

HOME eco challenge



Sustainable Food

30% of the average Australian's ecological footprint can be attributed to food¹.

This month's Eco Challenge examines the issues around the food choices we make every day.

The production, processing, transportation and storage of food all contributes to our ecological footprint. There can also be significant social impacts, both good and bad, on the people involved in every stage of the production and supply chain. Through making informed choices when purchasing and disposing of products we have the power to make far-reaching decisions and reduce the environmental and social impacts of the products we purchase.



How far has it travelled?

Food miles indicate the distance food has travelled from its sources to your table and the same principle can be applied to any product.

The greater the distance travelled, the greater the environmental impact - including transport energy use and the associated pollution. Buying locally grown food that is in season requires less energy to produce and transport. It also helps support local farmers. Visit the [Ashfield Council website](#) for a list of seasonal fruits and vegetables.



Buy organic

Certified organic products are grown and processed without the use of synthetic chemicals, herbicides, fertilisers or genetically modified organisms.

Every step of the process for producing a certified organic product has been audited against strict guidelines. There are a number of organic certifiers in Australia - the product must say 'Certified Organic'. For more information about organic farming practices check out the [Sustainable Table website](#).

While many people believe that eating organic food is better for them, it is the environment that is the real winner when you eat organic food. Organic farming methods help prevent soil and land degradation, resource depletion and loss of biodiversity.



Where can I buy organic produce?

Supermarkets are now expanding their ranges of organic fruits and vegetables as well as organic packaged items.

You can also try these local options:

- Marrickville Farmers Markets
- Summer Hill Organic Fruit Market
- Farmers Market at Everleigh
- Orange Grove Organic Farmers Market, Lilyfield
- Fruit and veggie boxes (home delivery or hub collection)

Looking for other great places to buy organic supplies? Check out [Leichhardt's Sustainable Shopping Guide](#)

The benefits of buying Fairtrade products



Guarantees a **better deal** for Third World Producers

Fairtrade is about better prices, decent working conditions, local sustainability, and fair terms of trade for farmers

and workers in the developing world. By requiring companies to pay sustainable prices, Fairtrade addresses the injustices of conventional trade, which traditionally discriminates against the poorest, weakest producers. It enables them to improve their position and have more control over their lives. Visit the [Fairtrade Labelling Organization](#) website for more information.

Free range eggs

Eggs have been under the spotlight recently as consumers question whether 'free range' really means what we think.

There are currently no national standards for egg labelling which means eggs labelled free range can have stocking densities of anything from 1000 - 20,000 hens per hectare. There are a number of accreditation bodies with labels that you can look out for. Check the labels on your favourite eggs and find out more about them at the [Sustainable Table](#) website. The [Shop Ethical](#) website also has lots of useful information about eggs and many other products.



Palm oil



Palm oil is used in a growing number of products due to its versatility, but recently palm oil plantations have been criticised for deforestation, greenhouse gas production and contribution to social

issues. It can currently be called 'vegetable oil' in the ingredients list so some consumers have been calling for palm oil to be specifically listed on packaging. Some manufacturers are starting to voluntarily list palm oil, particularly those that are using certified sustainable palm oil. For a more detailed look at the palm oil issues see the [Shop Ethical!](#) website

Borneo Orangutan Survival Australia has put together a [list of products that don't contain palm oil.](#)

Think about the meat you eat

Cutting down the amount of meat you eat can have a really positive environmental impact as meat production is very resource intensive. For example, by reducing your meat consumption by one meal per week you can reduce your greenhouse gas pollution by up to 300kg and reduce your water use by up to 10,000 litres over a year. Making more sustainable choices when purchasing meat is also important - for example, buying grass and pasture fed as well as organic meat is more sustainable than grain fed meat.

Meat Free Mondays are one way to reduce the amount of meat you consume. Take a look at the [Meat Free Mondays website.](#)

Sustainable Seafood

Fish stocks are under increasing pressure due to overfishing of key species and use of damaging fishing techniques.



By making careful choices, consumers can support the development of sustainable fisheries. Next time you are planning to cook fish, check out [Good Fish Bad Fish](#) which has a great 'seafood converter'. Enter the name of the fish your recipe requires to find out how sustainable it is and for suggestions for more sustainable alternatives you could try.



How much am I wasting?

The average NSW household throws away \$1000 of food every year.

When food is wasted, the energy and resources invested by the supply chain to deliver food to our pantry and plates is lost. Also, when food breaks down in a landfill, it produces methane, a gas 25 times more effective than carbon dioxide at trapping heat in the atmosphere, contributing to climate change.

Planning your meals and shopping to a list are great ways to reduce food waste. Try the recipe finder and shopping list generator at the [Do Something! FoodWise Website](#)

The [Love Food Hate Waste website](#) also has lots of tips for storing food to minimise spoilage and re-using leftovers.

Cafes and Restaurants

Looking for locally grown seasonal produce need not be limited to food you eat at home.

Next time you eat at a cafe or restaurant ask where the produce used to make it comes from. Check out the [Leichhardt Sustainable Shopping Guide](#) for local cafes and restaurants.



Grow your own

Growing your own food is one way to know for sure what has gone into producing it.

This can be anything from a few herbs on a window sill, a balcony garden, or a large scale backyard veggie plot. Many schools in our local area also have veggie gardens so children can learn first-hand where their food comes from.

Get started by booking into a gardening workshop through the [Treading Lightly Program](#) or check out community gardening with groups like [Ashfield](#) and [Leichhardt Community Gardens](#) where you can share skills and learn from others.



Packaging

Another way to minimise the impact of the food we consume is to reduce packaging waste wherever possible.

Safe clean drinking water is available almost everywhere in Australia, however plastic bottles are among the ten most common rubbish items picked up on Clean Up Australia Day. Watch the [Story of Bottled Water](#) or check out the [Clean Up Australia Bottled water fact sheet](#) and remember to take your re-useable water bottle next time you are out and about.



You can also avoid wrapping your lunch in plastic film - try putting your sandwich in a well sealed sandwich-sized container instead.

Remember to use your re-useable cup for your takeaway coffee.

Links for websites

www.ashfield.nsw.gov.au/page/eating_sustainably.html

www.sustainabletable.org.au/Hungryforinfo/conventional-and-organic-farming/tabid/114/Default.aspx

www.sustainableleichhardt.com.au/

www.fairtrade.net/

www.sustainabletable.org.au/Hungryforinfo/Free-range-egg-and-chicken-guide/tabid/113/Default.aspx

www.ethical.org.au/get-informed/issues/egg-choices/

www.ethical.org.au/get-informed/issues/palm-oil/

www.orangutans.com.au/orangutans-survival-information/helping-you-buy-responsibly-palm-oil-free-alternatives.aspx

www.meatfreemondays.com.au/

www.goodfishbadfish.com.au/

www.foodwise.com.au/recipe-room/our-recipe-finder/

www.lovefoodhatewaste.nsw.gov.au/

www.eventbrite.com.au/o/treading-lightly-3872044903

www.ashfield.nsw.gov.au/page/community_gardens.html

www.leichhardt.nsw.gov.au/Recreation/Community-Gardens/Community-Gardens

www.storyofstuff.org/movies/story-of-bottled-water/

www.cleanup.org.au/PDF/au/clean_up_australia_bottled_water_factsheet.pdf

References¹ EPA Victoria (2008) Victoria's Ecological Footprint www.epa.vic.gov.au/~media/Publications/1267.pdf

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