

QUESTIONS FOR A STORE MANAGER, MEAT MANAGER AND/OR BUTCHER

1. Do you sell any sustainably-raised or organic meat, poultry, dairy or eggs? (Ask for one, two, or all of these.)

These days, most large supermarkets, as well as many smaller stores, do carry some type of organic or sustainable food, so odds are the manager will say “yes”.

If the manager says “no”, encourage him or her to sell sustainable and organic food. Print out some articles on the benefits (especially economic benefits) of sustainable food and give them to the store manager, to convince him/her that sustainable and organic food is profitable.

Also suggest they visit Sustainable Table to learn more about the issues at:

www.sustainabletable.org

We have posted several articles for you to print out in the Shop Sustainable section of the Sustainable Table web site -

www.sustainabletable.org/shop/questions/

2. What can you tell me about the products and where they come from?

- a. Are they from small family farms in the area?**
- b. Do you know how the animals were raised?**
- c. Do you know the name of the farm and where it is located?**

Some stores do try to sell products from local sustainable producers and do know about their products, so if the manager can answer your questions, skip question 3.

If they can't answer your questions, see #3 below.

3. If the manager or butcher doesn't know where the meat, poultry, dairy and/or eggs come from, ask if anyone else in the store would know, or if he could ask his distributor if any meat products were sustainably raised. (Most large stores buy their food from a food distributor, not directly from a farm or company.)

If the manager agrees to speak with the distributor, you can give the manager a list of questions to ask. (See the back for a list of questions.) Managers and butchers do care about the products they sell, but they often don't know what questions to ask. If the manager tells you that the store does sell food from local, sustainable producers, and you are satisfied with the answers you received, ask which products they are – and start buying them!

However, if the store manager can't answer your questions about how the animals were raised and what they ate, ask for a contact number for the farm or company, and find out for yourself. (The least the store manager or butcher can do is ask their distributor for this information.) A couple of phone calls are all it takes to know you are eating the best meat and dairy products available.

Store managers, meat managers and butchers are extremely busy and have a lot of products on their shelves, so don't be discouraged if your local store manager doesn't know anything about the sustainable food issue. Just asking these questions will let the store know that there are customers who care about the food they're eating – if enough people start asking questions, they will listen – and they will find out the answers.

If the manager or butcher doesn't know about the sustainable issue, refer him or her to Sustainable Table (www.sustainabletable.org), offer to share articles and information, and help educate the manager on the benefits of sustainable food. And don't forget to thank anyone you speak with for taking the time to talk with you!

Also, please remember that stores operate on very slim profit margins and have limited shelf space. If you convince the store manager to start selling a certain item, make sure you are planning to buy that product when you need/want it!

QUESTIONS TO ASK

BEEF

1. Who raises the animals, and where are they located?
2. Was the cow raised on pasture? or How was the animal raised from when it was born until it went to market?
3. Was the animal fed anything else besides grass?
4. How was the animal finished?
 - a. If the animal was finished on grain, how old was it when it started, and how long was it fed the grain?
 - b. Was it finished in a feedlot? If so, how old was it when it started? How long was it there? How many other animals were there?
5. Was the animal ever given antibiotics?
6. Were hormones, steroids or growth promoters ever given to the cow?

CHICKEN/TURKEY

1. Who raises the animals, and where are they located?
2. How was the animal raised? On pasture, indoors, confined?
3. How much time does the poultry spend outdoors each day?
4. What was the chicken/turkey fed?
5. Was the chicken/turkey given antibiotics?
6. Were hormones, steroids or growth promoters ever given to the birds?

DAIRY

1. Who raises the animals, and where are they located?
2. Was the cow raised on pasture? or How was the animal raised from when it was born until it went to market?

3. Was the animal fed anything else besides grass?

4. Was the cow given rBGH or any type of synthetic hormone?

5. Was the animal ever given antibiotics?

EGGS

1. Who raises the hens, and where are they located?
2. How was the animal raised? On pasture, indoors, confined? Was it caged?
3. How much time do the hens spend outdoors each day?
4. Was the hen force molted?
5. What was the hen fed?
6. Was the hen given antibiotics?

HOGS

1. Who raises the hogs, and where are they located?
2. How was the hog raised from when it was born until it went to market? (pasture, indoors, proper bedding, etc.)
3. Was its mother held in a farrowing pen? Was it able to build a nest?
4. How much time do the animals spend outdoors each day?
5. What was the hog fed?
6. Was the hog ever given antibiotics?
7. Were growth enhancers or feed additives given to the hogs?