



FPC PRESS RELEASE

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FRUIT AND VEG ARE THE TOPS FOR HEALTH BENEFITS AND LOW IMPACT ON THE ENVIRONMENT

Fresh fruit and vegetables should be top of the shopping list for consumers who want a healthy diet and to be sustainable. The Fresh Produce Consortium welcomes this confirmation from international think tank, The Barilla Center for Food Nutrition, which has produced a 'double pyramid', assessing healthy food for people and sustainable food for the planet.

"It's great to see that foods with higher recommended consumption levels like fresh produce are also those with a lower environmental impact. This should give consumers the confidence they seek to enjoy fresh fruit and vegetables as part of a healthy diet and put in context their overall environmental footprint," said Nigel Jenney, Chief Executive of the Fresh Produce Consortium.

Analysis of the environmental impact of different foods included cultivation and raw materials, processing, manufacturing, packaging, transport, distribution, use, re-use, recycling and final disposal.

Comparing the carbon, water and ecological footprints of different foodstuffs, fruit and vegetables were far lower than meat and dairy products. For example, beef scored 105 for its ecological footprint compared to 3 for fruit and 14 for greenhouse vegetables.

Food miles are often cited as a major contributor to the environmental impact of imported fresh produce, however, this report confirms the low footprint of fresh produce, regardless

of its origin, and puts this in perspective compared to the impact of other foods,” added Nigel Jenney. “The fresh produce industry is putting in place measures to achieve food production in a low-carbon world, calculating greenhouse gas emissions, reducing excess packaging and increasing re-use and recycling, as well as reducing food waste and recovering energy.”

“Government departments can make a far greater impact to combat poor diets and rising obesity levels simply by having a cohesive policy for public sector food procurement which encourages greater consumption of fresh fruit and vegetables, in line with Defra’s own definition of ‘locally in season’ which includes imported produce,” added Nigel Jenney.

Defra’s definition of ‘locally in season’ is: ‘Food that is outdoor grown or produced during the natural growing/production period for the country or region where it is produced. It need not necessarily be consumed locally to where it is grown. This applies to seasonal food produced both in the UK and overseas’.

“Our society faces a major health issue with rising obesity levels and on average the UK consumer eats only 2.5 servings of fruit and vegetables a day. We need to encourage the UK consumer to eat 5-day through initiatives such as the industry’s Eat In Colour campaign (www.eatincolour.com) and to enjoy a wide variety of affordable quality fresh produce irrespective of its origin and means of production.”

Ends

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. For more information on the Eat In Colour campaign visit www.eatincolour.com
4. The Barilla Center for Food & Nutrition aims to gather the most authoritative thinking on an international level regarding issues links to food and nutrition: www.barillacfn.com

The Food Pyramid presents food groups in a graduated order, with vegetables at the base, being rich in nutrients and protective compounds. The Environmental Pyramid evaluates environmental impact on the basis of the Life Cycle Assessment.

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