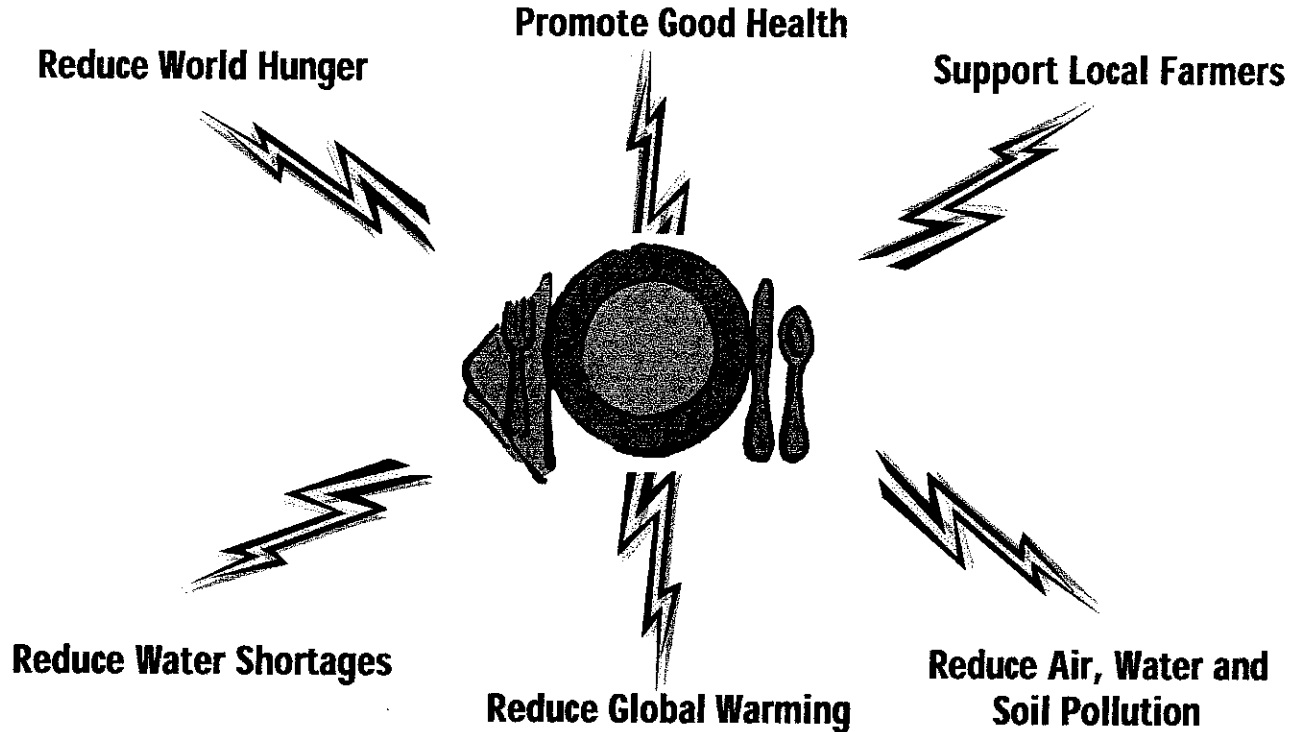


The Power of the Plate



The Seventh Principle of the Unitarian Universalist Church is “respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.”

Nowhere is the interdependent web of life more apparent than in the food we eat. The ways we grow, process and choose our food have far-reaching environmental, economic, social and health implications. Several of the problems related to food have existed for centuries. Although modern society has made many advances, it has also heightened disease, hunger, pollution, economic dislocation and threats to the earth’s genetic pool to unprecedented levels.

There is good news, however. These problems are NOT inevitable. Individual eating habits can make an enormous positive difference in our lives and the lives of future generations.

The purpose of the **Food For Thought (And Action!) Program** is to:

- **Bring to light** the connections between our dietary habits and societal well-being,
- **Empower** you, the members of our congregation, with knowledge of how to improve your health, your community and your world with every bite you take,
- **Take action**, once again renewing the 1st Unitarian Church’s leadership role in environmental and social justice issues.

