

Bethel College Mennonite Church Creation Care Committee

Creation Stewardship Notes # 3 – July, 2003

In the U.S., food typically travels between 1550 and 2500 miles from farm to plate. Since more people live in cities, fewer live near food production centers. Advances in technology allow longer storage; also less costly shipping has encouraged the food system to sprawl. Cheap gasoline and various transportation subsidies also underpin this food traffic which can require staggering amounts of fuel. A basic diet of meat, grain, fruit and vegetables can easily gobble four times the energy and generate four times the greenhouse gas emissions of an equivalent diet with ingredients from local sources.

Economists often argue that the long-distance food trade is efficient because communities and nations can buy their food from the lowest-cost provider. But the loss of local food self-reliance brings a range of unseen costs: to the environment, to the agricultural landscape, and to farm communities.

Evidence from North America, Asia, and Africa shows that farm communities have not benefited, and have often suffered, as a result of freer trade in agricultural goods. Meanwhile, the supposed efficiencies of the long-distance food chain leave many people malnourished and underserved. Farmers producing for export might go hungry as they sacrifice the use of their land to feed foreign mouths, while poor urbanites in both First and Third Worlds find themselves living in neighborhoods unable to attract supermarkets, green grocers, and healthy food choices.

A powerful actor in all this is the consumer. As food consumers, we can lessen the demand for food brought in hundreds and even thousands of miles while we help support a local producer. At the same time, eating foods from local producers ensures more nutritious and tasty food since the time from harvest to meal is shortened.

Here is a list of some local food producers:

Prairie Harvest in downtown Newton is a food store specializing in organically grown foods. They sell as much produce grown locally as possible. They have non-local fresh produce as well.

Homegrown Kansas is owned by Elzie and Pat Randleas who grow and sell fresh produce. They grow and market vegetables, fruits, and herbs and sell to:

- 1) Wichita restaurants
- 2) The 3 Whole Foods health food stores in Wichita
- 3) Consumers who ask to be included on their Wednesday e-mail list. They will let you know on Monday what they will have available for Real Food Wednesday of that week. Check their website: homegrownkansas.com.

Hesston Farm and Art Market - now on break but will resume in Sept. It will be held from 8-10:30 every Sat. AM in Sept. at the Lakeside Patio of the Wellness Center near Lake Vista. There are baked goods available, artists creating their work, musicians playing.

Newton Farmers Market - every Tues. from 3:30-7:00 PM and Saturdays from 7:30 AM to noon until fall crops are in.

Scott and Sandy Harders (Moundridge) raise chickens organically, have them dressed and ready to sell by the pound. Sold by pre-arrangement only. They also have organically grown sweet onions. Phone: 620-345-3394.

Gaeddert Farms - grows sweet corn near Buhler and sold at a number of locations: Newton, McPherson, Hutchinson, and 4 sites in Wichita as well as their farm near Buhler. Their corn is available at these locations every Tues. - Sat. until about the 2nd week of Aug. Phone: 620-543-2473.

Old Settlers Orchard - Miner and Valetta Seymour near Moundridge grow 3 varieties of apples without chemicals. Their apples are available by the pound, 1/2 bushel or bushel. They also make cider that is available year-round.

If you know of others that should be included on this list, let someone on the Creation Care Committee know and we can add it to this list.