

SIMPLE LIFESTYLE

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GOING (ORGANIC) BANANAS

One-third of the world's exported bananas come to the US, where they are the most-consumed fruit. Most come from Costa Rica, Ecuador, Columbia, and Guatemala (in that order). Bananas for export are among the most pesticide-intensive crops in the world. They are grown on large plantations and require expensive inputs, and thus are primarily grown by large landowners or multinational companies. Historically, the United Fruit Company (now Chiquita) was powerful enough to help topple Latin American governments bent on land reform (and played a catalyst role in the Guatemalan civil war/genocide). More recently in Columbia, they have paid protection money to rebels, hired para-military thugs to intimidate workers attempting to form unions, and been accused of funding right-wing death squads. From personal experience in Costa Rica, the banana plantations are biological deserts, empty of birds but full of chemicals that the locals fear. There, only the poor Nicaraguan immigrants work the plantations. Runoff from plantations regularly results in fish kills in rivers. This is one food item where going organic makes a huge difference. There are organic options and many stores regularly carry them.

MUTUAL FUNDS

Don't want to invest in Halliburton, Shell, or the military? CO2 emissions? Labor law violators? Tobacco? There are now so many Social Responsible Investing (SRI) mutual funds that you can almost certainly find some good choices. www.socialfunds.com has all the information. At <http://www.socialfunds.com/funds/chart.cgi?sfChartId=Social+Issues>, you can even sort a long list of mutual funds according to the issues you are most concerned about.

HOW MUCH OIL IS IN YOUR FOOD?

Growing food for US consumers accounts for 10% of the energy used in this country (over 100 billion gallons of oil). Trucking it all around the nation brings the total to 17%. Here are some ways to cut down on the energy demand of your diet:

- eat locally and eat seasonally; look for foods that have travelled relatively few "food miles" (which should be easy for us Californians)(we belong to a local farm that gives us a box of fruits and veggies each week)
- eat organic; 1/3 of the energy use in crops is associated with fertilizer
- eat whole foods; processing accounts for 16% of the energy used for food; stick to the perimeter of your supermarket, focusing on fruits, vegetables, dairy, and meat (but see next tip).
- consider pasture-raised meats; feedlot animals are fed corn, which requires lots of fertilizer and pesticides; some brands (e.g. Coleman Beef from the Food Co-op) are committed to ecologically-sensitive grazing (as free range cattle are notorious for destroying habitat throughout the West).
- avoid bottled water which is shipped long distances, sometimes from Europe or Asia! Use tap water with a filter.

SOURCE: SF Chronicle, reprinted in Davis Enterprise on Apr 23, 2007.

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Check out <http://thegreenguide.com/> for articles on a range of topics, and even test your "eco-IQ".

MORE IDEAS

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