



# National Farmers Union

## *“Growing Good Taste”*

### Section 4: Grades 9-12

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Optional Activities

*\* Lesson contains a cooperative education component.*

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# Lesson 1: Cooperatives Count

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**Unit Objective:** Students will connect the food they eat to farmer-owned cooperatives.  
**Grades:** 9-12  
**Length:** 1 hour: 10 minutes for the introduction, 10 minutes for concentration activity, 20 minutes for the guest speaker; 10 minutes for the cooperative exercise; 10 minutes to review the lesson and check the answers on the worksheet.

**Materials Needed:** Tables with adequate work area for each student, a hand out of the “Concentration or Cooperation” worksheet, taco shells, taco sauce, a bag of cheese, a head of lettuce, an onion, and a bag of taco meat, Sun-Maid raisins, Land O’ Lakes yogurt, Tillamook cheese, either orange, grape, or cranberry juice from a farmer-owned cooperative (see examples in lesson below), milk or ice cream from a local or regional dairy co-op, cheese cutter, disposable spoons, bowls and cups.

**Preparation Needed:** Invite in advance a guest speaker who can talk about cooperatives (either a manager or member of a dairy cooperative). The purpose of this presentation is to build awareness of farmer-owned food cooperatives.

## Background:

Your students likely believe there are thousands of food companies. Not surprisingly, many adults believe this is true, too, as they look at the bewildering number of food products that line shelves in grocery stores. Your students will be surprised to learn there are very few food companies and very few grocery stores in the **food supply chain**. This kind of **concentration** and **vertical integration** concerns farmers. In this lesson, students will discover how farmers have formed their own food companies known as **cooperatives**.

## Teaching Strategy:

1. Ask if any one of your students can describe a “**food supply chain**.” Listen to their responses. Ideally, they will identify the production of food on farms, the processing and packaging of food at plants, and marketing of food in grocery stores. Hand out the “Concentration or Cooperation” worksheet and ask them to fill in the blanks when they can match a term to its meaning.
2. *Let’s think about the numbers for a few minutes. There are thousands of grocery stores, and there are nearly 50,000 items for sale in each grocery store. When your grandparents grew up, there may have been several locally-owned grocery stores along the main streets in their hometowns. Retail shopping has changed over the years. Larger stores and shopping centers became popular. Small stores could not compete, or were bought out by larger chains. Today, many of the grocery stores you see are owned by just a few companies. This is called **concentration**. Fewer companies can mean less competition. Farmers Union believes more competition results in better products and lower prices. Concentration is a situation in which very few companies control most of the market share. Another type of concentration is called vertical integration. This is when one company effectively controls the **food supply chain**. For example, a company may contract with farmers to raise chickens, process and package chicken, and then market and sell the food products. One company controls every step of the supply chain from the producer to the consumer. This is known as **vertical integration**. In food production, there are just a few companies, too. Kraft Foods may make you think of Macaroni and Cheese, but Kraft also owns Oscar Mayer meats and Oreo cookies. What does Pepsi sell? Soda pop, right? Did you know in the last year of Pepsi’s total sales, 37 percent came from beverages and 63 percent came from food? Because it owns many companies, Pepsi sells such foods as Cap’n Crunch cereal and Doritos snack chips.*
3. Pass out the following items to students so each has just one product: taco shells, taco sauce, a bag of cheese, a head of lettuce, an onion, and a bag of taco meat. Tell each of the students they are the owner of a food business that specializes in the item they have in their possession. If you have additional students you may want to hand out additional items such

as napkins or packaging. *This is how the food business used to work. Each business developed its own markets. Now take all the items and give them to one student. All of you now have the choice to work for her (or him). This company has grown large enough to dominate the market because it is large enough to supply major grocery store chains with multiple items.*

