



FPC PRESS RELEASE

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FAIR MILES – NOT FOOD MILES - ARE A WELCOME STEP TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The 'Fair Miles' report produced by Oxfam and the International Institute for Environment and Development is a welcome step towards encouraging UK consumers to enjoy a wide variety of fruit and vegetables, irrespective of their country of origin, and to be reassured that their food choices are ethical and sustainable.

The UK is more than 74 per cent self-sufficient in agricultural produce yet we cannot produce all our fruit and vegetables in the UK. Around 60% of fruit and vegetables are imported into the UK, mostly from within the EU, providing us with produce outside the UK season as well as varieties which simply cannot be grown in the UK.

"We welcome the 'Fair Miles' report which recognises FPC's work to highlight the complexities of the food supply chain and its social, political and economic repercussions, and sensibly aims to capture the true impact of food production and consumption," said Nigel Jenney, Chief Executive of the Fresh Produce Consortium. "We need to tackle climate change, but the concept of 'food miles' is confusing. Let's look at the carbon footprint of the whole product supply chain and provide consumers with robust advice with which to make informed decisions."

Research shows that some imported fruit and vegetables are grown in less greenhouse gas intensive ways than the same products in the UK, with savings from greater efficiency outweighing the potential negative impacts of additional transport. There's no need to restrict choice by excluding imported produce on the basis of its carbon footprint. We can

enjoy a wide variety of fresh produce all year round, irrespective of its origin. The consumption of fruit and vegetables accounts for only 2.5 per cent of the UK's greenhouse gas emissions in total.

The Fair Miles report considers the ethical dimension of trade in fresh produce between developing countries and the UK which is often neglected within the 'food miles' debate. Agricultural growth is essential to economic growth in Africa; imports to the UK from Kenya alone are worth £100 million, with trade providing direct employment for 135,000 people. There is no evidence that fewer aircraft would fly if less imported fruit and vegetables were eaten, as at least 60% of air freighted fresh produce is brought to the UK in the bellyhold of passenger aircraft. Total air freighted imports of fruit and vegetables account for 0.2% of total UK greenhouse gas emissions.

With rising levels of obesity and the UK consumer eating on average only 2.5 servings of fruit and vegetables a day we should not be doing anything that limits choice.

"There are massive variations between the carbon footprint of Africa (1-2 tonnes of carbon per head) and that of the UK (11-14 tonnes per head) and the US (22 tonnes per head). We must put ill-founded concerns about the impact of transportation of fresh produce from developing countries in their proper perspective, and balance them against the need to address rising obesity levels and poor diets across Europe, as well as assisting the development of local economies in Africa. To encourage the UK consumer to eat 5-day we need a wide variety of fresh produce regardless of origin or means of transport," added Nigel Jenney.

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Notes for editors:

1. The Fresh Produce Consortium (FPC) is the UK's fresh produce trade association and is based in Peterborough. The FPC has represented the fresh produce sector for many years and is recognised across the UK and EU as the voice of the industry.
2. Extensive membership covers the complete spectrum of industry businesses including growers, importers, wholesalers, retailers, distributors, processors, packers, food service companies and other allied organisations.
3. Eat in Colour campaign www.eatincolour.com
4. 'Fair Miles – recharting the food map' is published by IIED and Oxfam: <http://www.iied.org/sustainable-markets/media/food-miles-mantra-can-be-miles-worse-for-climate-and-communities-say-oxfam>

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