the lowest cost, which can leave them on the breadline. Paying a fair price for produce means a living wage for small-scale producers, and it doesn't necessarily mean paying a higher price at the till.
- Most of the buying power in the food industry is concentrated in a handful of big retailers. The supermarket shelves are full of "choice", but in many cases it's an illusion. We can only buy what the supermarkets want to sell – and producers have to grow what they want to sell too. Who's actually in control of our health when we buy food from big retail outlets?
- Buying meat can mean animals travelling for miles to large slaughterhouses – unless it specifically says they haven't - causing unnecessary suffering. Intensively reared animals and birds suffer stress and illness, resulting in large-scale exposure to antibiotics and other chemicals that may have impacts on our own health.

Dish of the day: Unpackaged food, locally bought, as and when you need it.

Off the menu: Overpackaged, bulk-made, multi-buy purchases you don't really need, bought from out-of-town superstores.

What you eat

- Whether you eat lots of fruit and veg or you're a committed carnivore, everything that ends up on your plate has an impact on the health and welfare of our planet, people and animals.
- Food production can have serious implications for the environment. Rearing meat accounts for 8% of the UK's greenhouse gas emissions.
- It's a thirsty business too – it takes 5,000 litres of water to produce the average amount of meat consumed by a person in the UK every day, compared to 2,000 litres for a vegetarian. Eating less meat and dairy and more vegetables is one way to reduce our impact on the planet.

- Fish stocks are perilously low, and farmed fish can destroy the sea bed. Buying Marine Stewardship Council approved fish supports businesses that fish sustainably. So shop locally for fish and ask your fishmonger how and where it was caught.
- Intensive farming can destroy biodiversity; monocultures only support a few species of plants and animals, and pesticide use can wipe out what's left. Organic, small scale food production on farms that grow lots of different things takes best care of the land. Look for the soil association label on products to support our environment.
- Processed food contains much more salt, sugar, fat and additives than food in its natural state. This can cause hyperactivity in children, obesity, and even food scares like BSE. Look at the labels on your favourite food and ask whether all those extra ingredients are really necessary.
- The food and farming sector is the UK's biggest employer, and one of its worst. Workers suffer long hours, bad pay and short term contracts. These working conditions mean they have less access to fresh, healthy food for themselves and their families.
- Fairly made, fairly traded food offers a decent wage and working conditions to workers and producers in the UK and abroad.
- Intensively reared animals lead miserable lives. They are bred to provide optimum levels of milk, meat or eggs in the shortest time possible, often at the expense of their health.
- Buying free range and organic meat means that the animals you eat led decent lives. They're still bred for meat, egg or dairy production, but you can be happy in the knowledge that they were allowed to live well and grow at a natural rate.

Dish of the day: Lots of organic, fairly traded fruit and veg, and less but better quality meat and dairy and sustainably caught fish.

Off the menu: Intensively farmed and industrially produced fruit, veg, meat and dairy.