



## Oranges: Buying Local Helps Reduce Pollution And Protect Your Health

*The transportation-related pollution from importing Australian navel oranges includes 44 times more particulate matter and 6 times more global warming impact than transporting oranges grown in California.*

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What are the hidden costs of the food you eat? The distance your food travels from the field to your plate (known as food miles) can substantially add to global warming *and* can increase many health risks such as asthma, cancer, and premature deaths. Let's compare locally grown oranges with navel oranges traveling 8,600 miles by cargo ship from Australia to California.

### **Why does it matter how far your oranges have traveled?**

How your food is grown, stored, transported, processed and cooked can all influence how it impacts climate change and the environment. Transportation-related impacts are particularly important for imported foods, like oranges. After apples and bananas, oranges are the third most popular fresh fruit in the United States. Americans eat an average of 12 pounds of oranges each year. Although only about 2 percent of oranges are imported, that amounts to about 66 million pounds of navel oranges imported into California alone per year—almost all of them from Australia, which means they make a 8,600-mile journey in cargo ships and trucks. Most of the oranges enter California through the Port of San Diego, where they then make their way to supermarkets across the state and beyond.

This long journey has major costs both to the environment and to people's health. At the same time, California exports 16 times as many oranges as are imported each year.

### **Locally grown versus imported navel oranges in California**

The transportation associated with importing oranges from Australia into California causes the release of about 5.4 million pounds of pollutants each year. This includes roughly 5.2 million pounds (2,600 tons) of global warming pollution annually—the equivalent amount of carbon dioxide emitted from 460 vehicles. Another 160,000 pounds of soot and smog-forming pollutants are released into the air—the amount of pollution from 18,000 vehicles. This pollution is responsible for asthma attacks and for hundreds of missed school days due to respiratory disease in California children.

*In 2005, the transport of oranges from Australia to California using trucks and cargo ships resulted in the release of an estimated 5.4 million pounds of pollutants that contributed to global warming and caused unhealthy air quality in California.*

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### Five things you can do to help reduce your food miles

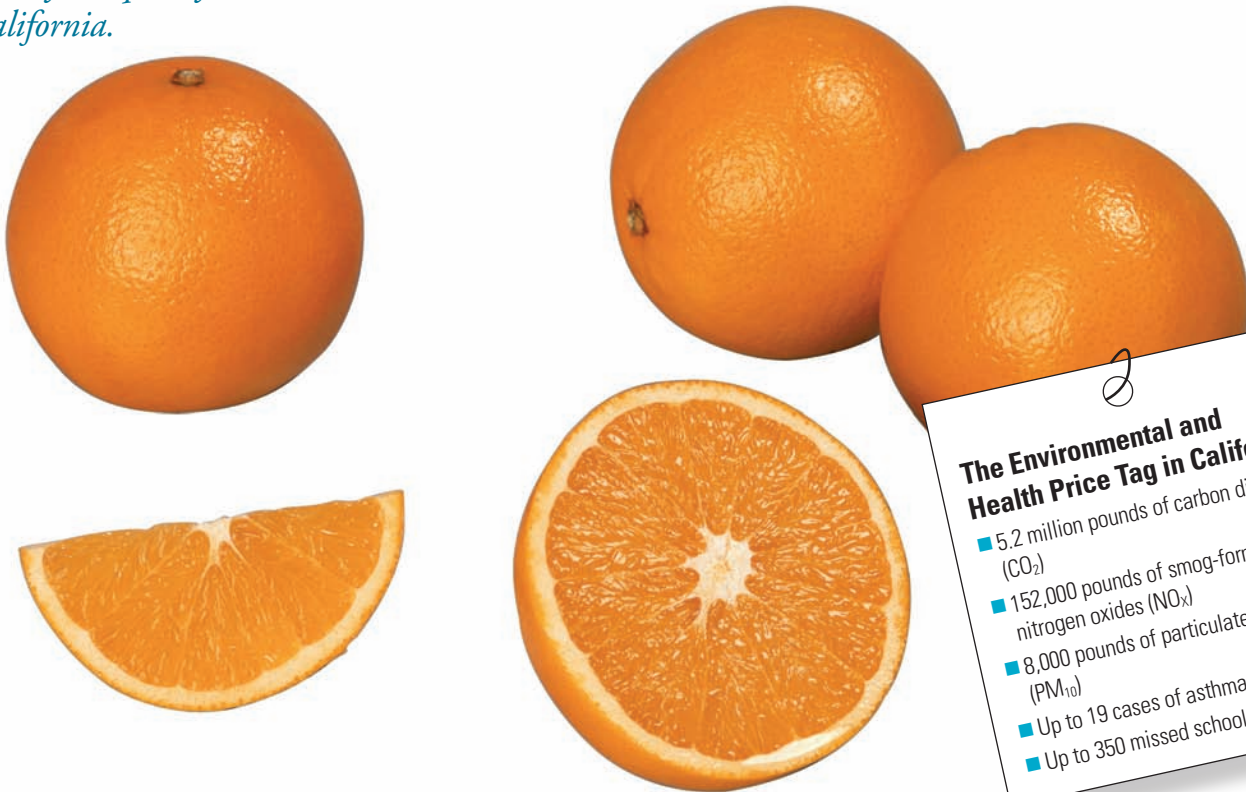
Choosing to buy local food can reduce global warming pollution, improve air quality, and protect your health. Here are five steps you can take as an individual to protect your environment and your health—without sacrificing the taste and quality of your food:

1. Buy different varieties of oranges. Oranges are grown year round in California.
2. Buy produce from your local farmers' market. You might also be able to sign up for deliveries of food baskets from local farms, so check for community supported agriculture (CSA) programs in your area. For more information on buying local visit <http://guide.buylocalca.org/> or [www.localharvest.org](http://www.localharvest.org).

3. Ask the grocery stores, restaurants, and work cafeterias that you frequent to carry local foods and include country of origin on food labels. You can find a sample letter to send to them at [www.nrdc.org/foodmiles](http://www.nrdc.org/foodmiles).

4. Encourage businesses and government bodies in your area to create farmers' markets and to adopt procurement policies that favor locally grown, organic, and sustainably harvested foods.

5. Tell the USDA to implement the provision of the 2002 Farm Bill requiring food labels on produce items to include the country of origin. You can find a sample letter to send them at [www.nrdc.org/foodmiles](http://www.nrdc.org/foodmiles).



### The Environmental and Health Price Tag in California

- 5.2 million pounds of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>)
- 152,000 pounds of smog-forming nitrogen oxides (NO<sub>x</sub>)
- 8,000 pounds of particulate matter (PM<sub>10</sub>)
- Up to 19 cases of asthma per year
- Up to 350 missed school days per year