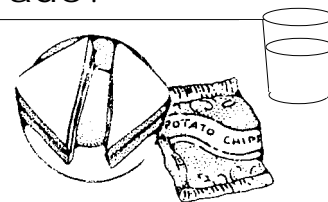


12. Food Safety: Do School Lunches Make the Grade?

- Objectives:
- To learn about agricultural pesticide use practices, pesticide residues in food, and special risks posed to children.
 - To promote the inclusion of organically-grown food in school lunch programs.



Activities:

- Read some background materials about food safety and pesticide hazards to children.
- Research the sources of selected, common foods (e.g., potatoes or apples) used in your school's lunch program. Start by interviewing school district food procurement staff. Ask for contact information about the distributors of the selected foods. Ask distributors which food processors they in turn buy from. [State crop commodity commissions (e.g., the potato or apple commissions) can also provide contact information for processors of those foods in their state.] Contact processors and ask what pesticides are used on the crops, when they are used, and for what purposes. For example, ask about pesticides used to treat the fields before planting, those that are applied to crops during the growing season, and those that are applied to crops after they are harvested (e.g., in waxes, or during storage or shipping). Ask if the processor routinely tests its produce and/or processed food product for pesticide residues. Try to identify individual growers for additional interviews about their pesticide use practices.
- Write a report summarizing your findings. Then write a news article for your school newspaper, and/or make a presentation to your school's PTSA or student environmental club. This report could include information about availability of organic food alternatives, proposed federal legislation to subsidize organic food for school lunch programs, and recommendations for using organically-grown food in the school lunch program. Organic growers can be located through state organic certification organizations or Departments of Agriculture, or through organic food distributors.
- Meet as a group with school district food purchasers to share your recommendations.

Background Reading:

- Wiles, R. and C. Campbell. 1993. *Pesticides In Children's Food*. Available from: Environmental Working Group. 1718 Connecticut Avenue NW, Suite 600, Washington, DC 20009. (202) 667-6982. Also available is a 1994 publication, *Washed, Peeled, Contaminated...*
- National Research Council. 1993. *Pesticides in the Diets of Infants and Children*. National Academy Press: Wash, DC.
- Natural Resources Defense Council. 1989. *Intolerable Risk: Pesticides in our Children's Food*.
- Anne Witte-Garland. 1993. *The Way We Grow: Good-sense solutions for protecting our families from pesticides in food*. From: Mothers and Others For A Liveable Planet, 40 W. 20th St., New York, NY 10011. (212) 727-4474.
- Norma Grier and Jennifer Curtis. 1995. "Pesticides Yield Toxic Harvest." Available from: Northwest Coalition for Alternatives to Pesticides (NCAP), PO Box 1393, Eugene, OR 97440. (541) 344-5044, along with other information on pesticide residues in food, harmful effects on children, and alternative agriculture.

- More -

Other Resources:

Pesticide Food Residue Data

- U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Pesticide Program *Residue Monitoring*. 1993. Contact your nearest FDA office for a copy of this annual publication.
- U.S. Department of Agriculture, Agricultural Marketing Service. 1994. *Pesticide Data Program: Summary of 1992 Data*. Available from Agricultural Marketing Service, PO Box 96456, Washington, DC 20090-6456.

Pesticide Use Recommendations for Selected Crops

- Each county has an Agricultural Extension Service office. See your local phone directory.
- Washington Apple Commission, (509) 663-9600.
- Oregon Potato Commission, (503) 731-3300. Idaho Potato Commission, (208) 334-8519.

Organic and Alternative Agriculture

- Washington State Department of Agriculture, (206) 902-1877. Certifies organic food producers.
- Washington Tilth, PO Box 85056, Seattle, WA 98145, (206) 527-9216. Publishes a directory of organic growers.
- Oregon Tilth, PO Box 218, Tualatin, OR 97062, (503) 692-4877. Certifies organic food producers in Oregon. Publishes a directory of organic growers.
- Community Alliance with Family Farmers, PO Box 464, Davis, CA 95617, (916) 756-8518. Publishes the annual *National Organic Directory*, a guide to organic farmers, wholesalers, legislation, and more. This directory contains several short background articles describing what "organic" means (e.g., certification standards,) the history of organics and certification programs, and summaries of certification standards in each state.
- Organic agriculture grows up, becomes business, not philosophy. Carole Sugarman, *The Oregonian*, 10/3/95, FoodDay (page 3.)
- Organic foods a real growth industry. Dean Rea, Capital Press, 8/25/95, pg. 6.

Legislation

- S. 1646, Better Nutrition and Health for Children Act of 1993. Introduced by Senator Patrick Leahy, D-VT.

