Please read the following article. Then, answer the questions on a separate sheet of paper. Turn in your answers and the packet to the teacher.

Giving farmers their fair share.

An article from www.farmaid.com

When I dig into a baked potato, I'd like to make sure the farmer who grew it actually gets his fair share.

All the middlemen along the way between the farmer's field and my grocery store shelf take a little piece. By the end of it, when you spend $1 on food, less than 16 cents goes to the farmer share. (If you eat out at a restaurant, they get even less — about five cents of what you spend goes to farmers.)

The other 84+ cents from our food dollar goes to processing it (turning the milk into cheese, carrots into baby carrots, and chicken into breaded frozen chicken nuggets), marketing it, transporting it, profit for wholesalers, grocery stores, and more. It turns out, a lot of people rely on the farmer's hard work for their business to work — and we on the farmer for food.

Comparing Apples to Oranges

Depending on what you buy at the store, farmers get different amounts. Take this quiz to see if you can guess which food item results in farmers getting more of a food dollar:

1: A farmer gets a bigger share of your food dollar from which item?

○ Iceberg Lettuce ○ Ice Cream

2: A farmer gets a bigger share of your food dollar from which item?

○ Cheddar Cheese ○ Butter

3: A farmer gets a bigger share of your food dollar from which item?

○ Grapefruit ○ Grapes

4: A farmer gets a bigger share of your food dollar from which item?

○ Apples ○ Oranges

5: A farmer gets a bigger share of your food dollar from which item?

○ Beer ○ Soda

As you probably saw, it's not easy to predict where the money from your food dollar goes. Walking through the grocery store, how am I supposed to know that 38% of the price of strawberries goes to farmers, compared with 19% for pears? Am I not allowed to eat pears anymore? (Although, to be honest, trading strawberries for pears for the rest of my life would be a pretty easy decision to make — sorry pear farmers!)

What You Can Do to Help Family Farmers, Not Middlemen

I think it's a good goal to try to get more of my food dollars directly to the people growing it — farmers. There are a few ways I do that:

- **Buy at farmers markets, farm stands, and U-pick farms**
  When you buy food at farmers markets and farm stands, you're putting your money right into the hand of the person who grew it. In addition, supporting local and regional farmers means you're supporting an independent business that will keep more money in your community. If you buy even just a small portion of your food from farmers markets, where

the farm operation gets 100% of your money, you give a huge boost to directing your food dollar towards those growing your food.

- **Join a CSA (Community Supported Agriculture)**
  CSAs are programs that allow you to buy a "share" of the harvest in advance in order to receive weekly or monthly packages of seasonal vegetables, fruits and meat throughout the entire growing season. Farmers like CSAs because they're a consistent and predictable source of cash during the late winter and early spring months, right when they need to buy seeds and supplies to begin their growing season.
- **Buy less processed food**
  Looking at the food dollar numbers from USDA and these similar ones from the National Farmers Union, a couple trends pop out. Foods that are less processed tend to return more money to the farmer. So if you're looking for a snack, try a carrot, where 44% of the money goes to the farmer who grew it, instead of potato chips, where just 4.5% does. Another good example is the price of milk versus cheddar cheese. On its own, 46% of the price of milk goes to farmers (although that 46% still doesn't cover the cost to produce the milk — see this column on the ongoing dairy crisis to learn more), with 25% of the price of cheese doing the same. The people making those processed products are taking a cut, not to mention the packaging and marketing costs that go into them.

Further Reading

- Read our *Farmer Hero profile of Corky Jones*, who says there are three things farmers' need: "Price, price and price. Not from the government, not from taxation, but from those who purchase the products farmers grow."
- High farm prices are in the news, are farmers getting rich? Read this month's *Ask Farm Aid* column to find out.

Join the Conversation

- Were you surprised how little farmers get? Do you think you'll change your buying habits to ensure farmers get a fair share of your food dollar?
- Buying less processed food means cooking more whole foods! Join Farm Aid's online community, HOMEGROWN.org, to find recipes and meal-planning tips.

Questions for Reflection:

1. **After reading the article, try to answer the five quiz questions on page one. List the numbers and your answers on your assignment paper.**
2. **Why would a farmer receive more money per food dollar for lettuce than ice cream?**
3. **Where does 84% of each "food dollar" go?**
4. **List three ways the article starts that we can ensure farmers receive more of each food dollar.**
5. **Explain how dairy farmers receive more money from milk than from cheddar cheese.**
6. **Do you agree with the article that farmer's should receive more of the food dollar? Why or why not? (For example: What about all of the processing and marketing jobs that could be lost if customers bought more directly from a farmer…don't those jobs help our economy?) Answer in a minimum of three sentences.**