Listening Comprehension Test for 10th Form Students

Text: **Adapted from “Where Does Your Food Come From” by Kathiann Kowalski**

Glossary: **deteriorate -** to become impaired in quality, function, or condition; worsen

Before you know it, spring will be on the way and more fresh fruits and veggies will be in stores. But what about the fresh fruits and vegetables we see in the stores right now? Where do those foods come from? Locally grown foods are a great choice when they’re available, but are they really always better? Taste is the reason Ohio teen Allie M. says she prefers locally grown peaches to ones that might travel more than a thousand miles to the supermarket. “They have to pick them so unripe to ship them, so they don’t spoil,” says Allie. “They’re not as good as they would be if you went to the farmers market during peak season and bought fresh peaches.” When fruits and vegetables taste better, you’ll probably eat them more often. That’s good, because the U.S. Department of Agriculture recommends filling half your plate with fruits and vegetables. While there’s no clear definition of what’s local, most shoppers agree that produce grown nearby is fresher than foods that travel long distances. Local foods can be more nutritious too. “The longer it takes for a food to go from the field to your plate, the more it may deteriorate in terms of nutrient content,” explains Mary Lee Chin, a registered dietitian at Nutrition Edge Communications in Denver. “But a lot of it depends on many different factors.” Soil conditions, fertilization practices, irrigation methods, and the specific plant varieties can all affect nutrient content. “Handling is really critical,” adds Chin. That includes everything that happens from harvest until foods reach your home. When fruits and vegetables are at peak ripeness and handled properly, the results can be both delicious and nutritious. But bruised, wilted, or overripe produce loses both appeal and nutrient value. Buying local foods also lets shoppers support the local economy. That builds feelings of community. “You know who grows your food,” says Allie. Local farmers markets may spotlight produce that an area is famous for, such as Michigan cherries or Georgia peaches. You might also discover varieties not usually carried by supermarkets, such as some heirloom tomatoes or fresh herbs. Some vendors sell only “organic” foods. Organic produce usually isn’t more nutritious than other fruits and vegetables. To receive official certification, farms follow specific guidelines, such as not using certain pesticides or fertilizers. (Some farms don’t go through the certification process but still may produce food according to organic practices.) Energy usage is another environmental issue. Local foods travel a shorter distance to market, so less fuel is required to deliver the food. However, notes Chin, the type of transportation matters. For a 100-mile trip, for instance, a typical pickup truck uses more than 10 times the fuel per pound carried than a full semitrailer. Farming practices, water usage, and other factors affect foods’ environmental impact too. Not all our favorite foods can come from local farms. Allie loves bananas, but they don’t grow in Ohio. And forget about finding fresh Ohio-grown melons, strawberries, or peaches during winter. “In my opinion, it’s not possible to have the lifestyle we enjoy and rely only on locally grown foods,” says Trevor Suslow, an agricultural scientist at the University of California, Davis. “In order to enjoy a year-round supply of healthful, nutritious, good-tasting, enjoyable diverse foods, they are being grown, harvested, and then shipped tens of thousands of miles.” Refrigerated storage and transport make it possible. Don’t rule out frozen, canned, or dried fruits and vegetables. Many companies run processing plants close to farms for cost and efficiency reasons. Other benefits are more obvious to the consumer. Not only are the nutrients of fresh fruits preserved, says Chin, but sensory qualities of appearance, smell, and taste remain too. A jar of applesauce serves many people and delivers almost the same health benefits per serving as fresh apples—that’s something to consider when money is tight.