

*If this document whets your appetite for more information, then please purchase a copy of *The Sustainable Table* and continue your learning by reading the contributors' stories and expanded Hungry for Information section at the back of the book. It will change the way you look at food forever.*



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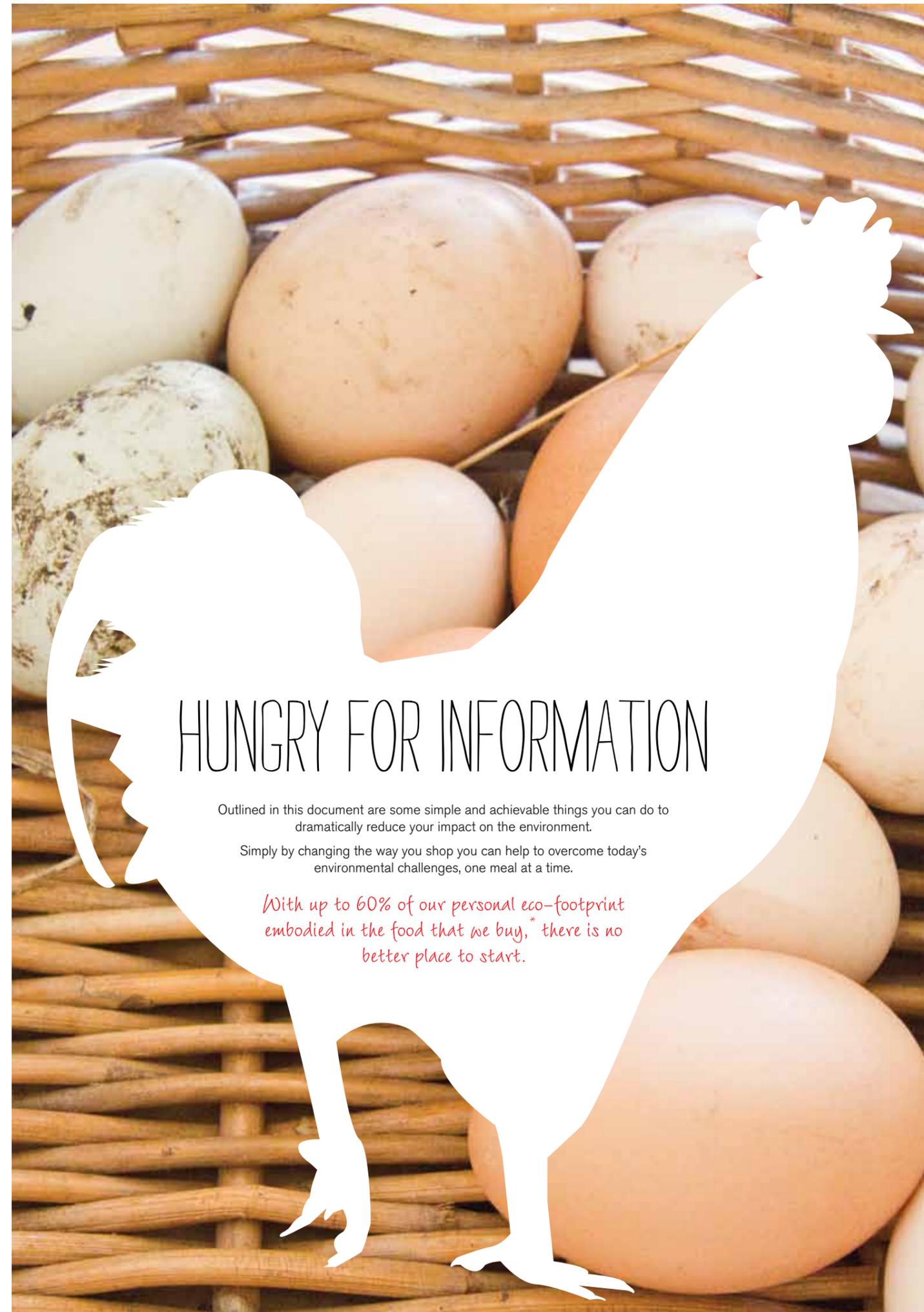
Sustainable Table is an environmental not-for-profit organisation that uses food as an entrée to explore sustainability issues.

Together we can help to overcome today's environmental challenges, one meal at a time.

