



Food Miles in Australia

Posted by [Phil Hart](#) on November 30, 2007 - 11:05am in [The Oil Drum: Australia/New Zealand](#)

Topic: [Environment/Sustainability](#)

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[CERES](#) have just released a study of [Food Miles in Melbourne](#).

The Centre for Education and Research in Environmental Strategies (CERES) is an urban oasis on the banks of the Merri Creek, 5km North of Melbourne CBD in Victoria, Australia. Over the last 30 years the local community has transformed the 4 hectare landfill site into a thriving community environment park, which encompasses a wide range of enterprises.

(Extracts below are on behalf of the authors, with their permission)

Here are some quotes from the Press Release:

“Food Miles in Australia: A Preliminary study of Melbourne, Victoria” researched and written by Asha Bee Abraham and Sophie Gaballa estimates the distances travelled for food items found in a typical Melburnian's shopping basket and the resulting greenhouse emissions from this transportation.

CERES Chairperson Robert Larocca said that the community understands the link between greenhouse gas emissions and personal transport and energy use, but is only now coming to understand the amount of emissions that result from the production of our food.

The study aims to open discourse in Australia about the sustainability of our centralised food systems and food production and take a proactive stance on forecasting future emissions. Co-author of the study; Sophie Gaballa said “With the current urgency required to respond to climate change and peak oil challenges, the study highlights the need for Australia to respond accurately to the role our current food system plays within these issues.”

“The study revealed that food items like oranges, sausages, tea, baked beans etc with ingredients sourced from overseas have seen more of the world than most people. In fact, the report estimates that the total distance travelled by 29 of our most common food items is 70,803 km—that's nearly two times the distance around the Earth!

“Calculating road transport alone, our shopping basket has still travelled 21,073 km,

almost the whole way around Australia's coastline. The resulting greenhouse gas emissions estimate for all food transporting trucks carrying these 25 items on any given day is the equivalent of 4,247 cars driving for a whole year! And that's just for one shopping basket of 25 items.

“Taking into consideration how far our food travels is only part of the Food Miles story. To further assess the environmental impact of food items you need to also look at how they are transported, processed and packaged to gain a more complete picture of the energy footprint of food systems,” Ms Gaballa concluded. The research was sponsored by the Finkel Foundation with the aim to develop a food education program that will inform and empower primary and secondary students through their food choices.

Results

Below are two tables of results from the study. The figures represent the food miles (kilometres!) and greenhouse gas emissions (for road transportation) associated with a typical basket of food purchased in a Melbourne supermarket.

[1 km = 0.62 miles]

Table 1: Food Kilometres and Emissions Estimates for Fruit and Vegetable Food Items

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Table 5: Summary of Results for Food Categories of Food Basket Items

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