

# Session 10:

## Food Resource Sheet – Living with Limits

Eating is not optional. Most of us do it at least three times a day. According to the charity [Second Harvest](#), Canadians waste about \$31 billion worth of food annually, yet 1 in 8 families struggle to put food on the table.

The average American eats almost a ton of food per year.<sup>1</sup> That would be over 70 tons of food for the average lifetime. It takes a massive amount of land to feed seven billion people. In the U.S., for example, 45% of land area is under cultivation. That means how we choose to grow our food and spend our food dollars is a major creation care issue. Examining our food choices is one of the most important steps toward a sustainable lifestyle.

- **What food choices is our household able to make? What things that currently limit our food choices could be changed?**

Some of us are living on very limited budgets. Some of us need to shop at the nearest convenience store because we don't have transportation. Some of us have plenty of money but are limited by our lack of knowledge about farming, nutrition or the food system. Some of us can't cook, or don't have time to cook. Some of us are trapped in bad habits we can't imagine living without. Many of these things can be changed; others cannot. Identify the choices you do have.

- **How can we structure our household to encourage healthy eating in modest quantities?**

Throughout history, most people's diets were limited by the seasons, by lack of refrigeration, by poverty and by rituals such as feasting and fasting. Today, the eating opportunities in North America are almost limitless. What limits do you need for the sake of your own health and to support food justice? For example, many calories are munched in front of the TV or computer. A simple rule limiting eating to the kitchen can make a difference.

- **How much meat does our household consume and what kinds of meat do we eat? What alternative sources of protein can we draw on?**

Meat has always been regulated in the Christian tradition. The Old Testament offers few opinions about how to cook a turnip, but many laws deal with butchering and eating meat. Most species of animals are off limits. In later times, Lenten practices and other fast days also limited meat eating. For monastics following the Rule of St. Benedict, meat is a medicine for the weak and the sick, not an ordinary food.

Today, North American lifestyles consume animal products at a rate that requires mass production of meat and dairy foods. Habitat destruction, cruelty to animals, inefficient use of calories and the challenges of concentrated animal wastes are among the issues that call us to reconsider limits on meat-eating. Christian vegetarians have a strong case. For those who *do* eat meat, the price of pastured, organic and humanely raised meat can quickly limit consumption.

<sup>1</sup> Allison Aubrey, "[The Average American Ate \(Literally\) a Ton this Year](#)," *The Salt*, NPR, 12/31/11.

- **What agricultural practices are best for the long-term health of the land? How can our household reward farmers who use these practices? How can we be sure that the workers who grow, pick and prepare our food are paid fairly and have safe working conditions? What opportunities do we have to advocate for justice with our dollars?**

[The Sustainable Food Purchasing Guide](#) is a very helpful resource for those trying to answer these difficult questions. It reviews the rationale for sustainable food choices, describes the issues related to different food groups and suggests questions to ask local farmers.

Your circle leader may be able to advise you on farms in your community that are worthy of your support. If budget is an issue, begin by researching just one product you commonly buy and find a brand you feel good about. Stay loyal to that brand.

These difficult questions may nudge us to consider the food system as a whole, not just our own cupboards. They may send us to the voting booth or to our political leaders as well.