

CHAMPIONS FOR NATURE

ELECTIVE ADVENTURE



138 Arrow of Light

SNAPSHOT OF ADVENTURE



About half of the land on Earth is being used for some type of agriculture. Agriculture is often in the form of a farm. How we farm, either growing crops or raising animals for food, has an impact on our planet. The country of India has the most land mass used for agriculture. The United States is second. Combined, these two countries account for 22% of the land on the planet being used for agriculture. How the United States grows, distributes, and uses food has an impact on the world. In this Adventure, you will explore food and ways to conserve it, and the resources used to produce food.

REQUIREMENTS

Approved by _____

1. Identify foods grown or processed in your state. _____
2. Determine the benefits of purchasing food that is locally grown or processed. _____
3. Explore the concept of a food desert. _____
4. Explore the concept of a food oasis. _____
5. Learn how individuals can reduce food waste. _____
6. Participate in a conservation service project. _____



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REQUIREMENT 1

Identify foods grown or processed in your state.

Every state in the United States has some type of agricultural activity. Large states like Texas are known for cattle, which require a lot of land. Grapes grown in parts of California require a certain type of soil and climate. The smallest state, Rhode Island, has dairy farms. You may even have a fishery, a farm that grows and raises fish in a controlled environment.

One way to identify foods grown or processed in your state is to see if there is a farmers' market near you. Farmers' markets provide local farmers a chance to sell what they grow directly to the public. The United States Department of Agriculture has an online tool to help you find a farmers' market near you. With an adult, visit www.usdalocalfoodportal.com, enter your city and state, select **Farmers Market** in the directory, and click **Search**.



REQUIREMENT 2

Determine the benefits of purchasing food that is locally grown or processed.

A farmer usually sells their crops or animals to a food distributor. The food distributor may sell the product to a company that processes the food. That company then sells to the grocery store, and that is where the product is sold to the public. The further away the farm is from the market where you buy the food, the more resources it takes to get it to you. For example, to ship fruit from Florida to New York, it takes special packaging, shipping containers that can preserve freshness, and a lot more gas than it takes to go to a nearby town and buy it from a farmer. When we buy products that are locally grown, it can lower the cost of those products and our impact on our environment.

Another benefit to buying food that is locally grown is that it helps your local economy, or how people make and spend money. When you buy products grown or made in your local community the money you spend stays in your community. The money a local farmer makes is spent at local businesses and used to pay local taxes. Local taxes pay for or help maintain roads you drive, parks you visit, and schools you attend.

If you visit a farmers' market or go to the produce department at a grocery store, you can find out a lot more about the benefits of purchasing food that is locally grown or processed.



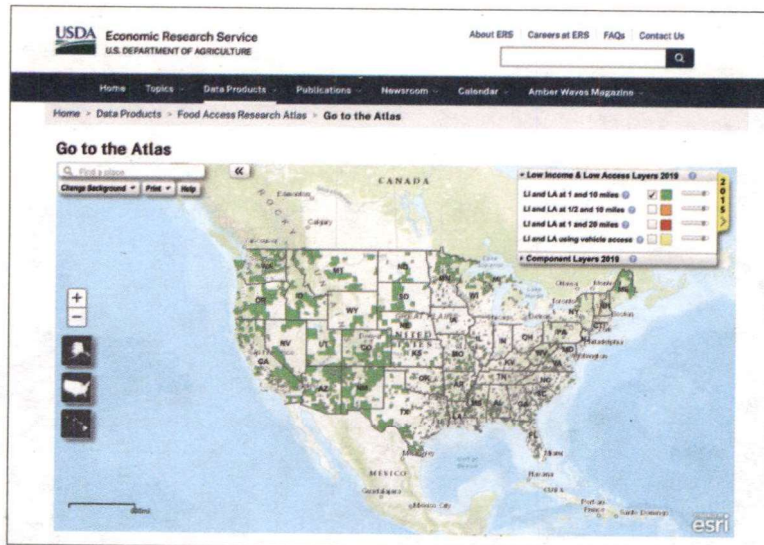
REQUIREMENT 3

Explore the concept of a food desert.

A food desert is an area that has limited access to affordable and nutritious food. In some communities people walk, ride their bikes, or rely on public transportation to get around. If affordable and nutritious food can't be reached with these means of transportation, it can create a food desert.

The foods that are available in food deserts are likely to be less healthy, such as fast food or prepackaged foods, and more expensive than fresh, nutritious foods. As a result, food deserts may put people who live in these communities at increased risk of health problems and other problems related to poor nutrition.

To locate food deserts in the United States, visit the United States Department of Agriculture's website at www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/food-access-research-atlas.aspx, where you'll find the Food Access Research Atlas.



REQUIREMENT 4

Explore the concept of a food oasis.

A desert is a large, extremely dry area of land with little vegetation. A desert oasis happens when water from an aquifer or underground river comes to the surface of a desert allowing vegetation to grow.

Like a desert oasis, a food oasis happens when affordable and nutritious food is available in the middle of a food desert. A food oasis is one solution to reduce food deserts. The good news is that there are several ways to form a food oasis.

Neighborhoods or communities that have access to land may come together to form a community garden that can become a food oasis. A community garden may have a section that is assigned to an individual or there may be a rotation of volunteers who tend to the garden. When the garden produces fruits or vegetables, they may be offered for free to the community or sold to cover the costs of maintaining the garden.

A community garden can be established just about anywhere. In cities, they can be on rooftops using raised garden beds. They can be in a local park or even at your school.

Another form of a food oasis is a farmers' market. A farmers' market brings those who grow food directly to the community. It may be a temporary market that is held for a couple of hours on a weekend. There are even some farmers who have created farmers' market food trucks that they drive around to sell fresh fruits and vegetables.

The ideal situation is for a food oasis to become permanent. When food markets in a food desert start to carry fresh and nutritious foods or new, accessible food markets open in communities in food deserts, the food oasis can take a community out of being in a food desert.

REQUIREMENT 5

Learn how individuals can reduce food waste.

Take what you want, but eat what you take. Keep this in mind not only when you're at home, but also when you go out to eat at restaurants. When you go out to eat, consider the amount of food you're ordering. If you have leftovers, will you eat them the next day?

You can reduce food waste when you buy food from a grocery store. Planning your meals before you go food shopping can reduce excess waste from food spoiling. Planning meals can also help you save money by creating a weekly menu that uses the same ingredients. That's because you can usually get more for your money when you buy a larger quantity of something rather than just a small amount of it.



What are some other ways you can reduce food waste?



REQUIREMENT 6

Participate in a conservation service project.



With your patrol, pack, or family conduct a conservation service project. Maybe you can conduct a project that will help with your local agriculture.

Here are some projects that can help reduce food waste.

- In the fall, collect pumpkins to donate to local cattle or livestock farms.
- Start a community garden where families can grow a garden together and share the fruits and vegetables they grow.