

Climate Change Interest Group – Sponsored by Maresfield Parish Council

Local Climate Change Challenge

The Climate Change Interest Group is made up of local people and our aim is to challenge Maresfield Parish residents to make changes in a variety of areas for the good of the environment. We hope you feel inspired to join in with some of our suggestions and would welcome your feedback.

May 2021 – Food Waste and its effect on climate change

Do you love your food? Food is something that unites us all. Food is something that is lovingly grown, prepared and then eaten with delight. It is essential to our existence, it can be a luxury or a comfort. Then why do we throw so much food in the bin every day? Why do we waste so much of our hard earned money in not eating what we bought? It hurts our purse, and it hurts the planet.

If food waste were a country, it would have the third biggest carbon footprint after the USA and China. In the UK 8.3 million tons of food is wasted by households each year. This means wasted CO₂ from production and extra methane from landfill.

We all throw away uneaten food, moldy bread, off milk, rotting vegetables, black bananas and scraps from our plates. This wasted food has a double impact on the environment. Firstly the CO₂e (CO₂e = Carbon Dioxide equivalent which includes other greenhouse gases as well.) released through producing that food has gone to waste. With 30% of global greenhouse emissions coming from food growing and processing, that's a serious problem. Secondly, most of that food waste goes to landfill where its decomposition produces methane, a major greenhouse gas. Wasted food is also bad for your family finances. What can we all do? Is there an easy solution? Yes.

Buy Less Food.

Don't buy more than you need. Making a shopping list and planning meals before shopping helps you to buy just what is needed so none goes to waste. Check your store cupboard so you don't buy things you already have.

Reheating and Reusing.

Eating up leftovers is a good way to reduce the amount of food that gets wasted. Leftover food is perfect for making curries and casseroles etc. Be careful to re-heat carefully and never re-heat more than once. If leftovers can't be used within a couple of days, then freeze them for use later.

Improve Food Storage.

Food is often wasted because it isn't stored properly. Follow packet storage instructions. Keep leftover food in a sealed container or tightly wrapped bag. Reseal opened packets carefully or transfer to an airtight container. Keep the fridge temperature at or below 4°C. The freezer temperature should be -18°C. Check temperatures periodically.

Understanding Food Labelling.

Keep an eye on the dates on your food making sure you eat the oldest first. There is usually a 'Use Before date' which means the food should be thrown out after that date, or a 'Best Before date' which is simply advisory. There is rarely anything wrong with food past its best before date. Canned food can last for years, old bread can be rescued by toasting, providing it isn't moldy and fruit and vegetables can be rescued by cutting off any bad parts.

Shop Responsibly

Shop at places that practice responsible waste management. Customers can encourage grocery chains to support local food banks. You can also reduce a store's waste by buying from the 'reduced' or 'seconds' section if there is one, which has the added bonus of saving money.

Compost.

If you have space in your garden for a compost bin, composting allows plant based food waste to be converted into nutrient rich organic fertiliser for gardening.

Consider eating less meat.

It's better for your health, and cheaper too.

Beef has the highest emission per 1 kg produced with 60 kgCO₂e followed by lamb with 24 kgCO₂e. Pig and poultry has fewer emissions with 7 kgCO₂e. On average, emissions from plant-based foods are **10 to 50 times** lower than animal-based types.

Useful website: www.lovefoodhatewaste.com

Food Production, Transport and Packaging and Its Impact on Climate Change.

Food transport, packaging and processing make up 6% of CO₂e emissions from rich countries.

In the UK:

Transport: 12% of food emissions. Local food travels shorter distances than supermarket food.

Packaging: 7% of food emissions. Local food generally has less packaging, although supermarkets have made some changes to improve this.

Processing: 12% of food emissions. Generally the more ingredients, the higher the emissions. Cook meals from scratch where possible.

Growing: 45% of food emissions. Here eating local doesn't make much difference, we need to eat seasonally as well.

NB. The remaining 23% comes from home cooking, catering and retail activity.

Eat Seasonal Food.

Here's the carbon footprint of 1 kg of tomatoes in the UK as an example:

0.4 kgCO₂e - Organic grown locally outdoors in July

1.2 kgCO₂e - Canned tomatoes

9.1 kgCO₂e - Average tomatoes in a supermarket

50 kgCO₂e - Organic, on the vine, commercially grown in a local greenhouse in March

So tomatoes can be both very low carbon and very high carbon, it's all about the source and the season. Learn what is seasonal and get used to a varied, seasonal, home-cooked diet. Getting a good seasonal cookbook can help.

Some Non-Local, Non-Seasonal Food can be nutritious as well as low carbon.

For example Fairtrade Bananas. They are easy to grow, easy to store and easy to ship, so are actually low carbon food. Another source of non-local, non-seasonal but low carbon food is canned and frozen fruit and vegetables. Both have some emissions from packaging, transport and storage, but they are always grown in season.

Avoid Air-Freighted Food.

Air-freighted food is a disaster for the environment. The CO₂e emissions for transporting one ton of food for one mile is roughly:

25g by train; 48g by boat; 297g by lorry; 1527g by plane

How our food is transported has a bigger impact than how far it travels, although obviously the shorter the distance the better. Shop locally where possible. Use farmer's markets and local produce where it's available. It is often fresher, straight from the grower and you support the local economy.

Data taken from the South East Climate Alliance Website.