


The Rice Web Activity

Introduction

This is a great introductory activity where, by creating a web, kids and adults will visually explore the long and complex path that rice goes through from field to table.

 25 + min

 8 or more

Goals

To examine where food comes from and the path that it takes from field to plate. To discuss how we can make more sustainable food choices.

Materials

- 1 large ball of yarn
- Story cards cut out from the «Conventional Rice Web Story» handout (see page 2)
- Scissors

Run the Activity

1. Print and cut out story cards on page 2 and the actors on page 3.
2. Gather the group into a circle and distribute one story card to 8 readers. Each reader represents a certain stage in the journey of rice.
3. Give the ball of yarn to the first reader. The yarn will represent the starting point of the story.
4. Start the game! Have each reader read their card out loud, shouting/yelling/emphasizing each word that is bolded and underlined. For every word that is shouted, the person holding the yarn must toss it to someone else while holding onto their part of the yarn. This will create the web. The yarn can be tossed to someone more than once. Each toss represents another step, process, location or actor involved in this complex rice food web.
3. Are there any steps that you think we've missed? What other steps would rice go through to get to your local grocery store (ex. ferry)?
4. Who do you think makes the most money in this system? Who should?
5. Can the web be simplified? What do you think an organic rice web may look like? What would a fair trade rice web look like?
6. What can we do to promote more sustainable foods? (see section below)

Take Action

1. **Reduce the foodmiles your food goes through:**
 - Shop at farmers' markets and/or sign up with a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) farm: <http://usc-canada.org/storyoffood/what-you-can-do/>
 - Buy fair trade products when you can.
 - Ask your grocer to give preference to local products.
2. **Reduce the packaging/processing your food goes through:**
 - Read your food labels.
 - Cook from scratch and use more whole foods.
 - Support small-scale farmers - Donate to USC at <http://usc-canada.org/donate-now/>
3. **Inspire others to take action:**
 - Share this activity with others.
 - Organize a film night - Check out our *Guide to Holding a Movie Night*: <http://usc-canada.org/resources/creative-campaigning/>

Debrief

1. Take a look at the entangled web of yarn. What does this say about our food system? Is it sustainable?
2. Let's recap the path that the rice went through. How many steps were there (58)? Did some steps repeat? Which ones (*selling, shipping, packaging, inspection*)? Do you remember how the steps were grouped (*Seeds, Farming, Packaging, Storage, Shipping, Inspection, Distribution and Purchasing*)? How many actors (25)? How long was the rice journey (*over a year*)? How many cities/countries did it travel to (*7 cities, but twice to Montreal*)?

CONVENTIONAL RICE WEB STORY: Instructions

- Cut along the dotted lines of each story card and see page 1 for how to run the game.
- **Note:** *This version of the food web ends in Montreal but it can be adapted to end anywhere in Canada.*

1. Introduction

"We are going to build a web of the path that rice travels from seed to our dinner plate, trackin the places it goes and the hands it touches on its way. Eight readers will read out the story of rice. As the story is read, they will shout out all words that are:

- **bolded** and toss the ball to a random person.
- underlined and toss the ball to the person that holds that particular word."

2. Seeds

"We start off with a rice seed, which has been **bred** by the International Rice Research Institute in the Phillippines. This improved variety is **packaged, sold, loaded** onto a truck headed for the ferry, where it is **shipped** to the buyer, a private seed company in central Thailand. The seed is then **grown** out in multiplication plots by a hired farm labourer, then **packaged** into 50kg bags of rice seeds. The bags are **sold** to a farmer in southern Thailand, **loaded** onto a truck and **shipped** to its farm."

3. Farming

"This farmer **plants** the seeds. After 2 weeks, a group of women are hired to **transplant** the seedlings into the larger fields. After 6 weeks, **fertilizers and pesticides** are applied by the farmer. After another 6 weeks, the farmer rents a rice combine to **harvest** the rice. Once harvested, the rice is **loaded** on a truck and **shipped** to a commercial rice mill."

4. Packaging

"At the mill, the main husks and straws are **removed** and the rice is **packaged** into 200 kg bags. The rice is **sold** to a rice broker by the farmer. Then the rice is **loaded** on a truck and is **shipped** to a storage facility near Bangkok."

5. Storage

"At the storage facility, a rice grading official and an inspector both **check** the rice for quality. The rice broker **speculates** the rice. He keeps it **stored** until the price is advantageous for the rice to sell on the market. Within a year, when the price is right, the rice is **sold** and **loaded** into a cargo container and **shipped** to the Hague, Netherlands."

6. Shipping

"At the Hague, Netherlands, the containers are **off loaded** and rest on the dockyards. There, the entire shipment of two hundred rice containers, each weighing 5 tonnes, is **sold** to an international food conglomerate. After 2 months, the containers of rice are **loaded** and **shipped** on another cargo ship headed for Montreal, Canada."

7. Inspection

"In Montreal, the containers are **off loaded** then **reloaded** onto a train, and **shipped** to a suburban food distribution centre. The 500 kg bags of rice are **unloaded** from the containers, and **inspected** by an inspector from the Canadian Food Inspection Agency. After inspection, the rice is **repackaged** into 200 kg bags, **loaded** onto another truck, and **shipped** to southern Ontario to a family owned rice and grain processing plant. At the plant, the 200 kg bags are **unloaded**, and the rice is visually **inspected, graded** and **sorted** by people and machinery. Then they are **repackaged** into 1 kg bags of white rice, **loaded** onto a train, and **shipped** to the Toronto Food Terminal."

8. Distribution and Purchasing

"The rice is **sold** to a buyer for a national grocery distributor (Weston Inc., Loblaws), who visits the plant and signs a contract for ten thousand, 1 kg bags of rice for its Montreal chain. The rice is **loaded** onto trucks and **shipped** to the distributor's own food terminal where they are **stored**. Within 2 weeks, the 1 kg bags are **packaged** together into boxes of 50 kg. They are then **loaded** onto other smaller trucks and **shipped** to different grocery stores, along with other requested products. The rice is finally delivered to the grocery store. The boxes of 1 kg bags are **unloaded** and **placed** on the shelf. Within 10 minutes the rice is **sold** and **biked home** by the customer where he/she **cooks** it for a potluck."

For more information, contact Kate Green:
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CONVENTIONAL RICE WEB STORY: Instructions

- Cut along the dotted lines of each actor/location card and see page 1 for how to run the game.

| ACTORS & LOCATIONS | ACTORS & LOCATIONS |
|--|---|
| <u>Rice seed</u> | <u>International food conglomerate</u> |
| <u>International Rice Research Institute</u> | <u>Montreal, Canada</u> |
| <u>Private Seed Company</u> | <u>Train</u> |
| <u>Thailand</u> | <u>Suburban food distribution center</u> |
| <u>Hired farm labourer</u> | <u>Inspector</u> |
| <u>Farmer</u> | <u>Family owned rice and grain processing plant</u> |
| <u>Group of women</u> | <u>People</u> |
| <u>Commercial rice mill</u> | <u>Toronto Food Terminal</u> |
| <u>Broker</u> | <u>National grocery distributor</u> |
| <u>Storage Facility</u> | <u>Distributor's own food terminal</u> |
| <u>Bankok</u> | <u>Grocery store</u> |
| <u>Rice grading official</u> | <u>Home</u> |
| <u>Cargo container</u> | <u>Customer</u> |
| <u>Hague, Netherlands</u> | |
| <u>Dockyards</u> | |