

Chaddesley cares about Planet Earth

Buying local produce – part 2

Last July the Independent ran an article centred around a book called “Uncovering the global food scandal”. Some of the statements made should make all of us sit up and think about what we do.

We are surely all aware of the amount of food we are said to waste - £610 a year for families, which could be represented by 4.4 million apples, 1.6 million bananas, 1.3 million yoghurt pots, 660,000 eggs, 440,000 ready meals, and 5,500 whole chickens – a day! (Calculated by Waste and Resources Action Programme).

Well now there are new figures about waste before the food even reaches us. For example, it is suggested that 25% of fresh fruit and vegetables produced in Britain is wasted before it even reaches the shops. Piles of “imperfect” potatoes, spinach, tomatoes and other produce are left in the ground to rot. Why?? – Europe again!!

European rules set cosmetic standards for food. Until the beginning of July there were 46 different fruits and vegetables that were banned if they were knobbly or oddly shaped. This has been relaxed somewhat, but while knobbly carrots are now acceptable, bananas still have to meet a specific bendy curve.

Think of the starving people who would be more than happy to eat a knobbly anything. Think of the reduction in environmental damage that could be achieved by allowing less than perfect specimens. Think of the EU fisheries policies which result in between 40% and 60% of all catches being thrown back into the sea dead

And the supermarkets are even more stringent – straight carrots and spherical potatoes – probably with a lot less taste and nourishment than is to be found in muddy carrots or potatoes.

The UN has estimated there are over 900 million malnourished people in the world, who could all be brought up to adequate level by the wasted food in the USA alone. Add the food wasted in the UK by consumers and the food industry and there would be more than enough food to satisfy the world’s hungry by some margin.

Another spin off – if unnecessary world food production was cut by 20%, and the spare land used to grow willow to burn instead, (rather than coal or gas) that could slash climate change gases by 40%.

Buy locally grown fruit and vegetables from your local producer: Buy regularly so that you buy only what you need: Buy what is in season and not imported from miles away: And remember all those who are worse off and could be better off, if we were not unnecessarily fussy/careless about what we buy.

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For the Working Group set up by the Parish Council