

# YOU AND YOUR FOOD



LIFESTYLE

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### WHY?

At harvest festivals, Christians often remember with thanks those who labour to produce the food on which we depend. We often don't go on to consider the way the food we consume impacts on the lives of humans, animals, and the earth. If Christians worship the good creator of a good creation and look forward to the whole creation being released from its bondage (Romans 8: 21), we should consider how what we eat affects God's creation.

**Impact on people:** Many churches recognise that those who work hard to produce food often get a bad deal and choose to serve Fairtrade tea, coffee, sugar, and other goods in response. This problem is not isolated to food items sourced from developing countries. UK farmers often receive a poor deal for their produce too, with farmers protesting that supermarkets pressure them to accept prices for their goods which doesn't make their work viable. Therefore, both globally and nationally, farmers are struggling to profit from their trade.

**Impact on animals:** Farming is becoming more intensive. Most chickens raised for meat live for only 35 days in vast warehouses without access to daylight. Most pigs spend their lives indoors and increasing numbers of dairy cattle are not given access to grass. Old Testament law required farmers to show consideration for their cattle (e.g., Exodus 20.8–11, 22.30; Deuteronomy 25.4) and the principles behind these laws still apply today. Yet, most farm animals are now not able to express behaviours that are natural to them. Choosing animal products from higher welfare systems is an important recognition of their status as fellow creatures made by God.

**Impact on the planet:** The fertiliser run-off from intensive arable farming changes the nutrient balance in rivers, causing significant ecological damage. Greenhouse gas emissions from transporting food and from the growing numbers of livestock raised for meat make a substantial contribution to climate change. Choosing locally produced, organic food, and reducing meat and dairy consumption lowers the environmental impact of our food choices.



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### HOW? PRODUCING IT

#### **FIND OUT HOW FOOD IS PRODUCED LOCALLY TO YOU**

Open Farm Sunday connects consumers with farming and food. It provides a unique opportunity for everyone to visit a farm, talk to farmers and see how their food is produced. Open Farm Sunday helps to build consumer trust in the food they eat – as well as building greater understanding about the vital job farmers do to produce food and manage the countryside sustainably: <https://farmsunday.org>

#### **AVOID INTENSIVELY FARMED ANIMAL PRODUCTS**

The 'farm animals' section of the Compassion in World Farming website provides a good overview of the farmed lives of pigs, chickens, cows, sheep, turkeys, fish and rabbits. The 'Know Your Labels' section explains the standards set by some well-known assurance schemes – Red Tractor, RSPCA Assured, Soil Association and the Lion Mark: <https://www.ciwf.org.uk/your-food/>

#### **KNOW YOUR PALM OIL**

Palm oil is an amazingly versatile product and has uses in food, detergent, shampoo, cosmetics and even ice cream. Palm oil production is a major driver of deforestation of some of the world's most biodiverse forests and a significant contributor to climate change. Look for palm oil certified by the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO). If a product says 'vegetable oil' ask what that means – it might well be palm: <http://palmoilscorecard.panda.org/>

<https://www.wwf.org.uk/updates/8-things-know-about-palm-oil>

#### **FOCUS ON FORAGING**

There's no such thing as a free lunch – or is there? According to the Woodland Trust, UK woodlands have plenty to offer with exciting ingredients for soups, sauces, deserts, and tipples found in abundance. With rising prices in the supermarkets – and wider awareness of wild food health benefits – we all might like to have a go at foraging and enjoy using new and interesting ingredients in our cooking. Here is a month-by-month guide to what you can find in the wild, some recipes and



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most importantly guidelines on how to forage sustainably and responsibly to make sure you stay safe and within the law: <https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/visiting-woods/things-to-do/foraging/>

### HOW? BUYING IT

#### **PURCHASE MORE FAIRLY: FAIRTRADE**

Fairtrade food is produced and purchased in a way that ensures farmers in developing countries receive a fair price for their produce. Fairtrade food is often also produced in a more sustainable manner. Look for the mark when you are shopping: <https://www.fairtrade.org.uk/What-is-Fairtrade>