While you’re at it, **enjoy** your food – never has environmental activism tasted so good!

You really do have the power to make the world a better place – one meal at a time.



First Unitarian Church, Portland
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Food for Thought (And Action!)



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Facts At A Glance

- U.S. mortality related to diet: **Two-thirds**
Incidence of high blood pressure in U.S. senior citizens: **More than 50%**
Incidence of high blood pressure in senior citizens in nations with low-fat, plant-based diets: **Virtually none**
Breast cancer rate for women in Japan who eat meat daily compared to those who rarely or never eat meat: **8.5 times greater**
- Per cent of world grain harvest fed to livestock: **36%**
Number of people starving or malnourished in the world: **1 billion**
Number of people who could be fed by grain and soy-beans eaten by U.S. livestock: **1.4 billion**
- Per cent of rain forest in Mexico and Central America cut down, mainly to produce meat for the U.S.: **50%**
- Water required to produce one pound of:
Beef: **2,500 gallons**
Chicken: **815 gallons**
Carrots: **33 gallons**
Wheat: **25 gallons**
- Current number of people worldwide facing a water shortage: **Nearly half a billion**
- Number of fish that have been killed by pig waste in North Carolina: **More than 1 billion**
Amount of water pollution generated by producing a pound of meat compared to a pound of pasta: **17 to 1**
- Number of Americans who drink water contaminated with pesticides: **15 million**
- Per cent of pesticides potentially cancer-causing: **30%**
Per cent of fresh fruits and vegetables containing at least one pesticide: **67%**
- Amount of minerals contained in organic foods compared to conventional foods:
Calcium: **63% higher**
Iron: **59% higher**
Potassium: **125% higher**
- Amount paid to farmer for a \$1 loaf of bread: **5 cents**
Amount paid for marketing, processing and distributing the bread: **75 cents**
- Farmer's typical profit in selling directly to customer compared to selling to food distributor: **10 to 1**
Cost to consumer of buying directly from a farmer's market or CSA (Community-Supported Agriculture) compared to buying equivalent produce in a grocery store: **Varies, but usually about the same**
- Number of farmer's markets started in the U.S. in the last ten years: **2,000**
Number of farmer's markets in the Portland area: **16**
- Number of households in the U.S. who have joined a CSA in the past few years: **Over 100,000**
Number of CSA's in the Portland area: **15**



(Sources: Chesapeake Bay Foundation; Department of Environmental Quality; John Robbins, *The Food Revolution*; Journal of Applied Nutrition; MacArthur Foundation Report; *Portland's Bounty*; Rainforest Action Network; Steve McFadden, *Farms of Tomorrow Re-Visited*; Union of Concerned Scientists; USDA; US EPA; US Surgeon General; U. of California Agricultural Extension; *Vital Signs 2000*; Worldwatch Institute)

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Further Action Tips

Would you like to take steps beyond your pledge? Here are more things you can do to promote good health for you and a healthy environment for the earth:

In Your Home:

- Buy food in bulk – reduce packaging.
- Buy foods that have been processed as little as possible.
- Buy re-usable canvas bags for groceries instead of using paper or plastic bags from the store.
- Re-use food containers.
- Eat local foods in season instead of imported out-of-season foods.
- Patronize restaurants that are members of the Chef's Collaborative, a national and regional group of chefs promoting local and sustainable food systems.
- Compost your food scraps (excluding meat) to reduce garbage and enrich the soil.

Read one of these books or websites

You may be amazed by what you'll discover and how much more empowered you'll be to make well-informed choices.



For the Greater Community:

- Tell at least three people you know – family, friends, co-workers – about this program.
- Ask produce managers at your local grocery stores to stock local and organic foods.
- Ask produce managers at your local grocery stores to label foods by country and state of origin.
- Ask restaurant managers to offer more vegetarian meals and use more local and organic food.
- Ask state and national legislators to support labeling genetically-modified foods.

