

# Think globally, eat locally



There are 25 million milk-producing animals in Mongolia, but the shops used by wealthier people there mainly sell German butter. Britain imports 430,000 tonnes of butter from its neighbours in the European Union (EU) – while exporting roughly 470,000 tonnes to those same countries.

The EU imports 72 per cent of all apples on the world market, and its supermarkets generally stock just four or five types of them. Yet more than 2,300 regional varieties of apple grow there.



One study, looking at a typical Sunday lunch near Leicester, England, found that the beef had travelled 21,462 km from Australia, the potatoes 2,447 km from Italy, the carrots 9,620 km from South Africa, the beans 9,532 km from Thailand and so on, through the courses, for a total of 73,448 km. Every continent contributed to the lunch table, but all the food could have been produced and bought locally.

Every morning, cargo planes filled with carnations and roses depart from Nairobi and land in Amsterdam to be sold at the world's largest flower market. The 21 million flowers then journey on to destinations as scattered as London, Moscow, Beijing and San Francisco.

Flowers, food and drink – meats, fruits, vegetables and even wines – now criss-cross the globe to an extent unimaginable just 50 years ago. Billions of poor people can only eat whatever is grown locally, but the relatively affluent enjoy seasonal produce like strawberries, tomatoes and peas all year round. South African grapes, Australian lamb, Guatemalan bananas and Argentine beef regularly end up on supermarket shelves and dinner tables, alongside Chilean apples and Moroccan beans.

Transport is faster and more reliable nowadays. But it is also subsidized by a lack of taxes on airline and shipping fuels. The environmental costs of pollution – including greenhouse gases that cause global warming – are not included in the prices paid for much of the food in the shops.



## 'A just cup'



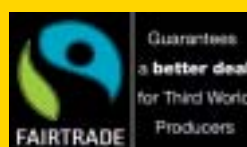
Santiago Riviera is a Nicaraguan coffee grower. After he and his family plant and harvest the beans, they are sold and shipped to processing plants around the world.

From the bush to our mugs, coffee beans can change hands as many as 150 times. Each person involved contributes labour and adds a few cents to the final cost. Of the \$3.50 charged by a café for a cappuccino, the grower rarely receives more than 10 cents.

But are all the steps really necessary? Those who support Fair Trade don't think so.

The Fair Trade movement aims to simplify the supply chain and provide small farmers with stable incomes. While others pay between 55 cents and \$1.76 per kilo, Fair Trade purchasers guarantee growers like Riviera \$2.77. As a result, Riviera can cover his costs, support his family and reinvest in his community.

Many major coffee houses are now selling Fair Trade coffee, as they discover that more and more customers are happy to pay an extra few cents to ensure that people like the Rivieras have enough to eat and can send their children to school. Perhaps it is important that our daily brew is not just a cup of coffee, but 'a just cup'.



## All grown up ↑

In the Masai village of Loitokitok in rural Kenya, Parmuya Kampei Kirasi and five of his friends admire the 4.85 hectares of seedlings they have just planted. For the second consecutive year, they have sown row after row of tomato plants and onion bulbs, and now they must wait seven long months to reap the fruits (or vegetables) of their labour.

The six young people formed the Ilmepukoo Farming Youth Group in 2002 to improve the living standards of youth in their village. They are supporting employment and training in modern agricultural methods, with the aim of giving their peers a chance to invest in their collective future.



People are starting to question the logic of all this. We could live just as well and interestingly using more locally produced goods. Drives to buy locally have sprung up - from Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger's urge to 'Be Californian: Buy California Grown' to the 'Proudly South African' campaign and farmers' market movements across Europe and the United States. Favouring local consumption as a way of returning to regional pride and cultural roots, as well as good environmental practice, is growing rapidly.

Buying foods locally can also build community and reawaken understanding of connections between people, land and harvest cycles. Cooking fresh ingredients - as advocated by the Italian-founded Slow Food Movement - encourages 'taste, tradition and the honest pleasures of food'.

**There is an old environmental slogan: 'Think globally, act locally'. Maybe it is time to supplement it with a new one: 'Think globally, eat locally'.**

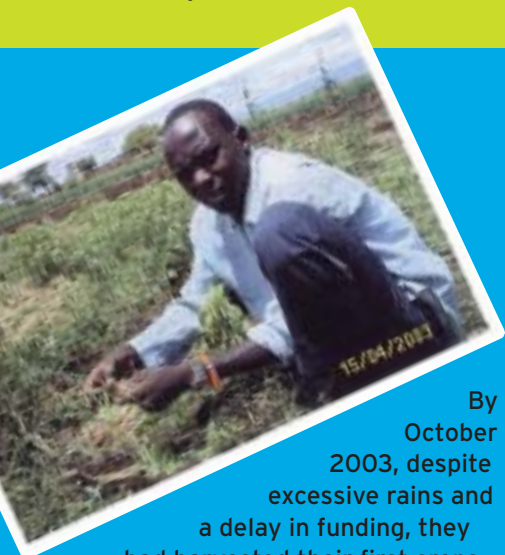


photo: Peacechild International

By October 2003, despite excessive rains and a delay in funding, they had harvested their first crops. They kept some of the produce for their families to eat and sold the rest, raising roughly \$515 to reinvest in seeds and equipment for the next planting season. In this way, the six friends hope to keep their small operation running for years to come, generating extra food and income for their families, and expanding to include more young people from their community.



## Where there's wool, there's a way

**I was born in Brno, the second biggest city in the Czech Republic, in 1979 - a time when the communist regime allowed no private farming. I have always felt close to all living things, especially livestock. So I was constantly looking for ways of meeting real horses, cows or sheep - even if it wasn't always easy.**

No one in my family farmed, so the only solution was to visit our family friends in the countryside where I - a city child - could delve into the mystery of farming. Pitchfork in hand, I devoured information about breeding horses and milking goats. Many people predicted that my enthusiasm would be short lived, and told me I should choose a more refined occupation - but I felt bound to farming by an invisible but intense tie.

I decided to be a farmer. During my studies at school and agricultural college I wove dreams of having my own farmhouse. I met Ludek, a young man who encouraged me in my plans, and we married. He gave me our first sheep as my 19th birthday present. We called it Alberta, and it came for walks

on a lead along the city streets with us.

We were searching for a place in the countryside where we could settle down. Finally we made our home in the tiny village of Pejskov - in an empty former piggery - and we have been restoring it for five years while our small numbers of horses and sheep have slowly grown.

The horses give rides to our guests - who come to enjoy the natural beauty. The sheep produce milk, from which I make a wide variety of organic dairy products, especially cheese. Both the horses and the sheep spend most of the year out at pasture, where they are happiest. Many other domestic animals live on our farm - dogs, pigeons, chickens, parrots, guinea pigs and rabbits - much to the delight of the mainly urban children who come to visit us.

Our farm is self-sufficient and makes enough for our modest subsistence. We are grateful to be creating a life for ourselves that is in harmony with nature - and to be able to share it with others.

*Julie Krocova*

