

ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND COMPOSITION

SECTION II

Total time—2 hours

Question 1

(Suggested time—40 minutes. This question counts for one-third of the total essay section score.)

Locavores are people who have decided to eat locally grown or produced products as much as possible. With an eye to nutrition as well as sustainability (resource use that preserves the environment), the locavore movement has become widespread over the past decade.

Imagine that a community is considering organizing a locavore movement. Carefully read the following seven sources, including the introductory information for each source. Then synthesize information from at least three of the sources and incorporate it into a coherent, well-developed essay that identifies the key issues associated with the locavore movement and examines their implications for the community.

Make sure that your argument is central; use the sources to illustrate and support your reasoning. Avoid merely summarizing the sources. Indicate clearly which sources you are drawing from, whether through direct quotation, paraphrase, or summary. You may cite the sources as Source A, Source B, etc., or by using the descriptions in parentheses.

Source A (Maiser)

Source B (Smith and MacKinnon)

Source C (McWilliams)

Source D (chart)

Source E (Gogoi)

Source F (Roberts)

Source G (cartoon)

Source A

Maiser, Jennifer. "10 Reasons to Eat Local Food." *Eat Local Challenge*. Eat Local Challenge, 8 Apr. 2006. Web. 16 Dec. 2009.

The following is an article from a group Weblog written by individuals who are interested in the benefits of eating food grown and produced locally.

Eating local means more for the local economy. According to a study by the New Economics Foundation in London, a dollar spent locally generates twice as much income for the local economy. When businesses are not owned locally, money leaves the community at every transaction.

Locally grown produce is fresher. While produce that is purchased in the supermarket or a big-box store has been in transit or cold-stored for days or weeks, produce that you purchase at your local farmer's market has often been picked within 24 hours of your purchase. This freshness not only affects the taste of your food, but the nutritional value which declines with time.

Local food just plain tastes better. Ever tried a tomato that was picked within 24 hours? 'Nuff said.

Locally grown fruits and vegetables have longer to ripen. Because the produce will be handled less, locally grown fruit does not have to be "rugged" or to stand up to the rigors of shipping. This means that you are going to be getting peaches so ripe that they fall apart as you eat them, figs that would have been smashed to bits if they were sold using traditional methods, and melons that were allowed to ripen until the last possible minute on the vine.

Eating local is better for air quality and pollution than eating organic. In a March 2005 study by the journal *Food Policy*, it was found that the miles that organic food often travels to our plate creates environmental damage that outweighs the benefit of buying organic.

Buying local food keeps us in touch with the seasons. By eating with the seasons, we are eating foods when they are at their peak taste, are the most abundant, and the least expensive.

Buying locally grown food is fodder for a wonderful story. Whether it's the farmer who brings local apples to market or the baker who makes local bread, knowing part of the story about your food is such a powerful part of enjoying a meal.

Eating local protects us from bio-terrorism. Food with less distance to travel from farm to plate has less susceptibility to harmful contamination.

Local food translates to more variety. When a farmer is producing food that will not travel a long distance, will have a shorter shelf life, and does not have a high-yield demand, the farmer is free to try small crops of various fruits and vegetables that would probably never make it to a large supermarket. Supermarkets are interested in selling "Name brand" fruit: Romaine Lettuce, Red Delicious Apples, Russet Potatoes. Local producers often play with their crops from year to year, trying out Little Gem Lettuce, Senshu Apples, and Chieftain Potatoes.

Supporting local providers supports responsible land development. When you buy local, you give those with local open space—farms and pastures—an economic reason to stay open and undeveloped.

Jennifer Maiser, www.eatlocalchallenge.com

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Source B

Smith, Alisa, and J. B. MacKinnon. *Plenty: One Man, One Woman, and a Raucous Year of Eating Locally*. New York: Harmony, 2007. Print.

The following passage is excerpted from a book written by the creators of the 100-Mile Diet, an experiment in eating only foods grown and produced within a 100-mile radius.

Food begins to lose nutrition as soon as it is harvested. Fruit and vegetables that travel shorter distances are therefore likely to be closer to a maximum of nutrition. “Nowadays, we know a lot more about the naturally occurring substances in produce,” said [Cynthia] Sass. “It’s not just vitamins and minerals, but all these phytochemicals and really powerful disease-fighting substances, and we do know that when a food never really reaches its peak ripeness, the levels of these substances never get as high.” . . .

Yet when I called to confirm these facts with Marion Nestle, a professor and former chair of nutrition, food studies, and public health at New York University, she waved away the nutrition issue as a red herring. Yes, she said, our 100-mile diet—even in winter—was almost certainly more nutritious than what the average American was eating. That doesn’t mean it is *necessary* to eat locally in order to be healthy. In fact, a person making smart choices from the global megamart can easily meet all the body’s needs.

“There will be nutritional differences, but they’ll be marginal,” said Nestle. “I mean, that’s not really the issue. It *feels* like it’s the issue—obviously fresher foods that are grown on better soils are going to have more nutrients. But people are not nutrient-deprived. We’re just not nutrient-deprived.”

