

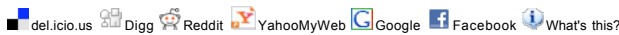
Search bar with 'search' button and 'Web Search powered by YAHOO! SEARCH' text.

Most Viewed

(From the last 12 hours)



- 1. [Santa Cruz Mountains fire map](#)
- 2. [Man arrested on suspicion of rape](#)
- 3. [Woman identified in Pacific Grove suicide](#)
- 4. [Police briefs: Two teens wounded in separate shootings](#)
- 5. [Letters: No Medal of Honor winner](#)



Food choices feeding future

Local firms take on sustainability

By RACHEL TOMPA
Herald Staff Writer

Article Last Updated: 05/18/2008 01:36:08 AM PDT

When meal time rolls around, hungry people tick through choices, such as what they feel like eating that day, what's available in the fridge or at the local store, and what would be easiest to prepare.

But there are other choices people face about what goes into their stomachs. Many want to know whether a particular fruit or vegetable has been sprayed with pesticides, how far food traveled to reach their table, or whether a piece of fish is fresh or frozen.

The answers to these questions, and other factors not immediately evident, determine the sustainability of food — that is, how much impact growing, catching or raising that apple, tuna steak or chicken drumstick has on the environment.

Getting creative|

Making sustainable choices can be difficult.

Sustainable food is likely to get more complicated in the near future. Growers and consumers will have to come up with increasingly more creative solutions to maintain eco-friendly practices.

Pressures such as climate change, population growth, increasing wealth — which goes hand in hand with increased meat consumption — and shifting crop land to biofuel production will limit the options for sustainable foods in the future, said Chris Field, director of the Carnegie Institution's department of global ecology at Stanford University.

"Climate change is basically a vise, squeezing down on the options we have for sustainable food systems," said Field, speaking about environmental

Advertisement

change and the future of food at the Monterey Bay Aquarium on Thursday.

Impact on agriculture|

Scientists have a hard time pinning down the precise long-term effects of global warming, but it is almost certain to have a negative impact on California's agriculture, Field said. Effects could range from

STRAIGHT TALK - STRAIGHT UP

Come share your story and help others with a disability

click & pay it forward

- Join Discussions
- Share a Blog
- Connect with Others

disaboom
live forward



temperatures too high to grow certain crops, such as cherries — already at the upper limit of their heat tolerance in many places in the state — to tighter constraints on water use, to invasions by different weeds as temperatures shift.

The difficulties of sustainable food don't end with crops. The typical American meat-rich diet is on the upswing around the world as economies grow in developing nations. Cattle use a large amount

of energy and land for grazing and for growing the grains to feed them. If the typical American diet becomes the typical global diet, that poses a big problem for sustainability, said Tom Tomich, environmental economist at the University of California-Davis.

The problems continue offshore. The seafood market is already feeling the pinch of overfishing. Warming oceans and increased CO2 levels in the water aren't good news for fisheries, said David Conover, marine scientist at State University of New York at Stony Brook.

Bigger picture view|

The Monterey Bay Aquarium distributes "seafood watch" cards that tell consumers whether a given seafood is sustainable. But it isn't enough to think about conservation and sustainability at the individual fish level, Conover said.

"We would really like to move the discussion of sustainability above the species level and up to the ecosystem level," Conover said.

It is too difficult to predict how sustainable fishing of blue fin tuna will be without considering what the tuna eats and its living environment. Conover would like to see consumer education that says fish from the Gulf of Mexico are not sustainable, while those caught in Alaskan waters are.

California leads the nation with system-based approach to conservation, Conover said. In 2007, the state Department of Fish and Game created protected areas along the Central Coast, sensitive coastal areas where recreational and commercial fishing are tightly regulated or not allowed. The department plans to establish more protected areas along the coast in the future.

Today, the future of sustainable foods looks grim, especially with the added pressures of skyrocketing food and fuel prices. But there are potential solutions to many of the problems, the scientists said.

Formulating strategies|

Field outlined three strategies farmers and consumers need to adopt to ensure the future of food production.

Farmers need to adapt to changing conditions as they arise and proactively, to anticipate temperature changes and droughts before they happen. Many fruit trees take years to develop, and if fruit growers want to stay in the business they need to start planting warm-weather varieties now to be ready in a hotter future.

"But adaptation only gets you so far, and once the climate change is beyond a certain amount, opportunities for adaptation become really limited," Field said.

Everyone needs to be more aggressive about reducing carbon emissions to

stem damage from global warming, Field said.

And finally, Americans need to let politicians know that global warming should be a top priority for the government.

Move toward sustainability|

Some in the food industry are already taking steps toward sustainability.

Bon Appetit Management Co., a café and catering company that specializes in local and sustainable food, launched a "low carbon diet" in 2007. The diet's goal is to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by relying on local and seasonal produce, decreasing beef consumption and reducing waste.

Fedele Bauccio, CEO of Bon Appetit, said consumer education is important to broadcast the sustainable message.

"We have done a horrible job so far communicating these issues to consumers," Bauccio said, commenting on how confusing some food labels in grocery stores can be, even to him.

Baucchio suggested that if people want to eat fish from oceans hundreds or thousands of miles away, maybe they can accept frozen fish that is trucked in, instead of fresh fish that is flown in and has a larger environmental impact. Eating local foods and reducing beef consumption will go a long way toward keeping Americans' eating habits sustainable, he said.

[RePrint](#) [Print](#) [Email](#) [Return to Top](#)

POST YOUR COMMENTS:

Type in your comments to post to the forum

Name (appears on your post)

Comments

Type the numbers you see in the image on the right:



Post Comment

Please note by clicking on "Post Comment" you acknowledge that you have read the [Terms of Service](#) and the comment you are posting is in compliance with such terms. **Be polite.** Inappropriate posts may be removed by the moderator. [Send us your feedback.](#)

<p>Refinance and Save \$1,000S \$150,000 Mortgage for \$483/month. Compare up to 4 free quotes. www.pickamortgage.com</p>	<p>Refinance \$300,000 for Only \$965/Month \$300,000 Mortgage for only \$965/month. Save \$1,000's - No obligation. www.HomeLoanHelpLine.com</p>	<p>Car Insurance Quotes Online Compare auto insurance quotes from top companies online. www.insurance.com</p>
-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------



[News](#) | [Business](#) | [Sports](#) | [Entertainment](#) | [Life & Times](#) | [Shop Local](#) | [Classifieds](#) | [Jobs](#) | [Cars](#) | [Homes](#) | [RSS](#)



[About MontereyHerald.com](#) | [Terms of Use & Privacy Statement](#) | [Copyright](#)