



Food and Farming Unit

Lesson 7: The Impact of Rising Global Food Prices

Key Ideas:

- World food prices for many staple crops showed a steep increase in 2008 – 2009.
- The steep increase in prices caused more hunger and malnutrition in developing countries.
- In the developed countries such as the UK, many consumers have been changing their food shopping habits.

Starter activity:

The [spreadsheet data prices](#) showing price changes for rice and wheat can be graphed and commented on: How sudden was the price change? How severe was the price change? What is the current trend?

Main activity:

It is a fact of life that the world price of basic farming commodities fluctuates over the years and it is a fact that causes severe problems for farmers who are unsure whether or not they will get a price that covers their costs and gives them a profit. For consumers, there is an inevitable knock-on effect when wholesale food prices rise, then food prices in the shops rise also – sometimes suddenly and dramatically. The impact on consumers in developing countries is very different to that in the developed world.

Activity 1 – The worksheet [The Impact of Changes in Food Prices](#) provides students with a set of imaginary food price graphs. They have to take on the role of a **Minister for Food** in a poor, less economically developed country and answer the questions posed in the worksheet. The aim is to understand the impact of variable food prices both for a government and for the people who depend on the imported food.

Activity 2 – The second activity [The Causes of Changes in Food Prices](#) worksheet looks at some of the causes of changing food prices and the students have to forecast whether prices will rise or fall or stay roughly the same. The aim is to develop an understanding of the principle of supply and demand and the extent to which these two things can be controlled by human actions.

Plenary:

In the UK, changes in food prices cause people to grumble but few people suffer hunger or malnutrition. In most cases, people buy less 'luxury' food items, more of the cheaper 'basic' own-brand food items and eat out less in take-aways and restaurants. Which 'luxury' food items would students give up in order to save money? If students have access to a school computer (or for a homework), they could compare the benefits of using different supermarkets by using the website [My Supermarket](#) to compare the total cost of a basket of ten basic items (sliced brown loaf, six eggs, milk (2.27 L), potatoes (1 kg), orange juice (1 L), cheddar cheese (200 g), pork sausages (pack of 8), cornflakes (750 g), baked beans (4 large tins), McVities Penguin biscuits (9 pack)). A simple version of the exercise with 6 listed foods items can also be done using the worksheet [How Much Can I Save?](#) This activity could also be used to think about how the 'credit crunch' might effect *ethical* shopping decisions. Will consumers buy fair trade bananas or free-range chicken when non-fair trade fruits and factory-farmed meats are cheaper? Students could debate the different factors that might influence consumer choices.