

School Eco-Club Climate Repair Activity: Eating a Low Carbon Diet

AIM: Produce a School Dinner Menu showing the Carbon Footprint of each Meal

BACKGROUND

The carbon footprint (a number that represents the harmful gases which go into the atmosphere) associated with the food you eat, depends on how the food is produced, processed, transported and packaged. In 2010 Mike Berners-Lee in his book 'How Bad are Bananas?' explored the carbon footprint of some common foods. More recently, a team at Oxford University calculated the carbon footprints of a range of foods which the BBC used to produce a 'Climate Change Food Calculator' for people to explore the carbon footprint of their diets (see <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-46459714>).

ACTIVITY

A set of charts which illustrate the carbon footprints of different foods has been provided with this activity along with a quiz sheet. Display the charts around the classroom and then provide each student with a quiz sheet to complete. The students will have to look at each chart in order to find the carbon cost of a portion of food for a range of foods listed on their quiz sheet.

Allocate students a dish from the school menu. The students need to identify the key ingredients of the dish and then use information from their completed quiz sheet, or through accessing <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-46459714>, to estimate the carbon footprint of the dish.

Finally, the students should create a new version of the school menu which includes the carbon footprint of each meal.

Discuss the students' findings:

- Are the results what the students would have expected?
- Are any of the students considering opting for different menu choices after this activity?
- Do the students have ideas they would like to share with Herts Catering Limited (HCL) - if that is who supplies your school - on how they could change their menu options to reduce the carbon footprint of school lunches.

POSSIBLE EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

- Ask the students to write a letter to HCL explaining what they have learned about the carbon footprint of the school lunch menu and possibly making suggestions on how the carbon footprint of this menu could be lowered.
- Try out some new vegetarian dishes, perhaps even making them in Food Technology, and consider proposing the most popular as future school lunch menu options.
- The charts for the quiz were initially produced for a Letchworth Festival event. Review these charts. Are they easy to interpret? Do they give a clear message? Then choose and present a set of data from the BBC 'Climate Change Food Calculator' on a poster in a way that you think will help people learn how to reduce the carbon in their diet.
- Discuss why the calculated carbon footprint of any particular kind of food can vary.

