

Eco Church - Further thoughts on our lifestyle.

Locally grown, organic, animal friendly, Fairtrade. (LOAF)

Where does your food come from? How often do you buy local produce? Why should you buy Fairtrade?

Like all issues there is never a black and white answer! Sometimes the pressure to buy local produce conflicts with the need to support the world's poorest countries and ensure that imported food is ethically sourced and produced.

Which is more important – to support local industries, invest in the local economy, and reduce the amount of air miles travelled by the produce, or to support the world's small farmers, ensure child or slave labour is not used, and guarantee that all receive a fair price for their goods? How much are the two in conflict with each other?

For example do the handmade chocolates made locally use Fairtrade chocolate or not? Have we asked that question? It may be that we can support both local industry and Fairtrade. It would be far too simplistic to attempt to debate all the issues in a short article here but if you're interested there is a lot of information on the subject on the internet, and it will undoubtedly form part of future discussions on many occasions.

Did you know? Air freight is mainly used for high value perishable produce like out of season berries (according to bbcgoodfood.com), but these products account for 11% of the UK's food transport emissions.

Those eco nuts are nagging us again! That is not the intention. On the eco church committee we are striving to raise awareness and maybe make us all think more deeply about our lifestyles. Nobody is saying you can never eat an avocado again, or eat raspberries in winter, but it is a good idea to weigh up your options and the potential impact.

One website which is useful if you're looking to buy locally sourced produce is biqbarn.co.uk. You can track down the very best, freshest and locally produced food and drink in your area. Simply type in your postcode.

However, even better is personal recommendation. This is where you come in. Which local suppliers do you use and would recommend? I personally enjoy the farm shop at Peterley Manor in Prestwood where you can also pick your own fruit, but there must be loads of others known to you. Can you send them to me? Maybe we could compile a list for the eco church section of the website.

So how did you get on with meat-free Monday? Maybe you tried it, maybe you didn't, but as with the decision on whether or not to buy locally, it is your choice. All we can do is raise awareness of the issues.

Coming next as we look at our own lifestyles – when we can meet face to face again - we will attempt to measure our own carbon footprint as individuals. Watch this space.