4. *Take a few minutes and discuss this situation in your group with these questions in mind. What are the downsides to having one company control so many different food products. Could there be advantages to consumers? In what position does this put farmers and ranchers? What can independent farmers and ranchers do to keep their markets when some businesses get so large? Have someone take notes of your conclusions.*
5. *Ask the students to report back. Use this opportunity to explain that large businesses can be disconnected from their customers, and can, in fact, be so large as to become unresponsive to what customers may really want.*
6. *How does this relate to farmers and ranchers? Concentration has occurred among the companies that buy crops, milk, and livestock from farmers and ranchers. Without competition, companies can offer farmers less for their crops and livestock. Farmers will tell you there have been times they barely made a living at farming while the companies that bought their crops were making record profits. Farmers do have an option. They could form **cooperative** businesses themselves. A cooperative is a business owned by members who work together for the common good. Cooperatives meet many different business needs. Some cooperatives focus on financial or other services, many farmer-owned cooperatives focus on supply or marketing needs. Farmers Union is a type of service cooperative. All the members are encouraged to participate in the organization. Farmers Union is sponsoring these classes. Depending on where you live, you may have a rural electric cooperative providing power to your home, your family may do its banking at a financial cooperative known as a credit union, and almost certainly you have had milk or ice cream or butter products made at a cooperative owned by dairy farmers.*
7. *Some of the best-known cooperative brands of food items include Land O'Lakes, Sunkist, Ocean Spray, Organic Valley, Florida Natural, Welch's, Sun-Maid, and Tillamook. A farmer-owned cooperative buys crops, milk, or livestock from its members and processes it into food products. Farmers have invested money in this business, and the farmers who are members of the co-op meet to discuss the business operations. They hire a manager to run the business. By processing and selling food items, cooperatives can return the profits to farmers as additional income. This is called a value-added step.*
8. *To explain how a cooperative works for farmers, we have invited (NAME) to talk to us today. NAME is a (manager, employee, or member of) the (NAME) Cooperative. Be sure to listen to how this cooperative works for farmers. And, we will have time for questions afterward so be sure to keep this in mind. Lead the applause and step aside for your speaker. Be sure to pay attention to him or her during the presentation in order to prepare for questions afterward.*
9. *After your speaker concludes, stand up and ask your students if they have any questions. If not, be sure to ask at least two questions yourself, such as "How many farmers are members of your cooperative," "How long has your cooperative been in business," "What are the newest challenges facing your cooperative," or "Did you have any relatives such as parents or grandparents who helped start the co-op?" Following the Q&A, thank your guest speaker for taking time to visit with your students.*
10. *Tell your students that a cooperative is a type of business. Instead of profits going to investors who may know nothing about the business itself, profits are returned to the members who own the co-op. Co-ops frequently found in rural communities are purchasing, marketing, and service co-ops. A purchasing co-op allows members to buy products in bulk and share the savings. Some of these co-ops include locally-owned Farmers Union oil co-ops and regional co-ops such as CHS, Inc, whose Cenex fuel products are found across the Midwest. A marketing co-op can be the local farmer's elevator or a co-op such as Land O'Lakes, whose butter and dairy products represent the kind of value-added processing we talked about just a few moments ago. Service co-ops include financial ones like credit unions and utilities including rural electric companies. Each of these co-ops is owned by the members.*

11. *How does a co-op work? Let's find out.* Group the students as evenly as possible for the number of co-op food items you have. If you have four items, move the students into four groups. Do not pass out the cups or spoons: you keep those. *"Each group has one type of product. You can be selfish and keep it to yourself, or you can share it with the group. They in turn can choose to not share with you. Will you compete, or cooperate?"* Let them consider this. Ask if any of them have food allergies that may limit their participation, and make sure they have an opportunity to clean their hands, if necessary. *As this is a lesson on cooperatives, I would like to see you work together to make sure each person has an equal opportunity to share equally in these products. If you have any questions, please ask me. Otherwise, figure this out on your own.* Hand a cheese cutter to the group that has Tillamook cheese. Move to a far table and make sure any cups, bowls, and spoons are visible just in front of you. Observe how the students begin discussing the situation. A leader may appear, or the group may use consensus to make decisions. Given the nudge by you, this group should agree to share the items. They first should agree to parcel out the yogurt and raisins, and then decide to pour equal amounts of juice and milk for everyone. At some point, one of them will be "elected" or volunteer to approach you and ask for the cups, bowls, and spoons. This is a critical time to ask loudly enough for all to hear, *"May I join your co-op?"* The answer, naturally, will be yes. Bring your items to their table and let them complete their distribution of the items. Allow them time to enjoy the snacks.
12. *When you organize a cooperative, you have to communicate with each other to set common goals. How did that work for you?* Give each student plenty of time to offer comments. In fact, the students may begin talking to each other. If they do, do not interrupt: let them carry on the conversation. *This is how cooperation works. Each of you had something to offer. Each of you had a willingness to share with others, knowing they wanted to share with you. In a cooperative business, you would have formed a board, hired a manager, and developed a business plan. The goal either way was the same: you wanted everyone to have an equal and fair chance to participate. This kind of attitude is very refreshing in a competitive world. It is another way of finding teamwork.* Also note that like a true co-op, they needed open membership for it to work. This included you as you had the utensils they needed. *Buying food from cooperative businesses means more money goes back to family farmers and ranchers, and cooperatives have a reputation of producing the best quality foods possible.*
13. Finally, review the answers to the "Competition or Cooperation" worksheet. They are, in order: 1. Food Supply Chain, 2. Concentration, 3. Vertical Integration, 4. Cooperative, 5. Value-added 6. Purchasing-Marketing-Service. You will have to determine possibly correct answers for #7.

