



NEWS RELEASE

'Buy local' food less safe—with limited environmental benefits

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TORONTO—Despite common misperceptions, locally-grown food isn't better for the environment, doesn't provide a more stable food supply and it isn't necessarily safer to eat, finds a new study released today by the Fraser Institute, an independent, non-partisan Canadian public policy think-tank.

“With Thanksgiving just around the corner, Canadians may be surprised to learn that the global food supply chain—and not the local farmers' market—provides safer, more affordable food that is better for the environment,” said Pierre Desrochers, associate professor at the University of Toronto Mississauga, Fraser Institute senior fellow, and author of *The Myths of Local Food Policy: Lessons from the economic and social history of the food system*.

The study finds that locally-grown food often increases prices for consumers, since the high cost of land in or near big cities means urban agriculture is expensive. Conversely, due to the competitive nature of most agricultural markets, imports must achieve the best quality for the price, resulting in overall lower prices for imported foods.

Likewise, the amount of energy used to transport food around the world in cargo ships is actually small compared to the energy required for heating and cooling technologies, irrigation, fertilizers and pesticides needed to grow food in a local region's less-than-ideal conditions. For example, by importing produce from the southern hemisphere, northern markets enjoy offseason produce at a fraction of the energy it would cost to grow and store it locally in controlled atmosphere facilities.

Finally, modern safety protocols used by large food producers, processors and distributors have produced the safest food system in history compared to farmers' markets. And the global food supply chain, which allows regions enduring bad harvests to rely on other regions, has all but ended widespread famine and created stability for global food markets.

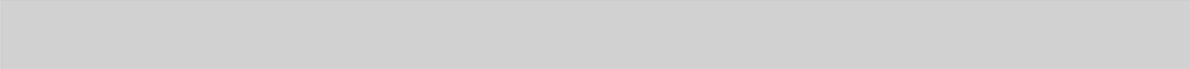
“People who want safer, more affordable food that's better for the environment should support increased free trade and the global food supply chain,” Desrochers said.

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