For more information please visit sustainabletable.org.au

Footnotes

- * Australian Conservation Foundation, 2007, 'Consumption Atlas', <http://www.acfonline.org.au/consumptionatlas/>, viewed 11 November 2010.
- 1. Australian Government, 2008, '*National Greenhouse Gas Inventory*', Department of Climate Change and Energy, <http://www.ageis.greenhouse.gov.au/>, viewed 8 November 2010.
- 2. Cribb, J, 2010, *The Coming Famine: The global food crisis and what we can do to avoid it*, CSIRO Publishing 2010, p. 33
- 3. Foran, B, Lenzen, M, Dey, C, 2005, *Balancing Act: A Tripple Bottom Line Analysis of the 135 Sectors of the Economy*, CSIRO
- 4. Roach, J, 2006, '*Seafood may be gone by 2048, study says*', National Geographic News, November 2 2006, <http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2006/11/061102-seafoodthreat.html>, viewed 20 July 2010.
- 5. Australian Conservation Foundation, 2007, *The Green Home Guide*, Victoria Edition, 2nd Edition Jan 2007, p. 32.
- 6. Australian Conservation Foundation, 2007, *The Green Home Guide*, Victoria Edition, 2nd Edition Jan 2007, p. 23.
- 7. Australian Government, Department of Climate Change and Energy Efficiency, 2010, '*Living Greener*', <http://www.livinggreener.gov.au/waste/reducing-waste>, viewed 14 July 2010.
- 8. Hendrick, K, 2010, *National Association of Retail Grocers of Australia*, Submission to Productivity Commission.



HUNGRY FOR INFORMATION

Outlined in this document are some simple and achievable things you can do to dramatically reduce your impact on the environment.

Simply by changing the way you shop you can help to overcome today's environmental challenges, one meal at a time.

With up to 60% of our personal eco-footprint embodied in the food that we buy, there is no better place to start.*

WHAT YOU CAN DO

This document has been developed to provide you with practical steps to significantly reduce your eco-footprint, simply by altering the way you shop. We urge you to carefully read through the information and start the change today!

Change the way you shop

Follow our ethical shopping pyramid to benefit your health and our environment. Your food will not have travelled as far to reach your plate, it will stay fresher for longer and you will be eating seasonally, which tastes better, is cheaper and better for the environment.



*including Coles, Woolworths, Thomas Dux, Costco, Aldi and NQR **including IGA, Leo's and Ritchies

Instigate household meat free days

Reducing your meat intake is one of the most powerful things you can do to reduce your impact on the environment. The environmental impacts of eating meat include:

- Methane emissions from animal grazing are one of the largest contributors to Australia's greenhouse gas emissions.¹
- It takes an estimated 50,000 litres of water to produce 1 kg of beef.²
- Animal industries cause around 92% of all land degradation in Australia.³
- The world is set to run out of ocean fish by 2048 if current demand continues.⁴

Buy local, seasonal, certified organic produce

There are so many health and environmental benefits of buying organic, seasonal produce.

Buying organic or biodynamic produce is better for the environment because no synthetic chemicals, pesticides or genetically modified organisms are used. Organic producers are often smaller family farmers, so by purchasing organic produce you are supporting them and the local economy.

Some farmers' market producers are not certified organic, but follow organic farming principles, so always ask.

Reduce waste and buy a compost bin

In Australia we waste \$5.2 billion worth of food each year.⁵ This food requires the same resources to grow and be transported, so we are effectively throwing food and resources down the drain.

You can reduce food waste by planning your meals and trying to avoid over-ordering when dining out or buying take-away – you will also save money.

Finally, feed leftover food to your chooks or compost any leftovers so that they can be turned into soil for your home veggie garden. Using a compost bin or worm farm for your food scraps can reduce the garbage you send to landfill by up to 50%.⁶ Using a home composting system also reduces your greenhouse gas emissions because you are preventing the methane emissions that occur when organic waste breaks down in the oxygen-starved environment of landfill.

Ethical and sustainable meat and seafood

When purchasing meat or seafood always source free range and organic options from ethical and sustainable producers similar to those who have been profiled in The Sustainable Table.

Eat whole foods, not processed food

Whole foods are foods that have not been processed or refined. These include unpolished grains, fruit and vegetables and unprocessed meats. Whole foods do not contain added salt, sugar, flavouring agents or preservatives. This means that less energy and resources have gone into producing them, and most of them can be bought free from packaging. They are not only healthier for you but they also have a much lower environmental impact.

Grow your own food

Growing your own food reduces your food miles to food steps! It reduces your contribution to climate change, enables you to eat seasonally, reduces the money you need to spend on food and gives you a greater connection with how food is grown. If you have enough space also get some chooks as they provide you with daily eggs and reduce your waste by eating your food scraps.

Avoid packaging

These days more and more fresh food items are being unnecessarily packaged in plastic for ease of transport. On average, each Australian sends almost 1 tonne of waste to landfill each year.⁷

To reduce your packaging waste:

- Make a rule not to buy fresh produce that has been pre-packaged.
- Find a local co-op or food store that sells non-perishable items such as rice and lentils in bulk and take your own containers, otherwise buy in bulk and distribute it amongst your friends and family.
- Take your own shopping bags.
- Don't use plastic bags to separate fresh produce, just put them all in your basket.
- Make food from scratch and freeze excess rather than buying packaged meals.
- Reuse glass jars for preserving food.
- Use fresh, rather than tinned produce where possible i.e. tomatoes.
- Shop at farmers' markets where very little packaging is used.

Reduce, Reuse, Recycle

Many people think it is a good thing to have a full bin of recyclables at the end of the week in comparison to their general waste bin which goes to landfill. Although this is good, there is still embodied energy in transporting and recycling products into something else.