**Sources:** Supermarket News, Food Processing, National Cooperative Business Association, National Farmers Union, University of Wisconsin Center for Cooperatives

# ***Concentration or Cooperation***

1. The production, processing, packaging and marketing of food:

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2. When just a few businesses control most of the market share:

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3. When one company can control the entire supply chain:

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4. A business owned by farmers working together:

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5. The processing, packaging, and marketing of food by co-ops:

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6. Three common types of cooperatives:

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7. One co-op that serves members in this area:

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# Lesson 2: Grow Your Own Groceries

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- Unit Objective:** Students will learn about farmers' markets, organics, and gardening.
- Grades:** 9-12
- Length:** 1 hour: 10 minutes for the introduction; 30 minutes for the lecture, 10 minutes to fill out the "Am I a Food Activist" worksheet, 10 minutes for closing discussion.
- Materials Needed:** Whiteboard or flipchart, a list showing the locations and schedules of Farmers' Markets in your area or state, and enough copies of the "Am I a Food Activist" worksheet.
- Preparation Needed:** Print off the farmers' markets list from your state's Department of Agriculture website, If you have the equipment and capabilities, consider connecting to the internet and allowing your students to view a few of the video clips at the Farm to School website. Depending on time, you may want to check with a local nursery, gardening store, or Extension Service to see if they would provide a guest speaker for this event. NOTE: No specific time was built into this lesson for a guest speaker so to accommodate one will require you to adjust the length of the lesson.

## Background:

Michelle Obama's White House kitchen garden was a visible sign that Americans are returning to their roots, so to speak. Partly because of the ongoing economic difficulties, and partly because we want to know where our food comes from, Americans are taking up gardening. For some, that means digging in the backyard, for others a community garden is a viable option and for those who don't have land or time shopping at the weekly farmers' market fills the niche. Also, school gardens and the Farm to School program are putting a healthy twist on going green at lunchtime. If you have time, you may wish to locate and read the book *Seedfolks* by Paul Fleischman. This book covers many ethnic, economic, and social issues that surround a community garden in an urban setting and could contribute ideas or insights for this lesson.

## Teaching Strategy:

1. This session will begin with you asking questions of your students to begin a conversation on gardens. *How many of you have gardens at home?* Study the show of hands, as you will want to engage these students with additional questions. *Why do people grow gardens?* Write down the answers on the flipchart or whiteboard. Among the answers you may receive or will want to add are: To have fresh vegetables; To save money on groceries; We've done it every year; It is an assigned chore or I get paid to do it; We donate vegetables to others; We sell vegetables to others.
2. Of those who said they do it save money on groceries, ask them how this works in their families. *Do you can or preserve these items for later use? Do you eat them right from the garden as they ripen?*
3. Explain that gardening and farming are similar. Each person is growing food from the ground up. Each person faces the challenges of planting too early and having to replant after a frost, not having enough rain, hailstorms close to harvest, infestations of insects and plant diseases, and possible raids by raccoons. Of course, farmers face a lot more challenges beyond their control that can hurt their production of crops and livestock. And with farmers, that production is their income for the year so a loss of crops means a loss of a paycheck.
4. *For those of you who might want to try home gardening, it is not difficult. The things you need are relatively inexpensive and readily available. Home gardening supplies can be found at many hardware stores, larger discount stores and local nurseries. There may be a local gardening association or relatives, friends, or*

neighbors who are willing to offer advice. You do not need a lot of space for a home garden, and many people successfully use planters to garden on their porches, patios, and even windowsills.

