Walk into any large food store and you will probably find items imported from different countries. In today’s global economy, a single store might sell beef from Australia, oranges from Brazil, and vegetables from France.

However, an increasing number of people are concerned about the globalization of food. In particular, they are concerned about food produced by large, corporate farms. Their concerns have started a trend—the locavore movement. Locavores are people who choose to eat food products from small, local farms. Why would someone become a locavore?

1. The Environmental Argument

Food products often travel large distances to reach a store. An orange, for example, might travel by truck from a farm to a packaging plant. It might then be exported by plane to another country, where it reaches a store and then, finally, a consumer. Some food items travel long distances even within a country. Food items sold in the United States often travel more than 1,000 miles (1,600 kilometers) from farm to kitchen.

Locavores argue that transporting goods over large distances is harmful to the environment. Burning airplane fuel, for example, produces greenhouse gas emissions. Locally produced products, on the other hand, consume much less fuel for transport. Because the distance from farm to consumer is shorter, local products also use less paper and plastic for packaging. In addition, small, local farms normally use fewer oil-based fertilizers and pesticides than corporate farms.

A packaging plant is a large factory where food is wrapped and made ready for transportation or sale.

Fuel is a substance such as coal, oil, or gasoline that is burned to provide heat or power. Cars and airplanes use fuel to run.

Greenhouse gas emissions are gases that are released into the air and cause a slow rise in Earth’s temperature. The main greenhouse gas is carbon dioxide.

Pesticides are chemicals that farmers and gardeners use to kill insects.
However, not everyone agrees that eating locally has a major effect on the environment. A recent study by Carnegie Mellon University shows that what you eat may be more important than where the food comes from. Beef production, for example, requires a lot of food, water, and land. Cows also produce methane, a greenhouse gas. Removing red meat from your diet, the study concludes, is probably better for the global climate than deciding to eat only locally produced foods.

2. The Health Argument

Locavores argue that eating locally is also good for your health. “The local food movement did not develop because of concerns about climate and greenhouse gas emissions,” says economist David Morris. “It developed because people don’t trust multinational companies. They [want] to know the supplier [of their food]. People feel that [local food] is safer, and it’s fresher.”

Local products are fresher, locavores argue, because they don’t have to travel so far. The products spend less time in storage and transport, so they need fewer preservatives and other chemicals. Locavores also argue that locally produced food items taste better. Fruit and vegetables, for example, can lose flavor and nutrients during transportation and storage.

However, not all places have the right climate or agricultural land to produce a variety of food all year. So locavores may not have many in-season products to choose from. In addition, food produced on big, corporate farms is often cheaper. Corporate farms can produce large amounts of food at a time, which results in lower costs for the farms and lower prices for consumers. Despite these factors, the locavore movement continues to grow worldwide.

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A multinational company is one that has offices in many different countries.

If you put something in storage, you keep it in a special place until it is needed.

Preservatives are chemicals that keep things in good condition. Food producers use preservatives to keep food fresh.

Nutrients are substances in food, such as vitamins and minerals, that help plants and animals grow and stay healthy.