So would Marion Nestle, as a dietician, as one of America’s most important critics of dietary policy, advocate for local eating?

“Absolutely.”

Why? Because she loves the taste of fresh food, she said. She loves the mystery of years when the late corn is just utterly, incredibly good, and no one can say why: it just is. She likes having farmers around, and farms, and farmland.

Source C

McWilliams, James E. "On My Mind: The Locavore Myth." *Forbes.com*. Forbes, 15 Jul. 2009. Web. 16 Dec. 2009.

The following is excerpted from an online opinion article in a business magazine.

Buy local, shrink the distance food travels, save the planet. The locavore movement has captured a lot of fans. To their credit, they are highlighting the problems with industrialized food. But a lot of them are making a big mistake. By focusing on transportation, they overlook other energy-hogging factors in food production.

Take lamb. A 2006 academic study (funded by the New Zealand government) discovered that it made more environmental sense for a Londoner to buy lamb shipped from New Zealand than to buy lamb raised in the U.K. This finding is counterintuitive—if you're only counting food miles. But New Zealand lamb is raised on pastures with a small carbon footprint, whereas most English lamb is produced under intensive factory-like conditions with a big carbon footprint. This disparity overwhelms domestic lamb's advantage in transportation energy.

New Zealand lamb is not exceptional. Take a close look at water usage, fertilizer types, processing methods and packaging techniques and you discover that factors other than shipping far outweigh the energy it takes to transport food. One analysis, by Rich Pirog of the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture, showed that transportation accounts for only 11% of food's carbon footprint. A fourth of the energy required to produce food is expended in the consumer's kitchen. Still more energy is consumed per meal in a restaurant, since restaurants throw away most of their leftovers.

Locavores argue that buying local food supports an area's farmers and, in turn, strengthens the community. Fair enough. Left unacknowledged, however, is the fact that it also hurts farmers in other parts of the world. The U.K. buys most of its green beans from Kenya. While it's true that the beans almost always arrive in airplanes—the form of transportation that consumes the most energy—it's also true that a campaign to shame English consumers with small airplane stickers affixed to flown-in produce threatens the livelihood of 1.5 million sub-Saharan farmers.

Another chink in the locavores' armor involves the way food miles are calculated. To choose a locally grown apple over an apple trucked in from across the country might seem easy. But this decision ignores economies of scale. To take an extreme example, a shipper sending a truck with 2,000 apples over 2,000 miles would consume the same amount of fuel per apple as a local farmer who takes a pickup 50 miles to sell 50 apples at his stall at the green market. The critical measure here is not food miles but apples per gallon.

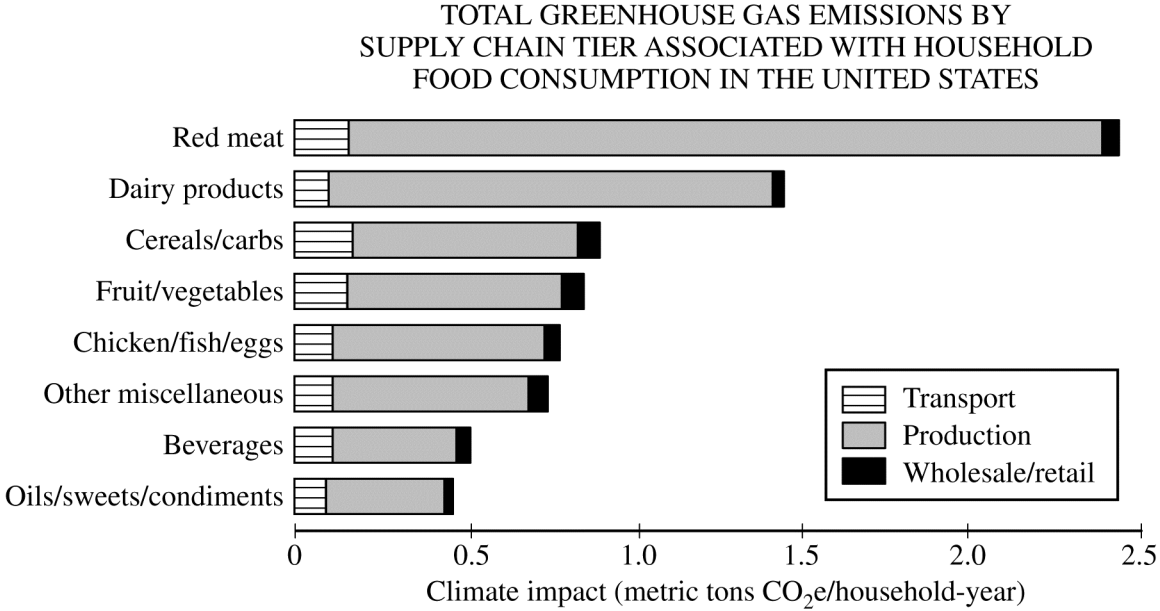
The one big problem with thinking beyond food miles is that it's hard to get the information you need. Ethically concerned consumers know very little about processing practices, water availability, packaging waste and fertilizer application. This is an opportunity for watchdog groups. They should make life-cycle carbon counts available to shoppers.