The best thing you can do is reduce your packaging, reuse what you can and use your recycling bin as a last resort.

Ask questions

As a consumer you have the power to avoid purchasing items that do not fit your environmental and ethical standards. The only way that shops, restaurants and supermarkets will change what they serve or stock is if sales decline and they recognise that their customers want something else. Remember to ask questions:

- Is the meat organic or free range?
- Where was the seafood sourced? How was it caught? Is the species over-fished?
- Is the produce organic?
- Was the produce grown locally?

Remember, every dollar you spend is a vote for the type of food system you would like to be a part of.

Our ethical buying pyramid explained

Accredited farmers' markets

Farmers' markets are a great way to shop, as they only stock seasonal produce that is locally grown. It is important to purchase local produce to reduce the food miles of your diet. The further food has travelled to reach your plate, the more greenhouse gases are emitted.

By regularly shopping at farmers' markets you'll benefit by:

- Finding out what is in season.
- Meeting the farmers who actually grow the food.
- Guilt-free shopping as everything is local and free range.
- Knowing that the profits go directly to the family farm.

To find a farmers' market in Victoria visit www.vicfarmersmarkets.org.au

For other states visit www.farmersmarkets.org.au

Community Supported Agriculture (CSAs)

CSAs involve a direct relationship between the producer/farmer and the consumer, where a group of people commit to paying a set amount for a whole season, in return for the farms produce which is normally delivered weekly. The upfront funding provides financial security to the farmer who can invest in production of organic or biodynamic growing practices and whole farm ecological health. Farms involved in CSAs tend to be smaller family farms growing a variety of produce.

Food Cooperative (co-op)

A food co-op is a food store/group that follows the principles of a cooperative. A cooperative is a non-profit organisation owned by members. Members are able to purchase goods (usually discounted), vote on how the co-op is run and share in any surplus generated from the co-op. Food co-ops usually sell organic and ethical food products.

Farm gate or fresh off the boat

Many smaller family farms sell produce directly from the farm. This can be a great way to shop because you get to experience the farm environment. Some fishermen also sell direct from their boat, such as Sea Bounty (featured in The Sustainable Table).

Organic grocer or organic box delivery

Organic grocers and box delivery services provide consumers with convenience and still provides a way for you to purchase food that is healthier, tastier, and more environmentally sound. Purchasing through a grocer or box system reduces some of the share of the profit that the farmer would otherwise be receiving if purchasing direct from the farmer. Additionally there is no requirement to source local produce, so be sure to enquire about this when shopping with them.

Non-organic box delivery, greengrocer, local market

Non-organic box delivery, greengrocers and local markets such as Queen Victoria and South Melbourne Market are different from a farmers' market as most sellers buy their produce directly from the Melbourne Wholesale Market. The Melbourne Wholesale Market is where a middleman on-sells produce to retailers, however some large farmers directly attend the wholesale market as well. This set-up is the same in other states of Australia. When you buy from one of these outlets the wholesaler and retailer have taken a share of the profit, reducing the amount the farmer receives. There is also no requirement to buy from local farmers or produce that is in season. The main benefit of shopping at one of these outlets is that you are supporting small business.

Community or independent supermarkets

These supermarkets are similar to large supermarkets, however they are smaller businesses therefore allow you to support your local economy and often give back to the community through giving programs.

Large supermarkets

In Australia the two largest retailers, Coles and Woolworths, control 78%-79% of the market, making Australia one of the most concentrated grocery markets in the Western world.⁸

Supermarkets are extremely popular and have done a great job at providing us with a convenient and accessible way to shop. They have huge buying power and work on economies of scale, meaning that they can often source and sell produce at a cheaper rate than independent stores can. However, this system of having shelves continually stocked and fresh produce eternally available, regardless of the season, is placing a huge strain on the environment. This centralised approach to food has also seen pressure placed on farmers to provide cheaper produce, which often forces them to sell up or scale up.

This pressure to provide cheap food is what has seen many farmers turn to factory farming and other intensive farming practices that have led to environmental degradation.

Additionally, Supermarkets only stock varieties of fruit and vegetables that have a longer shelf

life, so we are losing biodiversity and heirloom varieties. Loss of biodiversity makes us vulnerable to shocks in the system, for example a disease or pest outbreak of a certain crop can destroy large percentages of our food, resulting in dramatic price increases. This also makes us more reliant on pesticides, fertilisers and herbicides to protect mono-crops from damage.

However, nothing will be achieved by sitting back and blaming supermarkets for the problems within the food system. They have simply made a very profitable business out of responding to consumer demand. Supermarkets will only ever stock what generates a profit for them, so the power lies with us.

A recent example of the power of consumer pressure was seen when Coles announced that they are phasing out the inhumane use of sow stalls on their own brand pork products. This has only come about by consumers and animal welfare groups voicing their concern.

Remember, every dollar you spend is a vote for the type of food system you would like to be a part of.