

# PRICE TAG/COST TAG

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

## Potato

### Price Tag

Fresh potatoes cost \$0.46 - \$4.99/lb, but fries, hash browns and chips cost more. Potatoes are inexpensive, but at what real cost?



### Cost Tag

#### Food Miles

In terms of production, Idaho, Washington, Wisconsin, North Dakota, Colorado and Oregon are the major potato producing states.<sup>1</sup>

### Genetic Diversity

More than 4,500 potato varieties are cultivated worldwide.<sup>2</sup> One variety used heavily for french fries, the Russet Burbank, was planted on 37% of the potato acreage across the seven largest potato-producing states in 2018.<sup>3</sup> 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.<sup>4</sup> You can support genetic diversity by seeking out unusual varieties.



### Social and Health Costs

In the US, the average per capita availability of processed potatoes (frozen, chips, dehydrated and canned) was 82 pounds in 2018, compared to 31 pounds for fresh potatoes.<sup>5</sup> Farmers receive a smaller share of the food dollar for processed foods, like potato chips (\$0.23), than for a whole, fresh potato (\$0.52).<sup>6</sup> French fries, high in fat and sodium, accounted for over a quarter of US children's vegetable consumption in a representative survey.<sup>7</sup>

### Environmental Impact

Of all major US crops, fall potatoes had the highest level of pesticides applied per acre in 1995.<sup>8</sup> Pesticides used on crops grown in irrigated, sandy soils (including potatoes) pose a groundwater contamination risk.<sup>9</sup> 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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<sup>2</sup>Pieterse, L. and U. Hils. (2009). *World catalogue of potato varieties 2009/10*. Clenze, Germany: Agrimedia GmbH & Co.

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<sup>4</sup>Jansky, S.H. (2010). "Potato Flavor." *American Journal of Potato Research* 87:209-217. Retrieved Dec 7, 2015 (<http://link.springer.com/article/10.1007%2Fs12230-010-9127-6>).

### Social and Health Costs

<sup>5</sup>USDA ERS. (2019). *U.S. per capita use of fresh and processing vegetables, dry pulse crops, and potatoes; cash receipts; U.S. vegetable trade*, Table 1d. Washington, DC: USDA ERS. Retrieved Jan 6, 2020 (<https://www.ers.usda.gov/webdocs/DataFiles/8855/1/General.xlsx?v=7469.2>).

<sup>6</sup>National Farmers Union. (2015). *Farmers share of retail food dollar*. Retrieved Dec 7, 2015 (<http://www.nfu.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/073015-Farmers-Share.pdf>).

<sup>7</sup>Lorson, 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](http://www.adajournal.org/article/S0002-8223%2808%2902185-8/abstract)).

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<sup>8</sup>Anderson, M. and R. Magleby. (1997, July). *Agricultural Resources and Environmental Indicators, 1996-97*, AH712, Ch. 3.2: Pesticides, p 118. Washington, DC: USDA ERS. Retrieved Apr 16, 2019 ([https://www.ers.usda.gov/webdocs/publications/41902/30033\\_ah712.pdf?v=0](https://www.ers.usda.gov/webdocs/publications/41902/30033_ah712.pdf?v=0)).

<sup>9</sup>Sanford, S. and J. Panuska. (2015.) *Irrigation Management in Wisconsin*, A3600-01, p 1. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Extension. Retrieved Jan 6, 2019 (<https://cdn.shopify.com/s/files/1/0145/8808/4272/files/A3600-01-19.pdf>).



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