#### **DIVE DEEP INTO FOOD FROM THE SEA**

Download the pocket Good Fish Guide from The Marine Conservation Society. This publication tells you which fish are the best sustainable choices, which fish you should avoid completely, and the fish you should just eat occasionally to limit pressure on their stocks. Safeguard the future of our fisheries and other marine wildlife by only choosing fish from sustainable sources. Also look out for the Marine Stewardship Council's blue label on fish products to ensure your fish product has been fished sustainably: <https://www.msc.org/what-you-can-do/10-reasons-to-choose-the-blue-fish-label>

<https://www.mcsuk.org/goodfishguide/search>

#### **FOREGO THE PLASTICS**

So much of our food is needlessly wrapped in plastic or plastic in the form of bags is used to carry food. Much of this plastic is thrown away contributing to landfill or marine plastic pollution, which harms marine life. Look out for ways to reduce your plastic consumption such as buying loose fruit and veg without plastic wrapping and reducing your consumption of individually wrapped processed foods. Plastic Free July shows us how to do that in any month: <https://www.plasticfreejuly.org/>



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### SEARCH THE WEB FOR LOCAL FARMERS' MARKETS

Cook a meal using local produce and consider using local produce for meals served at church. To do this, search the web for your nearest farmers' market or local farm shop:

<https://farmretail.co.uk/>

<https://localfoodbritain.com/>

### HOW? EATING IT

### EAT FOR THE HEALTH OF BOTH YOU AND THE PLANET

The Planetary Health Diet (PHD) is the work of the EAT–Lancet Commission, funded by the Wellcome Trust. It is the result of extensive work over three years by scientists from 16 countries. The Commission set out to reach a scientific consensus by defining targets which would reflect both sustainable food production and a diet which would promote health:

<https://www.bbcgoodfood.com/howto/guide/what-is-the-planetary-health-diet>

<https://eatforum.org/a-weekly-planetary-health-menu/>

### SEEK OUT AN ORGANIC VEG BOX SCHEME

These delivery schemes bring fresh, healthy, organic fruit and vegetables straight to your door or allow you to collect from a convenient location if you're not at home. Use this online directory to find a local scheme near you and start supporting your local organic grower and enjoying fresh organic fruit and veg:

<https://www.soilassociation.org/organic-living/whyorganic/>

<https://www.soilassociation.org/organic-living/buy-organic/find-an-organic-box-scheme/>



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### WASTE NOT

Around a third of the food we produce is wasted, often ending up in landfill. There are many ingenious ways to reduce our food waste such as serving smaller food portions, using up leftovers, and being content with food that is less aesthetically pleasing (many supermarkets now stock imperfect looking fruit and veg). Check out the Love Food Hate Waste website for recipe ideas to reduce food wastage: <https://www.lovefoodhatewaste.com/recipes>

### LONGER READS & OTHER RESOURCES

Claire Carter is a Christian who writes '*The Real Meal Deal*' blog. Here are her thoughts on eating sustainably and some recipe ideas:

<https://www.therealmealdeal.com/eating-sustainably/>

<https://www.therealmealdeal.com/recipes-for-fairtrade-fortnight-2021/>

Prof David Clough, Professor of Theological Ethics at Chester University, set up 'Be Creature Kind' to help Christians think about the implications of their faith on their attitudes towards animals and in using them for food: <https://www.becreaturekind.org>

Read his blog posts here: <https://www.vegansociety.com/news/blog/should-christians-be-vegan>

Why not set up a discussion group at church to study his six-week course together? <https://www.becreaturekind.org/sixweek-church-course>

Learn more about methane and carbon dioxide released in the production of different foods at 'Our World in Data'. It's not all straight forward, methane doesn't matter as much as carbon dioxide. Plants don't produce methane, apart from rice: <https://ourworldindata.org/carbon-footprint-food-methane>



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Salad crops are also complex. In Northern Europe most commercial salad crops are grown under glass in highly controlled conditions. These are not classed as organic as they grow hydroponically (in water), not in soil. As the crops are in an enclosed environment, biological controls can be used so pesticides are not required. Thanet Earth (commercial salad growers based at a large glasshouse complex in Kent), suggest that with surplus electricity exported through the grid, carbon emissions are actually negative: <https://www.thanetearth.com/>

<https://www.thanetearth.com/how-we-grow/sustainability>