

Food's carbon footprint

Many of us around the world are trying to reduce our carbon footprints – for example cutting down on air miles and not using our cars so much. But what about the food we eat? Did you know that a fifth of the UK's consumption footprint comes from the food that we eat?

Carbon emissions begin on the farm with the use of tractors, fertilisers, heated greenhouses etc and then continue along the supply chain for example via food processing, transport, refrigeration, packaging and finally food waste. Calculating all of the emissions along the supply chain is complex but in recent years much progress has been made in quantifying the carbon footprints of different foods and new technologies should make it easier to track the source of ingredients used in processed foods. It would not be unrealistic for governments to start setting goals to label foods with a carbon footprint traffic light, much like the system we have now for foods high in fat or sugar. This would really help consumers to make the right environmental choices. In the meantime, good ways to reduce your impact are to buy seasonal products and to cut down on meat and dairy consumption.