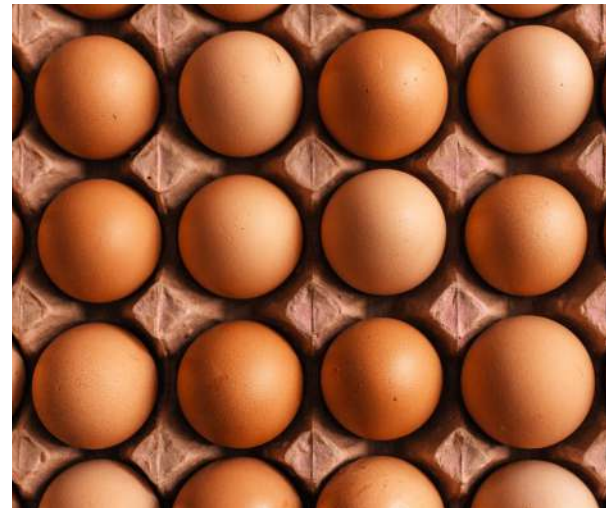


THE GOOD GROCERIES GUIDE

HOW TO BUY FOOD THAT HELPS THE PLANET, PEOPLE, AND ANIMALS








The Basics

Today's consumers are increasingly concerned about where their food comes from, and for good reason. The rapid industrialization of our food system has led to widespread problems such as foodborne illnesses, worker exploitation, animal abuse, and environmental degradation.

Recognizing that these problems — and their solutions — are interconnected, the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, Food Chain Workers Alliance, the Natural Resources Defense Council, and GRACE Communications Foundation have teamed up to produce a guide for today's conscientious consumer.

The guide below will sharpen your shopping skills and explain how you can:

-  **Avoid marketing claims and choose more humane, just, and sustainably certified foods**
 - Some labels like “natural,” “humane,” or “fair” sound good but don't actually represent an improvement in how the food was produced.
 - Certifications like Animal Welfare Approved, Certified Humane, or Global Animal Partnership (Steps 2 and up) require meaningfully better treatment of animals.
 - Buying meat from animals raised without routine antibiotics helps fight the spread of antibiotic resistant superbugs.
 - Food Justice Certified and other labels help protect workers throughout the food supply chain.
 - Organic and other sustainability certifications require food to be produced without harmful synthetic pesticides and fertilizers.
-  **Serve and eat more plant-based foods**
 - By eating more plant-based foods, we can reduce the number of animals in factory farms, cut greenhouse gas emissions, and grow more food for humans.
-  **Buy local in-season food when you can**
 - By purchasing locally grown and raised food, you'll keep more of your shopping dollars in the local economy and support farmers directly.
-  **Fight food waste**
 - Consumers can slash food waste — and their annual grocery bill — by shopping wisely, getting portion sizes right, storing leftovers, and other easy practices.
-  **Make your voice heard**
 - Ask where your food comes from, how it was produced, and if the supplier has made commitments to protect workers, farm animals, and the environment.

With every purchase of more sustainably produced food, consumers are on the front lines of the movement to make our food supply healthier for people, animals, and the planet.

Shopping & Animal Welfare



Photograph courtesy of ASPCA

The Facts About Animal Welfare



More than 9 billion chickens, turkeys, pigs, and cows are slaughtered each year in the US as part of meat, milk, and egg production.

The vast majority of these sentient, emotionally complex animals are raised within industrial facilities where they are caged or crowded in barren sheds, preventing them from moving freely, performing natural behaviors, or even seeing sunlight or grass at any point in their lives.

The public is concerned about farm animal welfare: 95 percent of respondents to a 2011 ASPCA survey said that animals raised for food deserve to be free from abuse and cruelty. According to a 2016 ASPCA survey, 74 percent of consumers say they are paying more attention to the labels that describe how an animal was raised than they were five years ago.

Compassionate consumers are often misled by food labels. “Natural” means nothing for animal welfare; “humane” is an unregulated term; hormones are banned by law on pigs and poultry rendering the “hormone-free” label essentially meaningless on chicken, turkey, eggs, or pork products; turkeys and chickens raised for meat are never raised in cages, rendering the “cage-free” label meaningless on turkey or chicken meat (though not on eggs). More about labels at aspc.org/labels.

How You Can Help Farm Animals

Opt for plant-based alternatives. Swapping meat, eggs, or dairy for plant-based alternatives in even one dish (or going [meatless one day](#) per week) reduces the number of animals raised on factory farms and cuts greenhouse gas emissions. Pound for pound, the carbon “footprint” of beef is about 34 times greater than legumes. Find plant-based brands at [aspca.org/foodbrands](https://www.aspca.org/foodbrands).

