

## **Article 5: How to Find Local and Sustainable Foods in Your Area**

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Most U.S. produce is harvested four to seven days before it arrives at grocery stores. Food travels about 1,500 miles from its source. Imported foods travel farther. High costs for fertilizers, pesticides, fuel, and energy increase food cost. This system can strain the environment.

**Sustainable Agriculture** Sustainable agriculture allows farms to produce food indefinitely, without causing severe or permanent environmental damage. Crop rotation and soil conditioners like lime, peat, and manure help to keep soil healthy.

**Local Organic Farmers** Local organic farmers do not use chemical fertilizers, pesticides, plant growth regulators, or genetically modified organisms. Transportation costs are lower, and fresh food may have higher nutritional value.

**Farmers' Markets** More than 4,600 farmers' markets are listed by the [USDA's Farmers' Market Search](#). Weekly market listings make it easy to shop most days of the week. They are usually open from late spring into fall. Customers support their favorite farmers. Farmers have direct access to markets and consumers, which increases their income. Urban communities also have easier access to fresh, nutritious foods that they did not have in the past.

**Community Supported Agriculture (CSAs)** [Local Harvest](#) lists over 2,000 CSAs that offer produce, flowers, fruits, eggs, milk, meats, and other farm products from late spring to early fall. Community individuals buy an annual share in the farm. Their shares cover the expected costs of the farm's operation and the farmer's salary. Share owners receive fresh produce during the growing season. They share the risk of poor harvests as well as bountiful ones. These direct sales give the farmer advance working capital, better prices for crops, some financial security, and less marketing burden.

**Food Co-Ops** The [Co-Op Directory Service](#) lists natural food co-ops. Natural food co-ops prefer to stock organically grown, minimally processed food, with little or no additives or preservatives. Co-op grocery stores, which are open to the public, may have thousands of member/owners. They pay a fee to join and donate time to operate the co-op. Members determine which products are sold and receive rebates, depending on the profit of the business and the amount they spent at the co-op that year.