

The Global Food Crisis

Section 1 - Thinking local

Age group: 11-16

Aims:

- To set up a framework for study which begins with learners' own experiences.
- To assess the impact of rising food prices on local families and communities.
- To develop an understanding of the term 'food security.'
- To develop research, decision making and presentation skills.

What to do:

You will need:

- Large sheets of plain paper and art materials
- Time to carry out research with learners' families/communities
- Access to a computer (internet and excel) would be useful

Activity 1 – Food Research

Divide the class into small groups. Ask each group to suggest a list of 10 essential foods required by most families. Once the group has agreed their list of 10 foods ask each group to produce a poster presenting images of the foods they have selected together with the price *they believe* each item costs.

For homework ask the learners to plan a research task asking their families/members of their community:

- The cost of each item on their list (a price comparison web site may be useful for this).
- How the price of each item has changed over the last 12 months (recent data was published in September 2008 – see <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/business/7597703.stm>)
- General comments about recent changes in prices – e.g.: how fast or how much prices have changed, how people cope with these changes.

Learners should try to interview both women and men and draw conclusions about which members of their families/communities have the greatest responsibility for budgeting for food.

When the learners return to class ask them to produce a group presentation outlining their findings. Posters, pictures, statistics, drama or other methods that help to make an impression on the audience could support the presentations and make them interesting.

To conclude this task learners could brainstorm the five most important points about food prices raised by their work.

Activity 2 – Food Security

Ask learners to do an online search for the term ‘food security’ or build up a definition through discussion.

Then ask them to consider the questions on page 4 and 5. These refer to the homework set in Activity 1.

You may like to consider the following points with respect to questions 3 and 4 on page 5:

Q3. A list of possible strategies is posted at http://www.ncpad.org/nutrition/fact_sheet.php?sheet=634. Although it is published in the USA its recommendations apply in the UK too. Extension work could explore the extent to which these strategies are open to people in poor as well as rich countries.

Q4. The answer is almost certainly no, although other purchases may have to be forgone to pay for food. For example the average UK family has an income of approximately £600 per week. During 2008 this family weekly food shopping has risen in price from £60 to £70. Rising fuel prices have an additional impact on family incomes.

Groups or individual learners could present their findings and assessments of the problem to the class.

The whole group should record and summarise their overall assessment of the problem in a class brainstorm. This could include suggestions for solutions.

The price of essential foods

Look at the prices of the items on your list of essential foods.

Imagine the price of each item rises by:

1. 100% and
2. 200% in the next 18 months

(This is roughly what has happened to the price of wheat and rice in the last 18 months).

How much would each item then cost?

For example;

If a can of soft drink costs 50p today then in 18 months it would cost

1. £1-00
2. £1-50

You could calculate the projected price rises for each food item manually or on an excel spreadsheet.

Price rises and food security

Review the projected price rises you have calculated and assess their impact on the people living in your community. It would be useful to discuss your ideas with your family and your teacher before you write up your ideas for class.

1. What would be the impact of these price rises on your family's weekly budget?
2. What sorts of things would your family have to give up to cope with these price rises and on what basis would choices be made?
3. Are there any ways people could avoid some of the impact of these price rises, e.g.: by substituting cheaper foods?
4. Would your family's **food security** be threatened?
5. Why?
6. Are there any groups in society who are affected by the rising price of food more than others? Why is this? (Think about pensioners, the unemployed, the low paid – poor people spend a higher proportion of their incomes on food in both rich and poor countries.)