



ISSN Print: 2394-7500
ISSN Online: 2394-5869
Impact Factor: 8.4
IJAR 2021; 7(4): 168-170
www.allresearchjournal.com
Received: 13-02-2021
Accepted: 15-03-2021

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Eat local, think global: Need of the hour

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Abstract

Since ages we as Indians have relied on our local food systems for our food which is one of the basic necessities for human survival but with times our attitude towards local grown stuff became disheartening which finally led to various problems. Covid-19 pandemic proved to be an eye opener and the importance of eating local yet thinking global was crystal clear to us. We came to know the importance of our local supporting systems and also various challenges faced by them.

Benefits of eating local

There are innumerable benefits of eating local. To mention a few are :-

- Eating local helps local economies to prosper and flourish.
- Local food systems save valuable energy from being spent on transportation, refrigeration and packaging.
- Local food systems encourage the concept of farmers markets.
- Eating local and seasonal keeps us healthy.
- Development of local food economy helps to revitalize a community.

Challenges faced by local food systems

- Threats by transnational corporations.
- Structural challenges.
- Inadequate quality retail.
- Real estate space.

Conclusion: The Covid-19 pandemic proved to be an eye opener and taught all of us the importance of eating local yet thinking global as during lockdown local food systems acted as our only supporting systems. Hence it is the need of the hour to be self-reliant and be “Vocal for Local.”

Keywords: local, global, benefits, challenges, farmers’ market

Introduction

In an agricultural country like India eating locally produced food might not seem like a novel idea and most of us do not question where our food is coming from, instead we assume that it must have been sourced from our surrounding region, the reality though, is quite different.

The definition of “local” food varies considerably depending mainly on the geographical area. Usually it is the consumers or residents of a certain area who decide what “local” means to them. For people living in remote locations or in urbanised cities access to agricultural land is not easy and therefore they would have to include a large area in their definition of “local”. But generally, the area within a 50-100 miles radius is considered local or regional.

To think big, to think global, to think beyond your limitations, the body must be well nourished the mind must be calm – says Rujuta Diwekar. Its possible only if the food is richer in calorie to calorie or in in non layman terms high nutrient to calorie ratio.

Benefits of Eating Local

There are innumerable benefits of eating local. To mention a few are:-

- Local root systems work on the principle of removing the middlemen in getting the food from the farms to the consumers thus saving valuable energy on transportation refrigeration and packaging.
- Eating local not only helps local economies to prosper and flourish but also sustain the surrounding environment.
- What grows around the place we stay is equipped to safeguard us against all the environmental challenges that we face for example, food that grows around the coastal

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area is an iodine rich soil condition (kelp, the sea vegetable is a great source that helps to keep our thyroid healthy).

- Local food systems use several means for distribution of the produce and farmers markets play an important role in this. Farmers' markets is a concept that's big in the world's biggest and bestest city- New York. It is a vision for us towards thinking global. It is not a concept, it's actually a huge movement, just like the traditional bazaar that India has always had, The Wednesday bazaar or Sunday bazaar. Infact small towns and rural areas in India are still blessed with these types of bazaars. So a weekly bazaar is a fixed day when farmers in the locality come to a fixed place and sell their produce. Here the consumer gets the best of vegetables, fruits, grains, dry fruits and at reasonable prices and the seller gets the best price for their product as there is no middlemen involved. Also it's a great place to bond, socialize and gossip.
- Local food systems are a sure way to increase our access to environmentally friendly food and to support more ecologically sustainable agricultural practices: local food systems are as a whole more sustainable, both ecologically and socially.
- The development of local food economy helps to revitalize a community by making farmers and consumers economically viable, using ecologically sound production and distribution practices and enhancing social equity and democracy for all members of the community.
- When we shop at a farmers' market, most of the food for sale has been picked within the past day or even the same day. It also comes to us fresh from the field, at the peak of its ripeness and flavor.
- Farmers who sell their food locally can choose their crops based on taste, nutrition or how well they grow in the local environment. A 2007 article from the Harvard School Of Public Health notes that many fruits and vegetables, including tomatoes, peppers and peaches, contain more nutrients when they are allowed to ripen fully on the plant before picking - something that doesn't always happen with conventional market.
- Only on relying on a few big conventional markets can create a problem of nations food security. A natural disaster that disables just one farm could create food shortages across the entire country. Supporting local growers help spread out our food production, so a single disaster can't cripple our food system.
- Many local farms also use organic farming practices, even if they don't meet the standards for organic certification. Organic farms use less water and fewer harmful chemicals and they tend to have a lower carbon footprint than conventional farms.
- Eating local and what is in season helps bring the naval closer to the spine and lifts the butt up as well and thus keeping us healthy and in shape.

Need of the hour

We all are currently in the midst of a worldwide trial that has changed our life beyond recognition. It is a challenge on the global level - since the Coronavirus does not respect national boundaries. But it is just as much a challenge on the national level, where many of the policy decisions in response to the pandemic are made. We got confronted with

the true uncertainty of human existence and the true vulnerability of human life. It presented before us the true picture of our local civic associations which proved to be our support systems during lockdown.

Prime minister Mr. Narendra Modi addressed the nation through his monthly radio broadcast *Mann Ki Baat* on 27th December 2020 and said Indians must replace imported products, become "vocal for local". He said Indians must use domestically made products to replace foreign ones as their resolution for the New Year.

He said, "the global best must be manufactured in India. For this our entrepreneurs and startups must come forward Vocal For Local is resonating in every house today." Referring to the Coronavirus pandemic he stated, "India faced many challenges this year but came out triumphant because it was Atmanirbhar (self-reliant)."

Challenges faced by local food systems

- Local food systems are threatened by transnational corporations gaining monopoly control over different links of the food chain and the modernist development agenda that encourages jobs in sectors other than food production.
- Despite the structural challenges and bureaucratic bottlenecks that the Indian local market suffers from, global retailers have been queuing up to enter and establish their footprint in the market, as they are aware of its potential growth opportunities.
- The Indian market being largely underpenetrated offers significant opportunity for growth - due to factors such as expanding middle class, rising disposable incomes, and a growing appetite for international quality goods and services among Indian consumers.
- The Indian local markets, continue to face significant challenges to growth in the form of inadequate quality retail, real state space, restrictive legislation policies and infrastructure bottlenecks.

Conclusion

in order to boost up our local food systems we need to focus on the challenges faced by them. The challenges should be thought of and a plan of action should be prepared to face them and, in due course minimize them and finally remove them. Giving a start today will definitely lead up to a desirable result tomorrow. With innumerable benefits as duly mentioned the local food systems must become our supporting systems permanently. We should respect and value the goods available to us locally and feel pride in using them. Our changed attitude towards the locally grown stuff should be welcoming and our acceptance towards them should be loud and clear. We actually need to be Vocal for Local as emphasized by our respected Prime Minister.

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