5. In crowded urban areas few people have backyards. People who live in apartments have no yards. Community gardens are a popular solution for people living in these areas who want to grow their own fruits and vegetables. *You will find community gardens in small towns and large cities including Chicago, Denver, and Minneapolis.* A good guide for forming a community garden may be found at [www.communitygarden.org/learn/starting-a-community-garden.php](http://www.communitygarden.org/learn/starting-a-community-garden.php). *Community gardening also takes a commitment on your part, as you will be working with other people. You and a friend or family member could share in taking care of your section in a community garden.*
6. Not everyone has the time or interest to garden. Your students still have options. *You can find thousands of farmers' markets in small towns and big cities across the United States. In fact, you can find farmers' markets in front of farms along rural roads. Farmers' markets provide locally-grown vegetables and fruits for sale. Many of these items are **organic**, meaning there were grown using recognized procedures that avoid the use of pesticides, herbicides and insecticides, all of which are chemicals that many people do not want on their food items. Farmers' markets can be open year-round, others are open from mid-summer to late fall when the crops ripen. By buying at a Farmers' Market, you will know your food is fresh, safe, and local. You will be surprised at the choices you have.*
7. Because locally-grown food is becoming more popular, some large grocery chains like Walmart are featuring organic and locally-grown selections of fruits and vegetables in special displays or using signs to let customers know the food is being grown locally. *There are a few grocery stores that specialize in stocking groceries that can be traced back to the farms and ranches that grew or raised the items available. The next time you are in a store that sells groceries, look for labels or signs that tell you something comes from a local source.*
8. Have students break into groups. Challenge them to discuss and then report their conclusions to these questions: *What would be the advantages of buying locally-raised foods? Why or why not are locally-raised foods likelier to be safer, tastier, and fresher? Is there an environmental advantage to supporting local agriculture? What is your definition of an organic food? Is buying locally produced food at a major grocery store the same as buying at a farmers' market?* Make sure you write the questions on the whiteboard or flipchart.
9. Have each group report on their discussions. As opportunity allows, use their comments to form follow-up questions on what is and is not important to them in terms of knowing their food sources.
10. *Farmers Union is sponsoring this lesson today. As an organization of family farmers and ranchers, Farmers Union supports the Buy Fresh, Buy Local programs.* Consumer demand for fresh, source verified, direct from the farm food is the fastest growing segment of the food business. Consumers want to know where the food they feed their families comes from. Moreover, they are willing to pay for it. Urban Farmers Markets and direct selling by farmers to consumers, retailers and restaurants are the direct results of the buy fresh, buy local movement sweeping the nation. *In fact, Farmers Union owns and operates two restaurants in Washington, D.C., that use food items directly supplied by American farmers and ranchers.*
11. Remind your students that gardening is a summer activity, especially as it relates to the school year in the Midwest. *School gardens are springing up in areas where the weather allows it, and some schools have found ways to have small indoor gardens to teach students about growing their own groceries.* Two things have happened recently to connect school programs to gardening.
12. The first is the United States Department of Agriculture and President Obama want to improve the nutritional standards for meals served at school lunch programs. Nearly 32 million kids participate in school meal programs every school day. Many children consume as many as half their daily calories at school. *The proposed changes to school meal standards would add more fruits, vegetables, whole grains, fat-free and low-fat milk to school meals.* Schools would also be required to limit the levels of saturated fat, sodium, calories, and trans fats in meals. *There will be an emphasis placed on using local, domestically-produced foods.*
13. The second action to raise awareness of fresh food is the Farm to School program that

connects schools and local farms to serve healthy meals in school cafeterias, improve student nutrition, and support local and regional farmers. Since each Farm to School program is shaped by its unique community needs, the National Farm to School Network does not impose a list of practices or product requirements. Farm to School ([farmtoschool.org](http://farmtoschool.org)) is a comprehensive program that extends beyond farm fresh salad bars and local foods in the cafeteria to include waste management programs like composting, and education opportunities such as planting school gardens, cooking demonstrations and farm tours. The program is aimed at teaching students about the path from farm to fork, and instilling healthy eating habits that can last a lifetime. The Farm to School approach helps children understand where their food comes from and how their food choices impact their bodies, the environment and their communities at large.

14. *Farmers Union encourages its members to be grassroots activists. We encourage you take the lead in making changes in your lives that are good for everyone in your community. If you do not have a farm-to-market program in your school, do you want to start one? If you do not have a garden at home, do you want to start one? If you have not shopped at a Farmers' Market before, do you want to find one and stop by?*
15. Pass out the “Am I a Food Activist” worksheet. Ask your students to fill out this sheet and then write in what they think they have to do to achieve their goals. Give them time to fill in the questionnaire and provide their own answers. Offer to be a resource should they have questions, but do not provide easy answers: challenge them to come up with the actions plans and solutions for their own desires.
16. Gather the students in a circle and review the worksheets they filled out. You will facilitate this discussion. Encourage the students to talk at length about their feelings on food, on school lunch programs, on gardening in general, and knowing where their food comes from. Expect these students to have strong beliefs on organic foods as well. End the discussion by saying, *You can take the actions to grow your own groceries, or to shop for food items that are local, fresh, and often have more taste and nutritional value than other options.*

**Sources:** American Community Gardening Association, USDA, The White House, Farm to School, National Farmers Union

# Am I a Fresh Food Activist?

I want to know where my food comes from.

