

Energy Star identifies products that are among the top 25 per cent of energy performers on the market. Models can be found at www.energystar.gc.ca.

(Today's dishwashers are about 95-per-cent more energy efficient than 1972 models, so that ancient machine is likely costing you more than buying a new one.)

The price premium for Energy Star is well under \$100.

RANGES

Energy Star does not cover stoves because energy gains have not been meaningful. However, there are many ways to reduce this energy hog's consumption. Self-cleaning ovens generally have more insulation than regular ovens, meaning energy savings every time you cook. The convection setting re-

sults in shorter cooking times and turning on the interior light to check your dinner, instead of opening the door, saves 20 per cent of the heat.

When cooking on the stove-top, remember that liquids will need less energy to boil if they're in a covered pot, and that simmering and slow-cooking uses less energy than boiling.

option year-round. And you can save up to 50 per cent of energy costs by using a microwave instead of a conventional oven.

Both the barbecue and microwave have the added benefit of not adding unwanted heat to your home during the summer.

REFRIGERATORS

The biggest energy glutton, your refrigerator accounts for 11 per cent of total household energy consumption, so buying an

energy-efficient refrigerator uses 50-per-cent less power than models made just 10 years ago.

FREEZERS

Standard-sized Energy Star-qualified freezers must exceed minimum federal standards by at least 10 per cent while compact models must exceed mini-

imum. Never put your front-loading washer on an upper floor, because the vibrations in its spin cycle tend to loosen floorboard nails over time.

Hang your wash to dry whenever possible; dryers burn lots of energy.

For a list of tips to reduce energy consumption with washers, dryers and dehumidifiers, check the Natural Resources Canada website at www.oee.nrcan.gc.ca.

WITH A FILE FROM TERENCE BELFORD

Food drives climate change

How importing foods contributes to global warming



Product/produce	LOCAL	CO ₂ (grams)	IMPORTED	CO ₂ (grams)
Mixed baby salad greens	Hamilton	3.7	New Jersey	63.8
Swiss chard	Millgrove	5.6	Texas	457.5
Carrots	Millgrove	14.9	California	840.2
Sweet potatoes	Aylmer	43.3	Mississippi	409.0
Pears	Milton	10.2	Portugal	223.1
			Washington	548.3
Apples	Collingwood	23.8	Washington	975.0
Lamb chops	Flamborough	7.0	New Zealand	8370.0
Total		108.5		11,886.9

SOURCE: FoodShare

TORONTO STAR GRAPHIC

Eat with Earth's health in mind

ELVIRA CORDILEONE
STAFF REPORTER

Our food system, the very thing that sustains us, has turned into an environmental hazard, spewing out vast amounts of greenhouse gases that contribute to global warming, researchers say.

"The continued use of massive quantities of petroleum, both in the production of synthetic fertilizers and machinery used in food production and in transporting our food across the globe, is clearly unsustainable," according to a 2005 study called Fighting Global Warming at the Farmer's Market.

The report, done by Toronto non-profit organization FoodShare, says long-distance food trade doubled between 1968 and 1998. It points out that such trade continues to rise, even though most of it occurs between countries of similar natural environments, places that could be growing much of their own food instead of importing and exporting it.

Wayne Roberts, Toronto's food policy council co-ordinator, describes our food distribution system as nothing short of irrational. How else can we explain trucking in so much of our food from thousands of kilometres away when much of it could be grown locally, he says.

According to Environment Canada, the transportation sector alone accounts for about one-quarter of this country's greenhouse-gas emissions. Add emissions caused by the packag-

ing and refrigeration food requires while in transit and the CO₂ emissions rise further.

FoodShare's study compares the emissions produced by transporting a selection of locally grown foods compared with the same foods that have been imported.

It found the imports, which had travelled more than 5,000 km to the point of purchase, dispersed 100 times more CO₂ than the local produce, which travelled an average of 100 km.

A similar study in the Region of Waterloo assessed 58 commonly purchased supermarket items that could be grown or raised in the region.

Just 10 to 15 per cent of what we eat is grown in Ontario

Author Marc Xuereb calculated they add about 52,000 tonnes of greenhouse gas annually, and he suggests that replacing those foods with products grown locally would reduce emissions equivalent to taking 16,191 cars off the road.

"This is big stuff. It's not just a bunch of lefties trying to change the world," says Randy Whitteker, general manager of Ontario Natural Food Co-op. "It's about survival of the species."

He says only 10 to 15 per cent of what we eat is grown in Ontario.

To help consumers increase consumption of local products, Local Flavour Plus, a Toronto-based non-profit group that

promotes environmentally responsible food production, created a labelling system to identify them.

