

FACILITATOR GUIDE



PHOTOS BY CYNTHIA VAGNETTI

5 | HOW DID WE GET HERE? THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE “MODERN” FOOD SYSTEM

Summary

What are the origins of today’s agricultural system? In this lesson, learners map the geographic origins of common foods and evaluate how changes in food-related technologies impact their eating habits. Then, learners read short selections about historic points in agriculture and create a timeline of significant global “food events” such as Columbus’ voyage, the introduction of synthetic fertilizers, and the “Green Revolution.”

Guiding Questions

- How did today’s food system develop?
- What are the key historical events?
- How are these historical events related?
- What is technology? How has it developed in relation to agriculture?

Big Ideas: As a result of this sessions, learners will understand that:

- Technology related to food has changed over time, and that these technologies have impacted the overall food system.
- Key points in “food history” include the Agricultural Revolution, Columbus’ voyage, the Scientific Revolution, the “Green Revolution,” the development of synthetic nitrogen fertilizer, and the “Gene Revolution.”
- Each of these historic developments created changes in how food was produced and consumed. Each development was also driven by specific assumptions about the meaning of “progress.”

Sequence and timing

Activity	Overview	Minutes
1) Tomatoes Aren't Italian?	Learners will hypothesize the origins of different foods and reflect on the actual origin.	15
2) Can't Live Without It	Learners select a food-related technology they "can't live without" and imagine how their eating habits would be different if the technology didn't exist.	10
3) How Did We Get Here?	Learners read selections on events in food history, create a group timeline of key events, and discuss connections and implications.	45
4) Before the next session	Learners are asked to consider different sustainable food options available in their communities as a way to prepare for the final session.	5

Materials

- For learners, the Session 5 packet
- A global wall map
- Sticky notes
- Flipchart paper, markers and tape
- Accompanying slides for Session 5

Preparation

Post the wall map. Review the reading selections in Activity 3 and decide if you want to include all of them. It is best to include at least 5 selections spanning a broad time range. Selections are as follows:

- 1) The Agricultural Revolution
- 2) Columbian Exchange and Colonialism
- 3) The Scientific Revolution and the Emergence of the "Modern" Worldview
- 4) "Eating the Leftovers of World War II" (the development of synthetic nitrogen fertilizer)
- 5) The Green Revolution
- 6) 1970s: "Get big or get out."
- 7) The Gene Revolution

Procedure

Activity 1) Tomatoes Aren't Italian?

Overview: Learners will hypothesize the origins of different foods and reflect on the actual origin.

- Direct participants to the activity directions. As noted, participants will choose two foods from the list, write them on sticky notes, and attempt to identify the region of origin by placing the stickies on the global wall map.
- When all responses are up on the map, have participants turn the page to review correct responses.
- Have participants reflect on what was new or surprising using the reflection questions.

Activity 2) Can't Live Without It

Overview: Learners select a food-related technology they “can't live without” and imagine how their eating habits would be different if the technology didn't exist.

- Direct participants to the activity and review the definition of technology provided (any human-created invention, or a natural force humans can control (such as fire).
- Review the directions. As described, participants will choose several technologies, and assess the impacts on their eating habits and how their lives would be different if that item was never invented or discovered.
- Have participants reflect on what was new or surprising using the discussion questions provided in the learners' guide.
- Post some of the historic events that participants say led to the creation or invention of the technologies; this will set the stage for the next activity.

Activity 3) How Did We Get Here?

Overview: Learners will read selections on events in “food history,” create a group timeline of key events, and discuss connections and implications.

Directions:

- Direct participants to the activity and review all directions before beginning. As noted, there are seven reading selections that summarize significant events in “food history”:
 - 1) The Agricultural Revolution
 - 2) Columbian Exchange and Colonialism
 - 3) The Scientific Revolution and the Emergence of the “Modern” Worldview
 - 4) “Eating the Leftovers of World War II” (the development of synthetic nitrogen fertilizer)
 - 5) The Green Revolution
 - 6) 1970s: “Get big or get out.”
 - 7) The Gene Revolution

- As described in the learners' booklet, participants will work in a pair or small group and read one of the selections, and then summarize by writing down 3-5 key points on the flipchart paper; points should respond to these questions:
 - Summarize the key events in the reading: What is significant? What happened or changed in terms of technology?
 - How did this event change agriculture and the way people eat? (Consider how food was grown, transported, processed, and or sold/distributed.)
 - What are the costs and benefits of the changes described?
 - How are the changes still impacting us today?
- Give learners 10-15 minutes to complete their reading selection and compile their notes on the flipchart paper.
- Have participants present their information (one group at a time) and post it on the wall, resulting in a group timeline.
- After all selections have presented, lead a group discussion using the questions provided at the bottom of the directions page in the learner's booklet:
 - What was new or surprising?
 - How are the events in each selection connected?
 - In what ways have these events moved us towards or away from a sustainable food system as defined in Session 2 ("a food system that maintains health, sustains the environment, preserves our cultural fabric, and benefits the regional economy")?
- Emphasize and reinforce key ideas and connections using the accompanying slides.

Before the next session

Overview: Learners are asked to consider different sustainable food options available in their communities as a way to prepare for the final session.

As noted in the learner's booklet, have participants review the following list of strategies to promote a sustainable food system. Based on their current knowledge (and without further research), participants should consider which of the following strategies they are aware of, and which may be in their community. Note that these strategies are covered in the following session. Strategies:

- 1) Local Farmer's Markets
- 2) Urban Gardening
- 3) Community Supported Agriculture (CSAs)
- 4) Fair Trade
- 5) Farm to Schools
- 6) Organic
- 7) Pasture-raised animals

