

PRICE TAG/COST TAG

What costs aren't included in the price of your food?

Potato

Price Tag

Fresh potatoes cost \$.59 - \$1.49/lb but fries, hash browns and chips cost more. Potatoes are inexpensive, but at what real cost?



Cost Tag

Food Miles

Idaho, Washington, Wisconsin, Colorado and Oregon are the major potato producing states.¹

Genetic Diversity

More than 4,500 potato varieties are cultivated worldwide.² One variety used heavily for french fries, the Russet Burbank, was planted on 41% of the potato acreage across the seven largest potato-producing states in 2006,³ decreasing to 32% in 2010.⁴ Relying on a single variety increases vulnerability to disease and chances of crop failure. Researchers are hoping to develop new strains of potatoes with outstanding flavor for fresh eating based on old Andean potato races.⁵ You can support genetic diversity by seeking out unusual varieties.



Social and Health Costs

In the US, the average per capita consumption was 80.5 pounds of processed potatoes (frozen, chips, dehydrated and canned) in 2008, compared to 37.8 pounds of fresh potatoes.⁶ Farmers receive a smaller share of the food dollar for processed foods, like potato chips (2.5%), than for a whole, fresh potato (10%).⁷ French fries, high in fat and sodium, accounted for over a quarter of US children's vegetable consumption in a representative survey.⁸

Environmental Impact

Of all major US crops, potatoes had the highest level of pesticides applied per acre in 1995.⁹ In one USDA study, a higher percentage of peeled, rinsed potatoes contained detectable pesticide residues than the average fresh fruit or vegetable.¹⁰ Pesticides used on potatoes grown in irrigated, sandy soils pose a groundwater contamination risk. Seek out certified organic or eco-labeled potatoes grown with few or no chemicals. Buy potatoes directly from farmers and ask about their production practices.

The price you pay for your food may or may not include all of the costs associated with it, such as costs to the environment and to the health of those who produce and consume it. Learn all you can about the food you buy—your choices matter!

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¹USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service. (2010, September). *Potatoes: 2009 summary*, p 11. Retrieved April 19, 2011 (usda.mannlib.cornell.edu/MannUsda/viewDocumentInfo.do?documentID=1123).

Genetic Diversity

²Pieterse, L. and Hils, U. (2009). *World catalogue of potato varieties 2009/10*. Clenze, Germany: Agrimedia GmbH & Co.

³USDA Economic Research Service. (2007). *US potato statistics, fall potatoes: Percent of major varieties planted, selected states, 1984-2006*. [Table 067] Retrieved May 5, 2011 (usda.mannlib.cornell.edu/MannUsda/viewDocumentInfo.do?documentID=1235).

⁴USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service. (2010, November). *Crop Production* ISSN 1936-3737. Retrieved May 5, 2011 (usda.mannlib.cornell.edu/usda/nass/CropProd//2010s/2010/Crop-Prod-11-09-2010.txt).

⁵Jansky, S.H. (2010). "Potato Flavor." *American Journal of Potato Research* 87:209-217. Retrieved April 21, 2011 (www.springerlink.com.ezproxy.library.wisc.edu/content/8j8453871m4627j0/).

Social and Health Costs

⁶USDA Economic Research Service. (2010, May). *Vegetable and Melons Yearbook. Potatoes: US per capita utilization, by category, 1970-2010*. [Table 138] Retrieved April 21, 2011 (usda.mannlib.cornell.edu/MannUsda/viewDocumentInfo.do?documentID=1212).

⁷National Farmers Union. (2011). *Farmers share of retail food dollar*. Retrieved April 21, 2011 (nfu.org/media-galleries/document-library/nfu-literature/farmers-share/March-2011-Farmers-Share-Flyer/).

⁸Lorson, B.A., H.R. Melgar-Quinonez and C.A. Taylor. (2009, March). "Correlates of Fruit and Vegetable Intakes in US Children." *Journal of the American Dietetic Association* 109:475. Retrieved April 21, 2011 (www.adajournal.org/article/S0002-8223%2808%2902185-8/abstract).

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⁹Anderson, M. and R. Magleby. (1997, July). *Agricultural Resources and Environmental Indicators, 1996-97* (AH712). Washington, DC: USDA ERS. Ch. 3.2: Pesticides, p 118. Retrieved May 5, 2011 (www.ers.usda.gov/publications/arei/Ah712/).

¹⁰Punzi, J.S., M. Lamont, D. Haynes and R.L. Epstein. (2005). "USDA Pesticide Data Program: Pesticide Residues on Fresh and Processed Fruit and Vegetables, Grains, Meats, Milk, and Drinking Water." *Outlooks on Pesticide Management*, June. Manassas, VA: USDA AMS Monitoring Programs Office. Retrieved May 5, 2011 (www.ams.usda.gov/AMSV1.0/getfile?dDocName=STE LDEV3003674).



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