



What You Need

Clipboards

Pencils

Ecosystem Hunt Worksheets

Food Ecosystem Hunt at the Farm

From Nourish Food + Community Curriculum

5th/6th grade

Students explore the farm to find evidence of ecosystem components and interactions involved in the creation of our food. They answer the essential questions: “In what ways do we depend on ecosystems for our food?” And “How does food production effect ecosystems?” Students will describe ecosystem components and find examples of each component on the farm.

30 min.

What to do

Show Nourish film during pre-visit, or prior to farm field trip. When students arrive at the farm review the Nourish film concepts, reminding them of the comparison between industrial corn production, and the heirloom tomato organic farmer.

Review the ecosystem vocabulary:

Producers: organisms that get energy by changing light into chemical energy; producing food.

Primary Consumers: Organisms that get energy and nutrients by eating parts of plants.

Secondary Consumers: Organisms that get energy and nutrients by eating parts of animals.

Decomposers: Organisms that get energy by breaking down dead organic material; which is then recycled into the soil as nutrients.

Energy: Sources of energy for living organisms

Soil: Substrate or source of nutrients for living organisms.

Organic Matter: Dead plant or animal material that is now leaf litter or soil particles.

Photosynthesis: Chlorophyll in green plants turning light energy into chemical energy to make food.

Cycle of Nutrients: Nutrients passing from one organism to another through eating, decomposition, or through plant roots.

Decomposition: Rotting or decaying once-living things, which release nutrients into the soil.

Web of Life: Energy and nutrients passing from one organism to another through the food chain or predator-prey relationships

Pollination: Transferring of pollen from one plant flower to another by organism or wind.

Explain that the way we farm impacts ecosystems; we can both support and degrade ecosystems with our farming choices. The “sustainable” farming movement seeks to use ecosystems as models for farms, and support natural systems.

Each student will get a clipboard, pencil, and Ecosystem Hunt worksheet—Make sure they put their names on the worksheet before starting. Define the boundaries for the hunt, and remind students of the guidelines for being at the farm—stay in boundaries, ask before you pick, watch where you step, respect the farm and each other. Students will spread out and document examples through writing, sketching, or photograph (if using cameras, make sure they are writing the photo number so they don’t get confused later). Ring the bell about 10 minutes before it is time to rotate. Allow students to share what they found—ask one person what they found for a given component, have the others raise their hand if they got the same thing. Did anyone get anything different? Then ask the next student the next component, and continue in the same way. Collect the worksheets and give them all to the teacher at the end of the day. Was there one that they could not find, or was most difficult to find? If so, what was it and why was it difficult to find?