Seek certified animal products. If shopping for meat, eggs, or dairy, look for welfare certifications that ban worst practices and audit farms: Animal Welfare Approved, Certified Humane, or Global Animal Partnership Steps 2 and above. Find certified brands at [aspca.org/foodbrands](https://www.aspca.org/foodbrands).

Ask how animals lived. If you buy directly from farmers (at a farm, online, or at farmers’ markets), find out how animals are raised. For lists of questions, visit [aspca.org/farmersmarket](https://www.aspca.org/farmersmarket).

Demand better options where you shop. If you can’t find plant-based alternatives or meaningful welfare-certified products where you shop, your store needs to hear from you. Visit [aspca.org/demandbetter](https://www.aspca.org/demandbetter).



Photograph courtesy of ASPCA

Shopping & Labor



Photograph by Forest Westward

The Facts About Food Chain Workers



The 21.5 million workers in the food system make up the largest employment sector in the United States, with 14 percent, or over one out of every seven, workers in the US working along the food chain. They are joined by millions and millions more workers around the world.

The food chain pays the lowest median hourly wage to frontline workers compared to workers in all other industries. The annual median wage for food chain workers in the US is \$16,000 and the hourly median wage is \$10, well below the median wages across all industries of \$36,468 and \$17.53. The 2016 US living wage is \$15.84 per hour, before taxes.

Food chain workers rely on public assistance and are more food insecure than other workers. Thirteen percent of all food workers, nearly 2.8 million workers, relied on Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits (food stamps) to feed their household in 2016. This was 2.2 times the rate of all other industries. [Learn more about food workers.](#)

What You Can Do for Food Chain Workers

Workplace justice campaigns and union drives need the support of consumers to help strengthen food workers' efforts to win better pay and working conditions. Consumers can get involved in food worker campaigns in a variety of ways, including attending a rally, signing a petition, speaking to an employer, or using social media. Follow [Food Chain Workers Alliance](#) to stay up to date.

Consumers can also support food workers by purchasing products from companies that are fair trade, union-made, or have high labor standards. Look for certification labels that tell you if a food product was made with good labor standards. Fairfacts.thedfta.org provides an evaluation of the major fair trade labels. Also check out the Fair World Project's evaluation of fair trade programs' impacts on farmworkers at bit.ly/FWP-farmworkers.

The public can call on policymakers to support pro-worker legislation. This can range from advocating for labor laws and anti-wage theft bills to procurement policies like the [Good Food Purchasing Program](#), as well as pro-worker certification programs like the [Fair Food Program](#) and the [Agricultural Justice Project](#).



Photo by UNITE HERE

Shopping & the Seasons



The Facts About Eating Seasonally



Buying local, seasonal food supports the local economy. A number of studies have found that the money consumers spend on products from local farmers and growers stays in the community and is reinvested in other local businesses. Seasonal food that is grown locally, processed locally, and distributed locally generates jobs and helps stimulate local economies and **local food systems**.

Seasonal fruits and vegetables produced on local farms are often fresher, because they do not require long distances for transport.

Unlike out-of-season produce, which is harvested early to be shipped and distributed to retail stores, **crops picked at their peak of ripeness taste better**.

Studies have shown that **fruits and vegetables contain more nutrients when allowed to ripen naturally on their parent plant**.

Local growers can tell consumers how the food was grown. When consumers buy seasonal food directly from farmers, they can ask what practices farmers use to raise and harvest their crops.

How You Can Eat Seasonally

Shop locally. When you can, shop at local farmers' markets or farm stands to support local farmers and local economies.

Use the Seasonal Food Guide, a free [online tool](#) and [app](#) that helps you find when more than 140 fruits, vegetables, herbs, legumes, and nuts are in season in each of the 50 states. The Seasonal Food Guide also includes links to recipes and in-depth information on local produce from GRACE Communications Foundation's [Real Food Right Now](#) series.



Shopping & Sustainability



Photograph courtesy of Cliff / Flickr

The Facts About Organic and Other Sustainable Certifications



Pesticide use degrades air and water quality, while threatening the health of workers, farmers, and communities. Organic agriculture is also often better than conventional agriculture in reducing global warming pollution.

Sustainable Certifications like USDA Organic and others give us a way to reward environmental performance in the marketplace. Organic agriculture, for example, is a safer choice for the environment and your family because organic growers don't use synthetic pesticides and fertilizers.

How You Can Eat Sustainably

Choose organic. When you can, buy organic and other certified foods. When possible, talk to your local farmers about what production methods they use.*

Support other third party sustainability certifications. Visit the Consumer Reports website greenerchoices.org for a review of what labels to look for.

