



Food and Farming Unit

Lesson 6: Food fashions – exploiting farmland and the natural environment.

Key Ideas:

- Demand for certain crops varies over time and increasingly farmers are growing 'new' crops which have become fashionable.
- Changes in demand means farmland may change from growing food crops to industrial crops.
- Changing crop demands means that there is a real threat to the natural environment as governments sanction destruction of rainforest, etc. to create new farmland.

Starter activity:

The photo (*Presentation7 Soybean Bus.ppt*) can be used as a stimulus with the students applying the **Five W's** (What is the soybean bus? Where can you find it? When was it created? Why was it created? Who uses the bus?) or using the **Five Why's** to probe a little deeper. The Five W's allow students to just ask questions or to try and pose questions which they also answer. The Five Why's is better option with slightly older students or those with a better basic knowledge – they should in reality be able to ask 3 – 5 'why' questions with subsequent questions based on the previous answer.

Main activity:

Activity 1 - The Word document [biofuel statements](#) contains lists of statements about biofuels. These can be handed out in sets and divided up in various ways. The students can be given freedom to decide or asked to divide the statements into 'positive statements', 'negative statements' and 'neutral statements'. The students could alternatively look for links between statements. The aim is to build up a picture of a situation in which the world is trying to shift from its traditional reliance on unsustainable, polluting fossil fuels to sustainable, environmentally-friendly biofuels. The key is to help the students realise that this well-meaning shift in resources has unpleasant side-effects:

- Farmland which used to grow food crops is now being used to grow industrial crops.
- The price of crops which could be used as food or fuel is rising rapidly.
- New land (often rainforest or other precious habitats) is being cleared to grow biofuel crops.

Activity 2 – There are a lot of video clips that could be used to focus student attention on one aspect of these side-effects (it is too complex and time consuming to try and deal with them all). These two videos are a good starting point:

[Deforestation in Borneo and Sumatra](#)
[the impact of the 'biofuel' boom on Orangutans](#)

Much of the material is deliberately **emotive** and it is easy for young students to take a very simplistic view of this issue – the reality is that the destruction of the rainforest for timber and the planting of palm oil plantations brings a huge amount of wealth to countries such as Indonesia and provides jobs for people who have few other opportunities. The students need to understand that countries like the UK cause the demand for palm oil and timber but that as a country and as individuals, we also have a responsibility to ensure that the products we use are produced sustainably wherever possible. Only the relatively smaller UK supermarkets (Co-op, Waitrose, ASDA and now Sainsbury's) have joined the **Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO)** which is trying to get all organisations involved in the production and use of palm oil to act responsibly. To draw the work together, students could work on an e-mail, a

poster, a slogan or an advert to try and persuade organisations who make lipstick, crisps, soap, chocolate, etc. to care about where the palm oil comes from and how it is grown.

Plenary:

Students could think about the topic as a whole and play (in pairs) 'word association' or 'word tennis'. The teacher could stop pairs at random and challenge students to explain how their word links to the previous word.