

Brady Kondek

Ms. Kraynak

AP English Language

5 April 2023

The Locavore Effect

Locavore diets are a new and upcoming trend in which people choose to strictly eat locally grown/produced products as much as they can. This movement has seen rapid growth and momentum within the last few years, as people become more conscientious about their impact on earth and the environment. With great benefits such as fresher food, more money for the local economy, and an increased variety in produce, it can be seen why this movement is seeing great results. While it can be acknowledged that eating strictly local can affect the global economy as a whole, since it takes money away from other places and economic sectors, there are great benefits that come along with being locavore, such as food being grown much fresher, more money being generated for the local economy which may need it, and much more available variety.

To start, food grown locally is much fresher than imported food; since it does not have to travel as far to get to your kitchen table. Jennifer Maiser states that “*while produce that is purchased in the supermarket or a big-box store has been in transit or cold-stored for days or weeks, produce that you purchase at your local farmer’s market has often been picked within 24 hours of your purchase. This freshness not only affects the taste of your food, but the nutritional value which declines with time,*” (Maiser). Think of it this way, would you much rather eat food that is two weeks old or two days old? Most likely your answer would be two days. Locally

grown food is sold within days after being sold, versus imported food which could take weeks before ending up on store shelves. Alisa Smith also explains how *“food begins to lose nutrition as soon as it is harvested. Fruit and vegetables that travel shorter distances are therefore likely to be closer to a maximum of nutrition,”* (Smith), which exemplifies the fact that distance ultimately affects the overall health and nutritional value of what you eat; something that every person should highly value.

The local economy is a highly significant and valuable component of a community, which aids in keeping it afloat. By eating more food grown locally, you are helping to support your local economy. Maiser continues to state how that *“a dollar spent locally generates twice as much income for the local economy,”* (Maiser), showcasing how this money spent goes right back into your pocket. As well, think about it, by spending locally you are helping the same farmer you bought your food from to be able to produce more food; on top of further helping to thrive your community, and support other local businesses in your area. It is also stated that by investing elsewhere, *“money leaves the community at every transaction,”* (Maiser), which takes the money out of your local community. You may think this is not much, but just wait until you start seeing your favorite places in town start to slowly disappear; then you will realize the effect of why communities need this financial support from people like you.

Tired of eating the same food from the grocery store every week? Does it seem like that is all that is available to you? Think elsewhere. Food at the local level translates to higher variety, in which you can find more types of food available, versus the big grocery stores that focus on selling the same five popular food brands. Maiser gives insight into how *“when a farmer is producing food that will not travel a long distance, will have a shorter shelf life, and does not have a high-yield demand, the farmer is free to try small crops of various fruits and vegetables*

that would probably never make it to a large supermarket,” (Maiser), which exhibits that local food will finally give you a break from that same food, and provide you with more available options, ultimately bringing you much greater nutritional value.

Let’s momentarily take a look at the opposing side here a moment. Opposers against the locavore movement argue that locally grown food costs much more than regularly imported food, create limitations on what you can eat based on what can be grown in your area and when you can get it, as well as problems at the global level. For example, Paul Roberts explains *“whereas some areas might find it fairly easy to eat locally (in Washington State, for example, I’m less than fifty miles from industrial quantities of fresh produce, corn, wheat, beef, and milk), people in other parts of the country and the world would have to look farther afield,”* (Roberts), and James E. McWilliams highlights that *“left unacknowledged, however, is the fact that it also hurts farmers in other parts of the world,”* (McWilliams). Some of these points do raise some questions, and do need to be taken into consideration; however, the benefits without a doubt greatly outnumber these downfalls when you consider things at the community level. Yes, there may currently be some immediate negative downfalls, but there is always room for improvement. The local community is the heart and soul of our daily lives, and by everyone committing to eating locally it will result in a much better and equalized state for them.

In the end, much can be said about being locavore and eating only locally grown food; and the debate will continue to go on. Locally grown food is fresher, brings in more for the local economy, and translates to more available variety. Not just that, but it helps to build stronger foundations for communities to thrive on. While the opposing side may argue that there are higher costs and other limitations brought by this, it is important to remember that you are directly helping your area. As well, there is always room for improvement to fix these problems,

while still integrating the importance of eating local. We have the ultimate vital role in shaping how we want our future to be. By coming together to support our local communities and farmers, we ultimately help invest into each other, helping to nurture that sense of community that has seemed to diminish in this fast-paced world we now find ourselves in. Do you want to make a difference? Now is your chance, by helping to build and defend not just a greater future for yourself, but for the future generations to come.

Works Cited

Maiser, Jennifer. "10 Reasons to Eat Local Food." *Eat Local Challenge*. Eat Local Challenge, 8 Apr. 2006. Web. 16 Dec. 2009.

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