*If I want this, I need to* \_\_\_\_\_

I want to grow my own food at home.

*If I want this, I need to* \_\_\_\_\_

I want to start or join a community garden.

*If I want this, I need to* \_\_\_\_\_

I want to encourage a Farm to School program.

*If I want this, I need to* \_\_\_\_\_

I want to my stores to sell locally-grown foods.

*If I want this, I need to* \_\_\_\_\_

I believe organic foods have value in my diet.

*If I want this, I need to* \_\_\_\_\_

# Lesson 3: A Safe, Secure, and Super Bargain

**Unit Objective:** Students will learn the U.S. has a safe, abundant, and affordable food supply.

**Grades:** 9-12

**Length:** 1 hour: 15 minutes for the opening activities and lecture, 20 minutes for a guest speaker to talk about cost of production and hours involved, 15 minutes for additional lecture and activities, 10 minutes for the concluding discussion.

**Materials Needed:** A whiteboard or flipchart, pens and paper, a 1-pound loaf of bread, an 18-ounce box of dry breakfast cereal (Cheerios will work well), an 11-ounce bag of potato chips, enough “Farmer’s Share of the Retail Food Dollar” and “What Do You Think” worksheet handouts for your students, a farmer to be a guest speaker.

**Preparation Needed:** Invite Farmers Union member who can provide an entertaining yet sobering sense of the cost of production of crops or livestock and also the 24/7 year-round job of farming. Go to [nfu.org](http://nfu.org) and download the latest “Farmer’s Share of the Retail Food Dollar” poster and make enough copies for all your students.

## **Background:**

Students this age are consumers: they have money to spend. Seldom do they spend it on groceries, although they may spend their money on fast food meals and snacks. They may not know how good they have it when it comes to food security and affordability in this country.

## **Teaching Strategy:**

1. Hold up a box of breakfast cereal and tell your students this item sells for, on average, \$3.79. Ask them to guess how much of that money goes back to the farmer who grew the oats that were needed to make the cereal. Write down their guesses on a whiteboard or flipchart. *On average, the farmer received just seven cents for the oats that went into this box of Cheerios. Seven cents. The box costs more than seven cents to make. Where did the rest of the money go? Let them guess and write down their answers. In the food supply chain, everyone gets a share of the retail food dollar spent by consumers. This kind of economic activity generates a lot of jobs for Americans. To begin with, the farmer gets paid for his crop. A company will get paid to store or sell the grain. The cereal company makes a profit processing and packaging the cereal. The grocery store that sells the cereal has to mark it up to pay its employees. Advertising companies are paid to make you want to buy the product. Transportation companies are paid to move the crop from the farms to the processing plant, and then to the grocery stores. When you buy a box of cereal, a lot of people make money. But the real reason for buying the cereal is to eat it. And the food inside that was grown by a farmer represents just seven cents. Think about that.*
2. Hold up a loaf of bread. Tell your students the bread sells for \$3.79. Of that amount, how much money is returned to the farmer for the wheat that was needed to make the bread? Let them guess and write down their answers. The farmer gets 15 cents for the wheat that went into this bread.
3. Let’s try one more. Hold up the bag of potato chips. *This bag of potato chips sells for \$3.99. What do you think the farmer’s share of this product is?* Write down the guesses. Actually, it is eight cents. That’s not a lot, is it? Farmers grow food, but most of the money made in the food industry goes to the companies that process and package food. We sometimes call these the middlemen.
4. *On average, farmers get 20 cents of each dollar consumers spend on food. That amount has been shrinking for decades. Just 50 years ago, farmers received 50 cents of every food dollar.* Because we can look at the entire food supply chain, we know farmers are being squeezed out of income for growing and raising the food we eat. More of the money is going to the businesses in the middle of the food chain, and less to the farmers and grocery stores. Food is big business, and many of the Fortune 500 companies are food companies. *If I mention Kraft Foods, you may think of*

*Macaroni and Cheese. But Kraft Foods has more than 50 different brands ranging from A1 Steak Sauce and Oreos to Oscar Mayer meats and Wheat Thins. Kraft Foods has 97,000 employees.*

