

Food Miles: Miles more progress to be made

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June 2007 - UK - Flying round the Caribbean and South Africa, Brazil and Israel, may sound like the holiday of a lifetime, but in fact it is just the route your morning fruit salad is likely to have taken to reach the breakfast table. And although this may sound exotic, latest research from MINTEL shows that we Brits are trying to steer clear of produce with high food miles, and are unhappy that more is not being made of our local, home-grown food.

MINTEL's exclusive consumer research shows that as many as two in five (41%) believe producers and supermarkets should provide more details about food miles on the products they sell. Meanwhile, one in five (19%) of us already try to avoid products with high food miles by looking at where the products were grown.

What is more, well over half (54%) of Britons feel there is not enough locally produced food available in the store where they regularly shop. And around the same number (53%) believe that retailers need to do more to develop and promote UK production to reduce global sourcing.

"Food miles are now high on the consumer agenda. People are becoming increasingly aware of just how far their food has had to travel. Many are also clearly frustrated by the fact that we are not making more of the produce that is grown on British soil," comments Neil Mason, senior retail analyst at MINTEL.

"There is no doubt that today's shoppers have become accustomed to an incredible choice of produce in their supermarkets. But frustration tends to run high when products that could be grown right here in the UK, have been flown in from the other side of the world, taking their toll on the environment," he adds.

Looking to the future, we could see more producers and retailers adopting the carbon labelling scheme, which is a more accurate way than food miles to measure the environmental impact of the food we are eating. This scheme highlights the carbon footprint of the product and identifies those companies which are committed to environmentally-friendly policies.

Recycling - Wasted opportunities

A little closer to home, MINTEL finds Britain is a nation of recycling junkies, with almost three-quarters (71%) of British adults recycling as much packaging waste as they can. But again consumers feel retailers could be doing more.

Today, as many as two-thirds (66%) of consumers believe retailers should do more to reduce the amount of packaging they use, while six in ten (60%) say there should be less packaging on fresh fruit and vegetables. What is more, well over half (55%) say that retailers and producers should only use packaging materials that can easily be recycled.

"The finding that nearly three-quarters of adults claim to be active recyclers makes it all the more irritating that the recycling infrastructure here is not better developed than it is. Although retailers and manufacturers have been active in reducing packaging for some time, consumers are still not satisfied and clearly feel that there is more to be done," comments Neil Mason

Taking out the rubbish is usually considered the man's job. But worryingly fewer men are active recyclers than women, suggesting that they may not be taking the trouble to sort and return recyclable rubbish when they take the bins out. Indeed, just over two thirds of men (67%) claim to recycle to the maximum capacity, compared to almost three-quarters of women (74%).

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