Recommended Books

Diet For a New America by John Robbins (1987)

Fast Food Nation by Eric Schlosser (2001)

Genetic Engineering: Dream or Nightmare? by Mae-Wan Ho (1998)

Hope's Edge: The Next Diet For a Small Planet by Frances Moore Lappe and Anna Lappe (2001)

Pillar of Sand: Can the Irrigation Miracle Last? by Sandra Postel (1999)

Portland's Bounty ed. by Jenny Holmes, Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon (2001)

Stolen Harvest: The Hijacking of the Global Food Supply by Vandana Shiva (2000)

The Consumer's Guide to Effective Environmental Choices by Michael Brower and Warren Leon (1999)

The Food Revolution by John Robbins (2001)

Recommended Websites

Chef's Collaborative: www.portlandcc.org

Council for Responsible Genetics: www.gene-watch.org

EarthSave: www.earthsave.org

Food Alliance: www.thefoodalliance.org

Food First (Institute for Food and Development Policy): www.foodfirst.org

Humane Farming Association: www.hfa.org

Organic Consumers Association: www.purefood.org

Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine: www.pcrm.org

Union of Concerned Scientists: www.ucsusa.org

Worldwatch Institute: www.worldwatch.org

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Food for Thought (And Action!)



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Benefits to You and Your World

The Benefits of Eating Less Meat

IMPROVE YOUR HEALTH: There is no question – people who consume large amounts of meat seriously endanger their health. Fat, cholesterol and other substances in meat have been linked conclusively to higher rates of heart attack, stroke, and breast, prostate and colon cancer.

What about getting enough protein? Meat is a good source, but it's not a requirement for a healthy diet. In fact, it's almost impossible **not** to get enough protein from a well-balanced diet of vegetables, legumes, breads and grains that provide sufficient calories for living.

REDUCE WORLD HUNGER: Approximately 1 billion people don't have enough to eat, one out of six humans on the planet. Every year, 60 million people starve to death or die of nutrition-related diseases. The causes of world hunger are complex. They include poverty, distribution, political problems and meat production.

However, the math of feeding animals is simple: it takes 16 pounds of grain to produce one pound of beef and eight pounds of grain for one pound of pork. In the U.S., 70% of grain is fed to animals. Many third-world nations have converted farmland that once grew food for their own citizens to produce feed for livestock exported to Western nations. This is a significant loss of potential food for the world's hungry.

PROTECT THE ENVIRONMENT: The Union of Concerned Scientists cites food production as second only to transportation in degrading our environment, with meat the major factor, accounting for **25% of threats to natural ecosystems**. This is how:

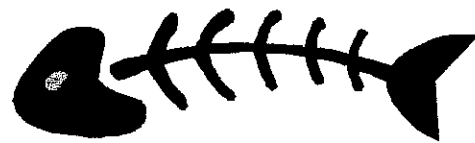
Global Warming: Burning fossil fuel creates carbon dioxide, the main cause of global warming. This is an integral part of meat processing, including transportation and production of fertilizers for grains grown for livestock. Producing a pound of beef generates as much CO₂ as burning a half gallon of gasoline. Also, livestock, through their belching and manure, generate huge amounts of methane, a greenhouse gas **21 times** more powerful than CO₂.

Finally, millions of acres of rain forest have been cleared for meat production, devastating one of the world's great resources for removing CO₂ from the atmosphere.

Water Supply: About 18% of the world's water is used for livestock feed, including enormous amounts for irrigation. To produce **one pound of beef** requires 2,500 gallons of water, **the equivalent of 500 showers**. Aquifers and surface water all over the world are in serious jeopardy of depletion, which could turn now-productive farmland into dust bowls. Many scientists believe water will surpass energy in the near future as humanity's most serious shortage.

Water and Air Pollution: The sheer amount of manure produced by livestock, **2 billion tons** a year, is wreaking havoc on the environment. One gas generated from manure, hydrogen sulfide, causes illness ranging from sore throats to seizures. Manure from factory farms of pigs and chickens contaminates drinking water and has already caused several disease outbreaks and millions of fish deaths.

Marine Ecosystems: In the last 40 years, the number of fisheries fully exploited, over-exploited or collapsed has risen from 5% to 60%. Some fish, including Atlantic cod and haddock, have almost disappeared. Like any other species, devastation to one will affect the entire food chain.