5. *Does that mean food is expensive? It can be. The more processed food is, or the more popular the name brand, the more expensive it becomes per serving. It can also be less healthy per serving. But consider this: in the United States, consumers spend less than 10 percent of their disposable income on food, and almost half of that amount is spent on food at restaurants. We have the least expensive food of any nation on the planet. And we have the most selection of food items anywhere in the world. We really have it good. In Japan, the cost of food is nearly double that in the U.S. based on the percentage of disposable income. In India, consumers spend over half of their income just to feed themselves.*
6. *Farmers have struggled for years to make enough money growing food for America. Today we have a guest speaker who will talk to you about how difficult it is – and how rewarding it can be – to be a farmer.* Introduce your guest speaker and lead the applause. Be sure to pay attention to him or her during the presentation.
7. Following the presentation, encourage your students to ask questions. If they do not, at least ask a couple yourself, such as, *How often do you lose crops to weather, insects, disease or other things that you cannot control?* and *What is the thing you like best about being a farmer?* Thank your speaker and resume your lesson.
8. *Farmers do not get as much money as you might think for growing and raising our food. They do not get much credit for being the first step in the food supply chain that provides millions of jobs for Americans. Farmers not only provide safe and affordable food for us, they provide **food security**. We can feed ourselves as a nation. We do not have to import food. Why is this important?* Wait for any answers. Raise this question. *Right now, we import about 65 percent of the oil we need. It comes from other countries. Why has that caused problems for America?* The discussion points to raise include: what happens if other countries have problems with oil production, what happens if hurricanes or terrorists or other events occur to disrupt the transportation of oil, what happens if another country such as China is willing to pay more for oil than us? *Now imagine if we had to import our food. Could we be at risk of running out or paying more because another nation controls the supply?*
9. *Here is one more thing to think about. Because we spend so little on food compared to any other nation, we have more money to spend on consumer goods including computers, clothes, cars, DVDs, movies, and much, much more.* Have each student come up to the whiteboard or flipchart and write down three things they are happy to have because their parents have more disposable income to spend on things other than food. Answers may range from Wii games to vacations. Assist each student with ideas should they get stuck.
10. Hand out the “Farmer’s Share of the Retail Food Dollar” to your students. *I want you to take a few minutes to look at this sheet. When you are done, we are going to see if we can find the answers to the questions on the accompanying worksheet.*
11. Circle the students for the final discussion. Ask them to give their answers to the questions you posed. *One reason farmers are paid so little is that they have become so good at production. They produce more food than we need so we never have shortages. If we had to import our food, we would have far fewer choices determined by the countries that would sell us food. Transportation costs alone would probably make imported food more expensive, and it might not be as fresh.*
12. Conclude the lesson by saying Americans really do have the safest, most secure, and affordable supply of food of any nation in the world. *For that you can thank a farmer.*

**Sources:** Department of Energy, Economic Research Service, National Farmers Union

# Farmer's Share of Retail Food Dollar

Did you know that farmers and ranchers receive only 20 cents of every food dollar that consumers spend on food at home and away from home?

According to USDA, off farm costs including marketing, processing, wholesaling, distribution and retailing account for 80 cents of every food dollar spent in the United States.

**Bacon**  
1 Pound



Retail: \$3.99  
Farmer: \$0.52

**Top Sirloin Steak**  
1 Pound



Retail: \$4.49  
Farmer: \$0.98

**Bread**  
1 Pound



Retail: \$3.79  
Farmer: \$0.15

**Fresh Carrots**  
3 Pounds



Retail: \$2.99  
Farmer: \$0.89

**Beer**  
6-Pack Cans



Retail: \$5.99  
Farmer: \$0.09

**Cereal**  
18 Ounce Box



Retail: \$3.79  
Farmer: \$0.07

**Cheddar Cheese**  
1 Pound



Retail: \$4.69  
Farmer: \$1.47

**Eggs**  
1 Dozen



Retail: \$2.69  
Farmer: \$1.08

**Flour**  
5 Pounds



Retail: \$2.59  
Farmer: \$0.73

**Boneless Ham**  
Price per Pound



Retail: \$3.99  
Farmer: \$0.52

**Lettuce**  
1 Head (2 Pounds)



Retail: \$2.19  
Farmer: \$0.40

**Milk**  
1 Gallon, Fat Free



Retail: \$4.39  
Farmer: \$1.34

**Potato Chips**  
Lays Classic, 11oz



Retail: \$3.99  
Farmer: \$0.08\*

**Fresh Potatoes**  
Russet, 10 Pounds



Retail: \$4.39  
Farmer: \$0.52\*

**Soda**  
Two Liter Bottle



Retail: \$1.09  
Farmer: \$0.08

Farmer's share derived from USDA, NASS "Agricultural Prices," 2010.

