



Resource Management

Changing Food Demand in the UK



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quiz



The Big Picture



Changing demand for food

The population of the UK is growing, which increases demand for food. Forty-five per cent of the UK's food was imported in 2019.

Additionally, there is a growing demand for:

- exotic, high value food from abroad
- out of season food being available all year
- more organic alternatives



High-value Food Exports

Despite the increasing food miles, it can be cheaper to import food from low income countries to the UK. A growing proportion of imported food consists of high-value products. Even if the food is produced cheaply in LICs, transport, storage and refrigeration costs can result in high prices. Additionally, specialist products such as Madagascan vanilla can fetch higher retail prices than UK products.

LICs benefit from jobs created in agriculture, packing and transport raising tax revenues that can be invested in services to benefit the population. However, less land is available for locals to grow their own food, there is greater pressure on water supplies and farmers are exposed to chemicals such as pesticides.



Seasonal Food

Historically, most food in the UK was seasonal and sourced in the UK. The UK now demands greater food choice around the year, increasing imports.



Organic Produce

Organic produce is grown without the use of artificial chemicals such as pesticides, herbicides



Key Terms



Agribusiness – Application of business skills to agriculture.



Carbon footprint – A measurement of all the greenhouse gases we individually produce.



Food miles – The distance covered supplying food to consumers.



Local food sourcing – A method of food production and distribution that is local, rather than national and/or international.



Organic produce – Food which is produced using environmentally and animal friendly farming methods.

and fertilisers. Demand for organic produce has increased since the 1990s. Organic produce is more expensive because yields tend to be lower and labour costs are higher.



Carbon Footprint

In the UK, food travels over 30 billion kilometres annually. Food contributes 17 per cent of the UK's carbon emissions (11 per cent is due to the transport of imported food). Some UK grown produce have a higher carbon footprint compared to if it had been imported e.g. tomatoes grown in heated greenhouses.



Local Sourcing

Local sourcing reduces carbon emissions by importing only foods that cannot be grown in the UK, eating seasonal UK produce, purchasing food from farmers' markets and consuming home-grown food.



What is Agribusiness?

Treating a farm like an industrial business increases food production by removing hedgerows, combining small farms and increasing mechanisation and chemical use. However, employment declines and there is a negative impact on the environment.