

SUSTAINABLE LIVING GUIDE:

29. EVERYBODY EATS: HOW A COMMUNITY FOOD SYSTEM WORKS¹

The community food system begins with small farms working with natural cycles and ends with fresh food and stronger communities in nearby cities. Scan the top banners to see How a Community-Based Food System works.



Sustainable Distribution

SHORT HAUL DISTRIBUTION



Using electric vehicles to move food from railheads and ports to markets in cities will result in cleaner air and a new automobile industry.

Fact: A regional diet uses 17 times less oil than the typical American long-distance diet.

REGIONAL PROCESSING

Local cooperatives can replace giant corporate processors for frozen and canned foods.



Food processing waste is composted and goes back to farm

LONG-HAUL DISTRIBUTION

Fact: Moving goods by rail instead of truck reduces fuel use by two-thirds.



¹ Yes! Magazine, February 13, 2009

SMALL FARMS



Clean energy such as solar, wind, and biogas provides clean power for farm machinery.



Closed-loop cycles mimic nature and eliminate waste. Nutrients are returned to soil.



Grass-fed livestock has a smaller carbon footprint and leaves grain for humans to eat.



Crop diversity increases yield, keeps soil fertile, helps fight pests.



Homegrown seed keeps old strains alive, produces new varieties adapted to local conditions.

Fact: Since 1900, 75 percent of vegetable varieties have disappeared worldwide.

No-till farming reduces soil loss and sequesters carbon. Edible prairie produces grain while building soil.

Fact: If all farmers in the U.S. used no-till, crop rotation and cover crops, they'd sequester 300 million tons of carbon a year.

Other characteristics: Fruit and nut orchards, farm waste converted to biogas fuel or compost, manure converted to fertilizer, clean water runoff.

SUSTAINABLE DISTRIBUTION



Regional Processing: Local cooperatives can replace giant corporate processors for frozen and canned foods. Food processing waste is composted and goes back to farms.



Short Haul Distribution: Using electric vehicles to move food from railheads and ports to markets in cities will result in cleaner air and a new automobile industry.



Fact: A regional diet uses 17 times less oil than the typical American long-distance diet.

Long-Haul Distribution: Use trains to transport goods over large distances.

Fact: Moving goods by rail instead of truck reduces fuel use by two-thirds.

LOCAL MARKETS



Money spent locally increases a community's economic health.

Fact: Every dollar that stays in a community has three times the effect of a dollar that goes to a distant corporate HQ.

Cooperatives allow farmers to share the cost of buying land and supplies, and to share labor and equipment.



Fact: Farms of 27 acres or less produce 10 times more dollar value per acre than larger ones.

Where we get our food: Farmers markets and community supported agriculture (CSA) leave out the big-retailer middleman. Small farmers make a living; communities get fresh, healthy, affordable food. Buy local food from farmers

markets, urban food vans, co-ops and CSAs.

GROW YOUR OWN



Lawns, abandoned lots, balconies, roofs, and even windowsills become gardens. Neighbors build community gardens and share the bounty at neighborhood feasts.

Fact: During WWII, Victory Gardens produced 40 percent of the vegetables people ate.

When you grow your own, use homegrown seeds, use garden waste to compost and allow household food scraps to be composted by worms.