Retail based on Safeway (SE) brand except where noted.

\*Reflects November 2010 prices.



Dec. 30, 2010

## ***What Do You Think?***

1. Why do farmers get so little for their crops and livestock?
2. Would we have as many product choices if we had to import all of our food?
3. U.S. food travels more than 1,500 miles from farm to customer. Why does this occur? Is it good or bad?
4. Would our food be more expensive if we had to import it all?
5. We import most of our oil. What problems has that caused the U.S.?
6. Who really benefits from farm policy that provides cheap food?
7. Do fewer and larger food companies leave you reassured or alarmed? Why or why not?
8. Why do you think the “know your food, know your farmer” trend is so popular?

# Lesson 4: You Are What You Eat

**Unit Objective:** Students will face their unhealthy eating habits and embrace healthier choices for life.

**Grades:** 9-12

**Length:** 1 hour: 10 minutes for introduction and serving size examples, 10 minutes for the four bad habits, 15 minutes for the guest speaker, 10 minutes for the dip and dressing activity, and 15 minutes for the “Good Food Commercials” and concluding comments.

**Materials Needed:** Whiteboard or flipchart and markers, a bowl of sugar and a teaspoon, a bag of potato chips, a bag of miniature candy bars (Three Musketeers thumbnail-sized bars will work), a nutritionist from a local hospital, Extension Service, or other qualified source as a guest speaker, unopened bottles of low fat and regular salad dressing, potato chip dip, salsa, ketchup, barbeque sauce and sweet and sour sauce, measuring spoons and small, clear disposable cups.

**Preparation Needed:** Secure a speaker and call one day in advance to verify he or she will attend.

## **Background:**

According to government data, almost 32 percent of children 6 to 19 years of age are overweight or obese; the number of obese children in this age range has tripled in the last few decades. These children are more likely to have risk factors associated with chronic diseases such as high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and Type 2 diabetes. This lesson will raise awareness of poor choices some people make when it comes to junk food, fast food, and serving sizes.

## **Teaching Strategy:**

1. Open the lesson with the background information above. Children and adults are adding more and more weight every year. Diets are incredibly popular, yet they are losing ground to poor eating habits. Americans have several problems when it comes to our weight: most of us don't exercise enough, eat too much, and eat the wrong kinds of foods.
2. Hold up the bowl of sugar and the teaspoon. *How many of you are ready to eat 33 teaspoons of sugar right now?* Expect a few smiles or laughs. *It isn't funny. If you drink two and one-half 20 ounce soda pops every day, you are getting the equivalent of 33 teaspoons of sugar. And for adults who get that much sugar daily, 77 percent will have a greater risk of high blood pressure. Too much sugar in any form can lead to weight gain, diabetes, and more visits to the dentist.* Pause to let them consider those facts.
2. *Do you like potato chips? What is a serving of potato chips? For many of us, it is the entire bag whatever size it is. Yet if you look at the nutritional label on the side, you will find it is about “19 chips” and that doesn't tell whether those are small or large chips. We compound the problem if we are loading up those chips with dip.*
3. *Hold up the bag of miniature candy bars. Is this a single serving? No? How many little candy bars equals a single serving? About seven. Yet when a bag like this is open, do we keep returning to it until it is empty? Watch for nodding heads. Junk food is packed with fats, sugars, and salts. They have few nutrients. And sometimes we don't count them because they are small like the candy bars, light like the potato chips, or like soda pop don't seem to be a food at all.*
4. *When most people grew their own food, or bought food from farms, they had a simpler and more natural source of nutrient-rich foods that provided carbohydrates, vitamins, minerals, and other things they needed to be healthy. They did not have junk food and they were not couch potatoes. They worked hard (what we would call exercise) and they ate unprocessed food in moderation (what we would call a sensible diet).* Have students brainstorm some of the worst eating habits they might have. Then share the four most common poor eating habits among teens, according to the American Dietetic Association.
5. *Skipping breakfast. According to the American Dietetic Association, more than half of male teens and more than two-thirds of female teens do not eat breakfast on a regular basis. Breakfast is the most important meal of the day. Eating breakfast gets a person's metabolism up and*  
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*running early in the day. This can help with weight control, mood, and academic performance. Breakfast does not mean a can of Mountain Dew and a donut. It means a glass of orange juice or milk, a granola bar or peanut butter toast. Use common sense when choosing your breakfast, and make breakfast a habit.*

