

PRESS RELEASE



Greens Say It's Time to Get Real About Food

*Embargo:
7pm,
Monday 10
June*

On Tuesday 11 June, Manchester Friends of the Earth launched their campaign for real food [1]. The local group held a public meeting to highlight how the majority of food on the shelves is bad for people's health and degrades the environment. The environmentalists put forward organic food, preferably produced locally, as a positive alternative. Those at the meeting, chaired by Allan Beswick of the BBC, heard from national Friends of the Earth's Real Food Campaigner, Pete Riley, and from local suppliers of organic food (Unicorn Grocery and Limited Resources). The public were also treated to a selection of free hot and cold organic food, and presented with a free directory of local and organic food in the Manchester area.

Food and farming in the UK faces a stark choice, claim Manchester Friends of the Earth. Either we continue to put profit first, accepting the associated health risks and environmental damage, or we adopt practices that safeguard the future of what we eat, and those who provide it. According to the Government [2], half of all UK fruit and vegetables that we buy contain residues from pesticides. Pesticides can accumulate in our bodies and affect our hormone systems. The cost of removing pesticides from our drinking water is £120 million each year. The group is also opposed to genetically modified food for which there is very little independent safety testing. Due to economics of scale, much food is also transported hundreds of miles before it ends up on supermarket shelves – even if it originated from a farm local to the final store.

Manchester Friends of the Earth are promoting organic food which is grown without pesticides and is thus safer to eat. They are calling for a third of all farm land to be organic by 2010. The group also wants to see people buying more locally produced food, which would lead to less lorries on our roads and less emissions of gases contributing to climate change.

Continues (with quote & photo opportunity)

For More Information

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Graeme Sherriff, a Real Food campaigner for Manchester Friends of the Earth, stated:

“The organic food that we call luxury, is basically how food should be: lower in chemical residues and higher in nutritional value. Yet, due to half a century of farming and food policy that has put production ahead of food quality and environmental protection, we are being sold short. We are being sold food that is threatening our health and environment, and costing UK taxpayers billions of pounds every year. Real Food, the local and organic alternative to globalised markets, is long overdue.”

ENDS

Notes to Photo Editors

Manchester Friends of Earth, together with a large display on real food and free examples of the Real Food they are promoting, Allan Beswick (the BBC) and Pete Riley (national FoE Real Food Campaigner) will be available for photographs and interviews at 6:45pm on Tuesday 11 June at the Friends Meeting House, 6 Mount Street. Members of the group will also be available for interviews throughout the day.

Notes to Editors

1. Manchester Friends of the Earth's Real Food evening starts at 7pm on Tuesday 11 June at the Friends Meeting House, Mount Street. Chaired by Allan Beswick (the BBC), speakers include Pete Riley (national FoE Real Food Campaigner), Graeme Sherriff (Manchester FoE), Rob Squires (permaculture) and Jonathan (GM Campaign). There will also be a display about real food, a display about Manchester Friends of the Earth, stalls by resellers of organic food and free helpings of organic food produced by Misty's Vegetarian Café.
2. Data from Ministry of Agriculture, Farming and Fisheries (1999).

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