To discover a wide selection of 4-H activities and experiences, visit 4-H.org/4HatHome

BE A FOOD SYSTEMS INVESTIGATOR

Learn about the key players involved in modern food systems.
Be a Food Systems Investigator

Learn about the key players involved in modern food systems.

About the Activity

There are a lot of key players – animals and humans alike – in the production of our food. Each have different roles, responsibilities, and perspectives. You’ll learn all about them in this activity, including (for the humans!) their points of view that are based on their life experiences, and then you’ll start to think about the different career tracks available to you in the food production industry.

Supplies

These simple supplies are all you’ll need for this activity.

- Internet-connected device
- Key Players in Food Systems Worksheet
- Printer
- Glue

Grades: 3-8

Topic: Food Systems, Civic Engagement

Time: 30 minutes
Activity Steps

Be a Food Systems Investigator –

1. Review this list of key players in food systems.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Players in Food Systems</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>POLLINATOR</strong> (move pollens)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RANCHER</strong> (raise cattle, horses, or sheep)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EDUCATOR</strong> (teach and develop resources)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**DID YOU KNOW?** Pollinators help plants reproduce so that we can have fruits, vegetables, and nuts to harvest. Common pollinators include bees, butterflies, moths, flies, birds, bats, beetles, and other small mammals.

2. Pick four players in the above list to learn more about, human or otherwise, and find some more information about them on the internet.

a. For people, find out about their job related to food systems. Examples could include: a restaurant chef, a waitress, a farmer, a 4-H Educator, a cafeteria worker, or a grocery store worker. You can easily find videos about, say, a farm worker by searching in a web browser ‘day in the life of a farm worker.’

b. For non-human producers, find out about their roles by searching ‘what are pollinators,’ for example.

**DID YOU KNOW?** Decomposers are made up of the “FBIs”—fungi, bacteria, and invertebrates (worms and insects).
In your role as a food systems investigator, find pictures of your four key players, then print them out.

**DID YOU KNOW?** The U.S. has multiple federal agencies that regulate food safety. The four main agencies are: the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), which is part of the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS); the Food Safety and Inspection Services (FSIS) of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA); the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA); and the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) of the Department of Commerce.

Glue each picture to the worksheet and write a short description of:

a. Role of the key player in food systems

b. Their responsibilities to food systems

c. Perspectives of the key player (For example: What did they say would make their jobs easier/better? What do they think of modern food systems?) [You may skip this one for non-human players.]

d. What’s happening in the picture

**DID YOU KNOW?** Agriculture, food, and related industries provided 22.2 million full- and part-time jobs for Americans, accounting for 10.9% of total U.S. employment in 2019. Food service, eating and drinking places, had the most jobs (13.0 million), followed by food and beverage stores (3.2 million), and farms (2.6 million). The rest of the agriculture-related industries provided a total of 3.4 million jobs.

For bonus points, find other players not included in this list, such as people who work in a food processing factory, people who work with food packaging, people who help get emergency food to those who are food insecure, or people who make decisions about food laws.

**DID YOU KNOW?** There are many cool jobs related to food that intersect with other industries. Here are some examples: a software engineer can design a food ordering app; a photographer can take food advertisement photos or shoot TV commercials; a professional food blogger can write about food on social media; a finance consultant can provide financial advice for a food company.
Test Your Knowledge

Visit https://4-H.org/FoodSystemsInvestigator to put your knowledge to the test with an interactive game.

Reflection Questions

Bonus questions to inspire wonder:

• What is your desired future career? What could be the connections of this career with food systems?
• Choose a key player in food systems. How could you make their role in the food systems easier?
• What is one other player in the food systems you could think of? What are their roles in the food systems?
Investigate & Explore
Take your new knowledge to the next level.

You just investigated some key players in food systems – but what about you? Do some thinking as you intersect with various food systems players in the near future and ask yourself ‘Could I see myself doing their job?’ Why, or why not? If there are certain things about their job you don’t like, how could you change them? For example, if you see a large truck driving food products that clearly come from far away, is that appealing to you? If driving a truck doesn’t sound fun, would you rather be a logistics expert who coordinates what trucks go where, and when? Or a farm laborer who helps to load the trucks? Food systems are complicated networks run by people, and you can have a role – other than that of a consumer – if you want, when you grow up!

Brought to you by:

This work is supported by the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture, AFRI - Education and Workforce Development project 2021-67037-33376.