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Source D

Loder, Natasha, Elizabeth Finkel, Craig Meisner, and Pamela Ronald. "The Problem of What to Eat." *Conservation Magazine*. The Society for Conservation Biology, July-Sept. 2008. Web. 16 Dec. 2009.

The following chart is excerpted from an online article in an environmental magazine.



Source E

Gogoi, Pallavi. “The Rise of the ‘Locavore’: How the Strengthening Local Food Movement in Towns Across the U.S. Is Reshaping Farms and Food Retailing.” *Bloomberg Businessweek*. Bloomberg, 20 May 2008. Web. 17 Dec. 2009.

The following is excerpted from an online article in a business magazine.

The rise of farmers’ markets—in city centers, college towns, and rural squares—is testament to a dramatic shift in American tastes. Consumers increasingly are seeking out the flavors of fresh, vine-ripened foods grown on local farms rather than those trucked to supermarkets from faraway lands. “This is not a fringe foodie culture,” says [Anthony] Flaccavento. “These are ordinary, middle-income folks who have become really engaged in food and really care about where their food comes from.”

It’s a movement that is gradually reshaping the business of growing and supplying food to Americans. The local food movement has already accomplished something that almost no one would have thought possible a few years back: a revival of small farms. After declining for more than a century, the number of small farms has increased 20% in the past six years, to 1.2 million, according to the Agriculture Dept. . . .

The impact of “locavores” (as local-food proponents are known) even shows up in that Washington salute every five years to factory farming, the Farm Bill. The latest version passed both houses in Congress in early May and was sent on May 20 to President George W. Bush’s desk for signing. Bush has threatened to veto the bill, but it passed with enough votes to sustain an override. Predictably, the overwhelming bulk of its \$290 billion would still go to powerful agribusiness interests in the form of subsidies for growing corn, soybeans, and cotton. But \$2.3 billion was set aside this year for specialty crops, such as the eggplants, strawberries, or salad greens that are grown by exactly these small, mostly organic farmers. That’s a big bump-up from the \$100 million that was earmarked for such things in the previous legislation.

Small farmers will be able to get up to 75% of their organic certification costs reimbursed, and some of them can obtain crop insurance. There’s money for research into organic foods, and to promote farmers’ markets. Senator Tom Harkin (D-Iowa) said the bill “invests in the health and nutrition of American children . . . by expanding their access to farmer’s markets and organic produce.”

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Source F

Roberts, Paul. *The End of Food*. New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2008. Print.

The following is excerpted from a book about the food industry.

[T]he move toward local food, for all its trendiness (the more adamant adherents, known as “localvores,” strive to buy products that have traveled the least “food miles”), highlights one of the problematic pieces of the modern food economy: the increasing reliance on foods shipped halfway round the world. Because long-distance food shipments promote profligate fuel use and the exploitation of cheap labor (which compensates for the profligate fuel use), shifting back to a more locally sourced food economy is often touted as a fairly straightforward way to cut externalities, restore some measure of equity between producers and consumers, and put the food economy on a more sustainable footing. “Such a shift would bring back diversity to land that has been all but destroyed by chemical-intensive mono-cropping, provide much-needed jobs at a local level, and help to rebuild community,” argues the UK-based International Society for Ecology and Culture, one of the leading lights in the localvore movement. “Moreover, it would allow farmers to make a decent living while giving consumers access to healthy, fresh food at affordable prices.”

While localvorism sounds superb in theory, it is proving quite difficult in practice. To begin with, there are dozens of different definitions as to what local is, with some advocates arguing for political boundaries (as in Texas-grown, for example), others using quasi-geographic terms like food sheds, and still others laying out somewhat arbitrarily drawn food circles with radii of 100 or 150 or 500 miles. Further, whereas some areas might find it fairly easy to eat locally (in Washington State, for example, I’m less than fifty miles from industrial quantities of fresh produce, corn, wheat, beef, and milk), people in other parts of the country and the world would have to look farther afield. And what counts as local? Does food need to be purchased directly from the producer? Does it still count when it’s distributed through a mass marketer, as with Wal-Mart’s Salute to America’s Farmer program, which is now periodically showcasing local growers?

The larger problem is that although decentralized food systems function well in decentralized societies—like the United States was a century ago, or like many developing nations still are—they’re a poor fit in modern urbanized societies. The same economic forces that helped food production become centralized and regionalized did the same thing to our population: in the United States, 80 percent of us live in large, densely populated urban areas, usually on the coast, and typically hundreds of miles, often thousands of miles, from the major centers of food production.

Source G

Hallatt, Alex. "Arctic Circle." Comic strip. King Features Syndicate, Inc. 1 Sept. 2008. Web. 12 July 2009.

The following is a cartoon from an environmentally themed comic strip.



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