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Lesson 2: Home Grown? Trends in Home Production

Objective: Students will investigate and discuss the implications of historical changes home food production.

Materials

- Internet access
- [USDA's Food Grown at Home Table](#)

Standards Addressed: [click here](#)

Background

See [Harvest of Freedom: the History of Kitchen Gardens in America](#) from the Mann Library at Cornell University

Laying the Groundwork

Use the following questions to spark discussion about our sources of food:

- Where does your food come from?
- Where do grocery stores get their food?
- What would you do if you went to the grocery store and all the shelves were empty?
- How many of you have a garden at home?
- What do you grow in the garden and how much do you harvest?



Exploration

1. Explore [Harvest of Freedom: the History of Kitchen Gardens in America](#) with your students. Talk about the historical importance kitchen gardens.
2. Give each student a copy of the Food Grown at Home table and give them a few minutes to study the data.
3. Begin a discussion of students' observations about the data. They should notice that the amount of money spent on food has increased greatly since 1869. Ask them why they think it has increased (possible answers: inflation, increase in population/demand).
4. Ask them to look at the differences between growth of sales from food stores and value of home production. Ask the class, *Is looking at the actual dollars the best way to compare the changes over time? Are there other ways to compare?* One option is to calculate the percentages of the grand total represented by food sales and home production and *then* compare. They will find:

In 1869	In 2005
Food Sales: 65%	Food Sales: 98.7%
Home Food Production: 35%	Home Food Production: 1.3%

More advanced students may want to discuss inflation and calculate adjustments. [Click here](#) for more information and calculators.

5. Based on the Food Grown at Home table, ask students to predict future trends and their consequences.

Making Connections

November 2006 Kids Garden News

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about this newsletter or your membership. Please reply to: [NGA editor](#).

Questions for discussion:

1. How has home food production changed over time?
2. How much of the food that you eat at home, in restaurants, and at school is grown locally?
3. Should we be concerned about the fact that most of our food is not grown locally?
4. Discuss the following facts from [Kitchen Gardeners International](#): The average plate of food in our country travels 1500 miles from field to table; feeding the average American requires 400 gallons of oil per person per year. Is this a sustainable way to live? What would happen if we ran out of oil? What will happen as the population grows?
5. Debate this statement: The sovereignty of our nation depends on our ability to produce food.

Branching Out

- Plan a field trip to a local grocery store. Ask staff about the origins of the food they sell and the path it takes to get to their store. As a follow up after the trip, ask students to research the origin of the ingredients of their favorite foods.
- Take a field trip to a farmers market and ask the same questions of the farmers as you have of the grocery produce manager. Have students discuss their findings.
- Ask each student to write a paper about the benefits and drawbacks of home food production.
- Hold a design competition. Ask students to create a design for a kitchen garden including a plant list of crop varieties recommended for your area. Have the class vote on designs or ask local landscape designers to judge them. If possible, plant the winning garden design at your school.