"Our focus is to move our (food) system to where it was 50 years ago, about 60 to 70 per cent grown locally," says Mike Schreiner, vice-president of Local Flavour Plus.

That entails changing our habits to eat what's in season, buy locally grown frozen and canned foods instead of fresh imports, and growing winter greens in hothouses using solar or other environmentally friendly production methods.

But like all complex problems, the solutions lie in balancing options. Experts say implementing policies that strictly enforce buying local produce could prove counter-

productive, since distance travelled, though important, isn't the only factor that determines the least noxious way of feeding ourselves.

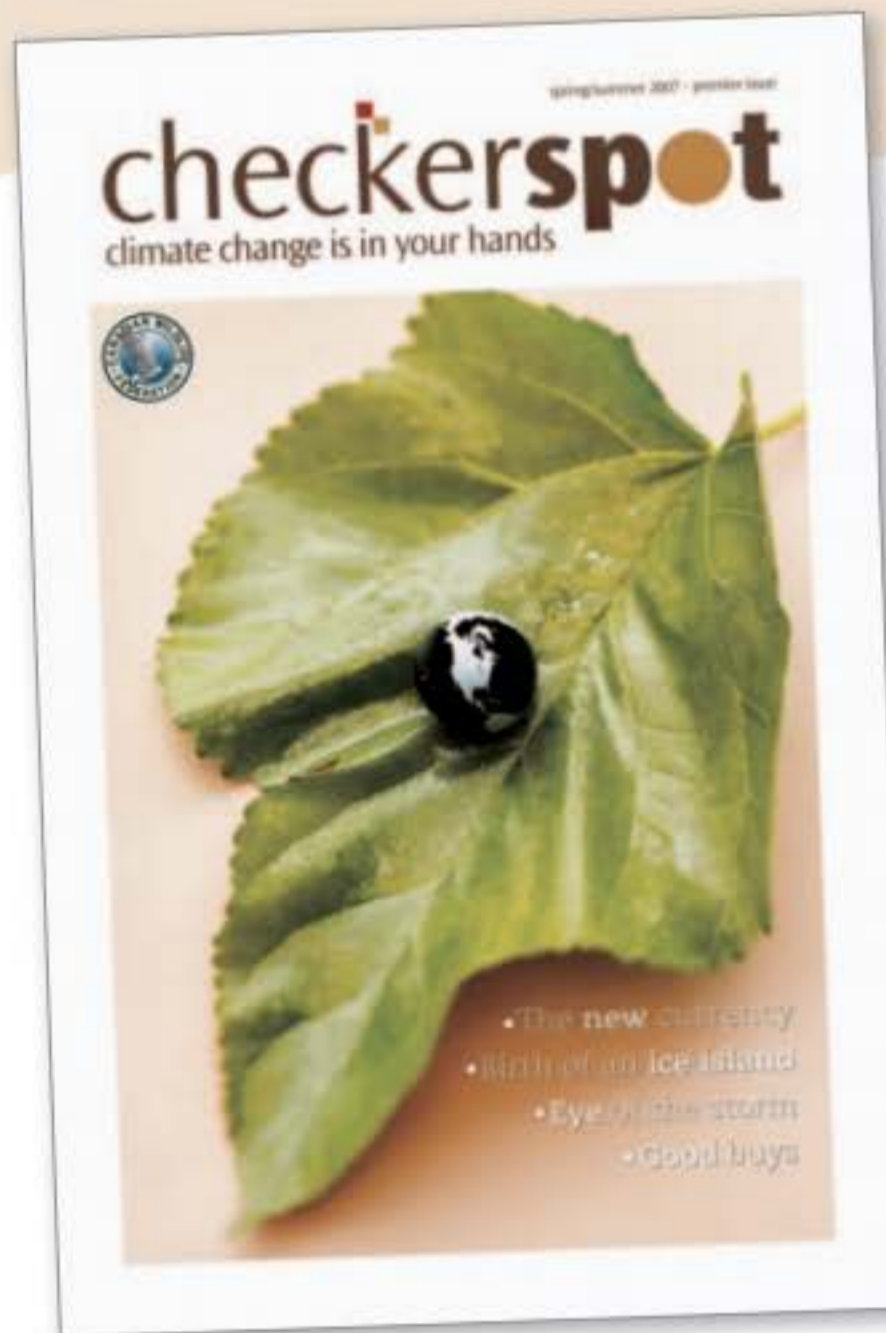
For example, FoodShare's study notes that the mode of transportation makes a huge difference. Air transport is the most polluting, followed by truck, rail and boat.

How the food is grown is also important, according to a 2003, British study called Wise Moves. It found growing lettuce in English hothouses may consume more energy than bringing it from Spain. But it also suggests "putting something else in our sandwich might be better."

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