6. *The next downfall is eating too many high-fat and high-calorie snack foods. The United States Department of Agriculture has a food pyramid that shows the number of servings you need from the five food groups: grains, vegetables, fruits, milk, and meat and proteins. Nutritionists will urge you to get Five A Day, meaning five servings of fruits and vegetables. That does not mean potato chips and orange pop. Loading up on snack foods high in sugars, salts, and fats does not show up as a recommendation. Apples, bananas, oranges, tomatoes, garden salads, and similar choices are nutrient-rich foods that are good for you, and just good to eat if you think about it.*
7. *Another bad habit is making fast food a significant part of your life. Because we have busy lives, and because our social lives can revolve around food, it is easier than ever to meet at McDonald's or order in pizza while studying for tests or watching movies. Some fast food places are trying to offer healthier choices, and a few, such as Subway, have made healthier eating a part of their marketing campaigns. You can limit the impact of fast food in three ways. One, simply eat less fast food by reducing the number of times weekly you order. Two, when do you eat fast food, do not supersize the fries, get the three-patty burger, or order the 44-ounce drink. Three, when you do eat fast food, take time to consider the healthier choices on the menu. Most restaurants have nutritional guides to let you know such things as fat grams, calories, and what is considered heart healthy. Finally, learn to make your own sandwiches and pack fruits and veggies as snacks as a healthy option to fast food.*
8. *Last but not least, significantly cut down on the soda pop. A study looking at American youths aged 6-17 found an increase in soft drink consumption from 37% in 1978 to 56% in 1998. Fruit juice and water are terrific choices. Or try fruit flavored carbonated water instead of soda pop. Many people do not consider pop as a source of calories because they are liquid like water. The sugar and caffeine some drinks contain are much more than a person needs.*
9. *Today we have a nutritionist to speak to us about healthy -- and unhealthy -- eating. Please welcome NAME. Be sure to lead the applause. After your guest speaker is done, allow your students to ask questions.*
10. *I want you to gather into groups of two or three and determine what the actual serving size is for the dressings or dips I give you. Use the measuring tools and small cups to measure out a single serving, and then write down how many calories, how much sodium, how much sugar (which includes high fructose corn syrup), and how many fat grams are in each serving. Provide your students with one or more regular and low-fat salad dressings, potato chip dip, salsa, barbecue, ketchup, sweet and sour dips, and any other selections of your own choosing. Give the students time to read the labels and measure out the serving sizes into the clear containers. Have each group of students report on their findings and show the actual serving size. Talk about how these items are seldom consciously counted as calories in our daily diets. Just as with a bag of potato chips, we may think of a container of chip dip as a single serving, or think of the serving sizes as how much dip you get on each chip or how much sauce you can get on each chicken nugget.*
11. *As an option, provide healthy food items to sample the dips such as baby carrots, baked bread sticks, and cucumber slices.*
12. *Close out this session by asking your students to gather in groups of three and design a poster or "Good Eating Commercial" that promotes a healthy food tip based on what they learned during the session. Pass out poster board and markers. Give them time to develop a theme, prepare their poster or commercial, and then invite them to stand in front of the class, show their poster, and explain why they believe their theme is important for people to consider.*

**Sources:** Parenting Teens, Lance Armstrong Foundation, USDA, Department of Health and Human Services

# Optional Activities

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*The following activities could be incorporated at the end of any lesson to fill extra time.*

1. If you have phones with video recorders, encourage the students to make “Thank a Farmer” clips and post them to YouTube.com. Examples could include, “Did you know Americans spend the least amount of their disposable income on food. You can thank a farmer for that.” Or, “Did you know a farmer gets just seven cents for the oats used to make a box of Cheerios? You can thank a farmer for growing affordable food.”
2. Hand out a one-inch by ten-inch strip of paper to each student. Have them write the following words using both sides of the paper: “five vegetables and fruits a day; less processed foods; fewer fats, salts, and sugars; balance among the five food groups; water rather than soda pop; daily exercise; moderation in servings. Then have them twist one end 180 degrees and tape it to the other end. This is called a Mobius Loop. The words will appear to keep going forever. Tell your students that a healthy lifestyle requires making many good decisions that complement each other.
3. Have students prepare and sign thank you cards for the guest speakers. Make sure the cards are sent in a timely manner.
4. In advance of the last session, pick up nutritional information cards from local fast food restaurants and pass them out to your students. Encourage them to look at their favorite items to discover how many calories and fat grams each one contains.
5. Have your students participate in an Iron Chef style cook-off. Provide them with fruit, veggies, and a few common kitchen ingredients and utensils. Then give them time to see what creative dishes they can make with fresh foods. Allow the students and youth leaders to vote following a taste test.
6. Teach some Farmers Union songs.