** There is an ongoing effort to improve the animal welfare standards in Organic meat, eggs, and dairy production.*

Shopping & Food Waste



Photograph courtesy of Foerster / Creative Commons

The Facts About Wasted Food



Forty percent of food in America goes uneaten. Consumers are the largest collective source of wasted food; an average family of four spends \$1,500 a year on food they don't eat.

Wasting food also wastes massive amounts of resources. Producing the food we throw away consumes 21 percent of the water used by the US agricultural industry and generates climate change pollution equivalent to 37 million cars per year. Lost food also accounts for 21 percent of the material that goes into landfills.

How You Can Save the Food

The good news is that consumers can also make a big difference by taking small steps in their own kitchens. For tips, tricks, and recipes, go to [savethefood.com](https://www.savethefood.com), or pick up the [Waste-Free Kitchen Handbook](#). Here are a few of our favorites:

Shop wisely. Plan your meals. Use shopping lists. Opt for loose produce and bulk bin items. Also, avoid impulse purchases or marketing tricks that encourage excess purchases. Though large-volume purchases and promotions may be cheaper per ounce, it may be more expensive in the long run if you don't eat the full amount. Patronize stores and restaurants that embrace practices like flexible portions and allowing items to run out at the end of the day.

Understand date labels. Sell-by, use-by, and best-by dates are manufacturer suggestions for peak freshness or quality and have nothing to do with safety. Aside from infant formula, date labels are not federally regulated. Most foods can be safely consumed after these dates have passed. Learn how to understand these labels and rely more on your own judgment about food quality.

Buy and serve smaller portions. Use resources like online portion calculators to prepare appropriate servings.

Save leftovers and use your freezer. At restaurants and supermarkets, ask for smaller or half portions. At home and at restaurants, save your uneaten meals for later — then be sure to eat them! If you're not going to eat it soon, freeze leftovers. Almost anything can be frozen, including milk, cheese, and eggs.

Send food scraps to backyard chickens and compost. For inedible parts and other food scraps, backyard chickens make excellent food recyclers. For those who are not ready for additional animals, recycle your inedible food through a home compost bin or a community compost program.

Shopping & Antibiotics



Photograph by Lance Cheung / USDA

Use Your Shopping Dollar to Fight Antibiotic Resistance



The overuse of antibiotics in agriculture contributes to the growing epidemic of drug-resistant infections in humans. Leading medical experts warn that we must stop overuse of antibiotics in both animal agriculture and in human medicine, or the life-saving drugs we rely on to treat common infections and enable medical procedures, like surgeries and chemotherapy, will increasingly fail.

Many classes of antibiotics used in US animal agriculture are the same as those used to treat human infections — these are known as medically important antibiotics. There are some infections, in fact, for which there are now few effective antibiotics or none at all.

Livestock producers routinely give antibiotics, often to animals that are not sick, to help them survive the stressful, crowded, and unsanitary conditions on industrial farms. When antibiotics are used routinely like this, some bacteria become resistant to these drugs. The resistant bacteria — sometimes known as superbugs — can escape farms and find their way into communities.

What You Can Do to Help Keep Antibiotics Working

When buying meat, poultry, and dairy, look for products from animals raised without the routine use of antibiotics. Look for any of these labels: USDA Certified Organic, USDA Process Verified Never Ever 3, Global Animal Partnership (GAP), American Grassfed, Certified Humane, and Animal Welfare Approved. Animal products bearing these labels are third-party certified as coming from farms where routine use of antibiotics is prohibited. Labels saying “No Antibiotics Administered” or “No Antibiotics Added” or “Raised Without Antibiotics” also communicate the producer’s commitment to responsible use but are not third-party verified.



Consumer Resources

Download a list of higher welfare brands and get involved in farm animal protection campaigns on the ASPCA's Shop With Your Heart platform: aspca.org/shopwithyourheart

Learn more about food worker campaigns, fair labor standards, and how you can help at the Food Chain Workers Alliance website: foodchainworkers.org

Find what's in season near you with GRACE Communications Foundation's Seasonal Food Guide and app: seasonalfoodguide.org

See how sustainable certifications and antibiotics claims compare with Consumer Reports' GreenerChoices website: greenerchoices.org

Find tips, tricks and recipes that save food, money, water, and energy from NRDC and The Ad Council's Save The Food campaign: savethefood.com

QUESTIONS?

farmanimalwelfare@aspca.org

programs@gracelinks.org

food@nrdc.org

info@foodchainworkers.org