Geographic origins of food

According to a study by researchers from Iowa State University, these are the most likely sources of the following foods arriving in Chicago.

Choose a cafeteria meal, and find one of the items in that meal on the list below. Using a map, measure the distance from Chicago to the center of each state of origin for the food items you choose.

Item	State of origin	Item	State of origin
apples	Washington	onions	California
bell peppers	California	melons	Missouri
blueberries	California	tomatoes	California
broccoli	California	strawberries	California
cabbage	Georgia	spinach	California
carrots	California	beans	Georgia
cauliflower	California	lettuce	California
cucumbers	California	potatoes	Idaho
grapes	Georgia	plums	California
mushrooms	Pennsylvania	pears	Washington

How far did your food travel (in kilometers)? _____

Now, multiply the distance in kilometers by 41 for each food item. If your food traveled by rail, this is the total grams of CO_2 emissions per 1000 kilograms of that food item (we use tons since no one would ship a single apple or tomato across the country)._____

Multiply the distance in kilometers by 207 for each food item. If your food traveled by road, this is the total grams of CO_2 emissions per 1000 kilograms of that food item._____

For comparison, 1000 kilograms of apples = about 6,500 apples.

If a food item from your cafeteria meal wasn't on the list, you can try looking for an item in the grocery store. Produce should have a label with the state - or the country - where it was grown.

In fact, some of the food we eat has specific climate requirements and therefore cannot be grown in the continental United States (pineapples, for example). Try to find out where your favorite food can be grown.

