

January 13, 2013

It's High Time: Climate Change Solutions, A Public Forum

Food Action Group Summary

Discussion Leader: Sonia DeMarta, founder of Lexington Farmer's Market

Minutes taken by Lexington Global Warming Action Coalition

- Local food is desirable, not just because it is fresh and hopefully organic, but because it also helps us live more self-sufficiently and cut way back on miles traveled to get the food to us. We should not need to buy frozen food grown in Thailand or China. We can always freeze food grown in our own gardens or at local farms. Many businesses are bringing local food to a wider market.
- The price of food is growing more precarious due to unknowns associated with droughts, weather extremes, and gas prices for transportation. Before modern-day transport and refrigerated trucks Americans had to be self-reliant. There will always be food items such as bananas, citrus varieties, grains, or avocados that cannot be grown in the Northeast, but we need to find ways to adapt to changing world conditions.
- Local food brings people together. Those who grow food and buy food, particularly at farmers markets, talk to each other. There are cooking co-ops, trading meals among CSA members, classes on various topics, such as making cheese, canning, beekeeping, and dinners centered on local foods. Children who have the experience of growing their own food will eat food they wouldn't normally eat.
- Local food helps us tune in closer to nature and the seasonality of food availability.
- Food waste is expensive! We waste water, energy, and chemicals. It contributes to climate change pollution through production, packaging, and transporting discarded food. Nearly all food waste goes into landfills, where it decomposes and releases methane, a heat-trapping greenhouse gas that is 21 times more potent than CO₂. In the U.S. we waste around 40% of all edible food. In our households, composting is a non-gas-producing means to turn unused food scraps into healthy soils.
- Eat less meat. We eat just shy of 200 pounds per person per year. The main sources of greenhouse gases from animal agriculture are:
 - Deforestation of the rainforests to grow feed for livestock.
 - Methane from manure waste. – Methane is 72 times more potent as a global warming gas than CO₂
 - Refrigeration and transport of meat around the world.

- Raising, processing and slaughtering of the animal.
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Meat production also uses a massive amount of water and other resources which would be better used to feed the world's hungry and provide water to those in need. It takes 100 times more water (up to 2,500 gallons) to produce a pound of grain-fed beef than it does to produce a pound of wheat. Around 45 percent of the world's land is either directly or indirectly involved in livestock production. As forests are cleared to create new land for grazing animals or growing feed crops, the earth's capacity to sequester greenhouse gases (trees are especially good at this) diminishes. Fertilizers used in farming are responsible for a significant share of the warming that causes climate change.

- Carbon is a key ingredient in soil organic matter (57% by weight). Plants produce organic compounds by using sunlight energy and combining carbon dioxide from the atmosphere with water from the soil. Soil organic matter is created by the cycling of these organic compounds in plants, animals, and microorganisms into the soil. Well-decomposed organic matter forms humus, a dark brown, porous, spongy material that provides a carbon and energy source for soil microbes and plants. (Ohio State University Fact Sheet)

Try organic butter from grass fed cows. Not as toxic as typical butter.