(Sources: American Cancer Society; American Heart Association; Audubon Society; John Robbins, The Food Revolution, Diet For A New America; National Academy of Sciences; Natural Resources Defense Council; Physicians' Committee for Responsible Medicine; Time; Union of Concerned Scientists; USDA; US EPA; Worldwatch Institute)

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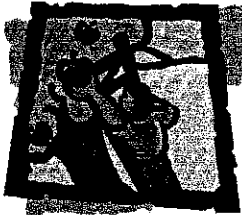
The Benefits of Eating Local Food

REDUCE GLOBAL WARMING: The average mouthful of food travels an estimated 1,300 miles to reach us, requiring a staggering amount of fossil fuel. Every time you eat food locally grown or produced, you reduce the need for these transportation costs, both financial and environmental.

SUPPORT LOCAL FARMERS: Local farmers and orchardists are being driven out of business by cheaper imported food, often produced through much cheaper labor and lowered environmental standards. In the Hood River region, one of the finest fruit growing areas in the world, orchardists are cutting down pear trees because imports from Chile are undercutting their prices.

The advantages of buying local food are many, both for you and the farmer:

- You receive fresh, delicious, nutritious food
- Farmers stand a much better chance of receiving a fair price and earning a decent living
- Family farms are preserved, enriching our local communities



ENHANCE FOOD SECURITY: In the aftermath of the tragic events of September 11, we are reminded how dependent we are on foreign oil. The same principle holds true for food. Every time we import food instead of producing it locally, we become more dependent upon potentially unstable sources.

Farmers often receive prices from middlemen at or below the cost of production. Pressured to sell, family farms are rapidly being bought up by developers or huge multinational corporations with absentee owners, often destroying local communities. Since 1945, the total number of farms in the U.S. has dropped by two-thirds.

With more control of our entire agricultural system in the hands of fewer large corporations, local independent farmers are increasingly losing any control whatsoever of land ownership, crop choices, distribution and prices. The suicide rate among U.S. farmers is three times the national average.

(Sources: Center for Rural Affairs; Eric Schlosser, Fast Food Nation; USDA)



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The Benefits of Eating Organic Food

As people become more knowledgeable, organic food sales in the U.S. have soared by **20% a year** for over 10 years, and the trend is expected to continue. By eating organic, you are reasonably assured that harmful substances will not get into the earth, the food and your body. Here are a few, among others, you will not get:

PESTICIDES: Chemicals that kill unwanted insects also can kill beneficial ones, such as ladybugs, bees and Monarch butterflies. When one part of the food chain is affected, *all parts are affected*, such as birds that feed on the insects, and people that eat the food. Diseases ranging from neurological disorders to cancer have been linked to pesticides. And the effects can be long-lasting: virtually all Americans have measurable residues of DDT in their tissues, even though it was banned in the U.S. in 1972.

HORMONES: One example – approximately 25% of the milk produced in the U.S. today is from cows injected with Bovine Growth Hormone (rBGH), which may be linked to prostate and breast cancer. Moreover, since it causes increased rates of painful udder infections in cows, they are often given antibiotics, which can be ingested by people. The United States is the only industrialized country in the world that hasn't banned this use of rBGH.

GENETICALLY-ENGINEERED (GMO) FOODS: Biotech companies have inserted flounder genes into tomatoes, rat genes into broccoli and human genes into fish. The major concerns, beyond ethical questions, are that there are no guarantees about the long-term health effects of these foods and the difficulty of keeping GMO organisms separate from natural ones. The threat that potentially harmful GMO plants and animals will "leak," both into the environment and into people, is quite real. Starlink corn, approved only for animal feed, escaped into the U.S. food supply in 2000, contaminating taco shells and nearly 300 processed foods.

A word about prices: Organic foods often cost more than non-organic. However, pasta, beans, cereals, grains, etc., in bulk food sections often are bargains because packaging costs are reduced.

(Sources: John Robbins, Diet For A New America; John Ryan and Alan Durning, Stuff: The Secret Lives of Everyday Things; NY Coalition for the Alternatives to Pesticides; Martin Teitel, Kim Wilson, Genetically Engineered Food; World Health Organization)

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