

## Buying Food Locally

Sermonette for April 17, 2005 Service by Terry Wiggins  
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“In reality, most people don't change when you tell them they should, they change when they tell themselves they must.” So said New York Times columnist Tom Friedman. I want to share some information that might enable you to change if you determine that you want to.

I'll start with the new issue of *Ode* magazine from our church Library. On the cover: “Close to home / Truly fresh food is back in style as we rediscover the pleasure of markets and nearby farms / Indeed, Local is the new organic (but that doesn't mean you can't enjoy your coffee and bananas.)”

The article points out that even as farmers of Nebraska are going broke; the state spends hundreds of millions on food grown out-of-state. The apparent abundance on the fields of America's breadbasket and in America's supermarkets is in contrast to the economic hardship that farmers are feeling. Big ag and big oil are profiting.

It's not a new thing that the economics of agriculture in this country are haywire, but -- *oil companies* you ask? Yes, indeed. Fertilizers, herbicides, and pesticides are all made from petrochemicals. Farm machines run on oil. And our food is transported an average of 1500 miles to reach us.

What's a healthy response to this situation? We want one that can support our farmers, our communities, and is enjoyable and healthy for our children and ourselves. One alternative is farmers' markets. Kansas City is very lucky to have not just one, but three *ORGANIC* farmer's markets. And I really don't know how many farmers' markets there are in total in the metro. Even if the food you purchase at a farmers' market or roadside stand is not organic, it's *still* better to purchase locally produced food that doesn't leave the farmer inadequately compensated. Nor does local food require the packaging, refrigeration, and transport that generate huge amounts of waste and pollution. Nor does it have the additives and preservatives in order to endure the journey, nor does it encounter as many opportunities for contamination.

Another alternative to supporting “Big Ag” is to buy a CSA. CSA stands for “Community Supported Agriculture”. The basic principle is that you buy a share of your farmer's production. CSAs work in a variety of ways. Some collect the money up front, so they have money to buy seeds. Some have you pick up at the farm or at a store or at a location in your neighborhood, and some deliver to your house. But the key is cutting out the middle people. The farmer is guaranteed a fair price. You get more nutritious and tasty food right off the farm.

I encourage you to take a look at the KC Food Circle's “Directory of Local Organic and Natural Food Producers,” [hold up] found on the tables in Conover, along with lots of other literature.

And if investing in local or organic food -- yes, it will seem like investing, because it's often pricier than industrial food -- doesn't seem political enough for you, I present you the issue of CAFOs. CAFO stands for Confined Animal Feeding Operation. These are the factory farms where the pigs and chickens are permanently confined in pens or cages, from birth through slaughter. The cows are fattened up in feeding lots. The animals are fed lots of hormones and other chemicals. Besides being cruel for the

animals, CAFOs are dangerous in that they create more manure than the local fields can absorb, so they pollute the air and water around them. Currently, legislation that would lift restrictions on CAFOs has received Missouri Senate approval. It is moving through the House. Because the Farm Bureau has withdrawn its support for the bill, there really *is* hope for defeating it. We ask you to add your voice to the opposition by signing a letter in Conover after the service, or write one of your own.

I close with words of Wendell Berry that I found in *Fatal Harvest: The Tragedy of Industrial Agriculture*:

“[What I propose] is a revolt of small local producers and local consumers against the global industrialism of the corporation. Do I think there is a hope that such a revolt can survive and succeed and that it can have a significant influence upon our lives and our world?”

“Yes, I do. Is now possible for farmers to sell their products at a premium to local customers. This market is being made by the exceptional goodness and freshness of the food, by the wish of urban consumers to support their farming neighbors, and by the excesses and abuses of the corporate food industry.”