

NEWS RELEASE**Shop local and save the planet****For immediate
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Manchester Friends of the Earth [1] is urging people to shop local, following a Government report published last week [2] which revealed the true social and environmental cost of 'food miles'.

The report, by the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs [DEFRA], estimates that transporting food to and around the UK produced 19 million tonnes of carbon dioxide in 2002, of which 10 million tonnes were emitted in the UK - 1.8 per cent of total UK carbon dioxide emissions. The report revealed that the overall cost of food transportation is £9 billion, with impacts on road congestion, climate change, noise and air pollution.

Manchester Friends of the Earth is calling on the Government to take action to reduce UK food miles, including tougher policies to stop the development of out-of-town stores, well resourced schemes to ensure the development of more local and regional food supplies and setting targets for companies to reduce their carbon dioxide emissions.

But as Manchester Friends of the Earth campaigner Paul D'Ambra points out, it's not just a Government responsibility - individuals can make a difference at a local level too.

"Locally produced food travels much shorter distances, which cuts down on pollution. For example, supermarket food travels on average 1,000 miles, compared with just 30 to a farmers' market. By voting with their wallets and buying local produce, consumers can show they really do care about the impact of the food they buy on their health, the local economy and the environment."

Manchester Friends of the Earth has compiled a Real Food Guide to locally sourced, organic, GM-free and fair trade food, which can be accessed online at www.realfoodguide.org.uk.

ENDS

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Notes to editors

[1] Manchester Friends of the Earth is a prominent campaign group, raising awareness and lobbying for policy changes at a local, regional, national and international level. The group consists entirely of volunteers, and its campaigns are funded by membership fees and individual donations. Up-to-date information is available on its website:

<http://www.manchesterfoe.org.uk>. Manchester Friends of the Earth is part of a national network of local groups, affiliated to the national organisation (further information can be found at <http://www.foe.co.uk>)

[2] For more information about “The validity of food miles as an indicator of Sustainable Development” DEFRA, visit <http://statistics.defra.gov.uk/esg/reports/foodmiles/default.asp>