

Do My Food Choices Matter? Worksheet

We saw in the reading that the living things in the ecosystems that produce our food don't contribute to a net change in the amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. They simply recycle the carbon moving it back and forth between inorganic carbon in the form CO₂ in the atmosphere and organic carbon in the food chain. However, we also saw that people move carbon into the atmosphere when they use fossil fuels to power machines and vehicles to develop manage and harvest the ecosystems and transport and process the food. Carbon footprints are measures of this net movement of carbon into the atmosphere when a product is made and used. So, one way to look at the environmental impact of your burrito choices is to compare the carbon footprints of each type of burrito.

Use the online carbon footprint calculator - <http://www.eatlowcarbon.org/food-scores/> to determine the carbon footprint of each type of burrito. Compare these footprints to some of your favorite foods.

Carbon footprints of different foods

Beef burrito grams of CO₂ equivalents
 Chicken burrito grams of CO₂ equivalents
 Bean burrito grams of CO₂ equivalents

Grams of CO₂ equivalents – the amount of carbon dioxide emitted during the production of each food. If other greenhouses gases are produced, they are tabulated as the amount of CO₂ that would produce the same amount of warming.

Your choice of other food:

Food	Carbon footprint (grams of CO ₂ equivalents)

Patterns

How would you characterize foods that tend to have small carbon footprints?

Large carbon footprints?

How would you explain these differences?

Based on the carbon footprints that you found, how many bean cheese burritos have the same carbon footprint as one beef cheese burrito?

Which of your favorite foods has a large carbon footprint? Why do you think this is?

Which of your favorite foods has a small carbon footprint? Why do you think this is?