



You have a choice. . . . Select locally grown food

The foods you purchase determine what farming techniques are used to raise the food. If you want to support sustainable agriculture, you can do that by buying locally grown foods.

You can support small family farms near you by purchasing at farmers markets, roadside vegetable and fruit stands and self-pick farms; buying locally marketed foods; and participating in community-supported agriculture programs.

Additionally you can raise your own food, in backyard gardens, in patio pots, or in neighborhood food plots (community gardens).

Eating locally grown foods is a healthy and environmentally friendly way to eat. The advantages of buying locally grown foods include:

- **Fresher foods.** The closer you can get your foods from the garden or the barnyard, the fresher the food. When foods are picked closer to the time they are purchased and eaten, they can be picked when they are riper.
- **A shorter travel distance to the markets and to your home.** Significant greenhouse gas emissions are emitted when food is shipped long distances.
- **Reduced food waste.** Foods are destroyed when they are exposed to temperature extremes and changes in humidity. Fresh fruits and vegetables can be bruised during transportation, warehousing, and distribution cycle, which leads to food waste.
- **Local foods boost the local economy.** Buying locally supports local jobs, puts money in the pockets of local farmers, and even attracts tourists.
- **Increased local soil health.** Locally grown fruits and vegetables can be grown in rotation with other crops, which improves soil fertility. Farmers who use organic methods do not use pesticides and artificial fertilizers, thus protecting air quality and water quality.

Iowa grows very little of the food its residents eat, particularly vegetables and fruits. Iowa has great potential to expand local foods.¹ By supporting local farmers, even more of the fruits, vegetables, meats, and meat products can be produced in Iowa.

Your food choices can improve water quality, air quality, soil health, carbon emissions, the local economy, and even your own health. You vote three times a day when you choose the foods you eat. So cast the vote by eating locally grown foods.



*Photos courtesy USDA
NRCS, Stephen Kirkpatrick*

¹ Dave Swenson, Selected Measures of the Economic Values of Increased Fruit and Vegetable Production and Consumption in the Upper Midwest, Leopold Center, Iowa State University, March, 2010