



## Food Transportation Efficiency Contributes to Climate Goals

December 4, 2009

The U.S. House Agriculture Committee's Subcommittee on Conservation, Credit, Energy, and Research this week reviewed scientific analyses of how policies that are inspired by concerns about climate change can negatively affect the farm sector economy.

One of the witnesses at the Dec. 2 hearing presented particularly interesting views, debunking the increasingly popular myth that low-input agricultural production systems have less impact on the environment. Low-impact systems include shunning the use of production-enhancing chemicals and reducing the distance that food travels from production site to consumer. These fads are known by the buzz phrases "sustainable agriculture," "local food," and "reducing food miles."

Dr. Jude Capper, Assistant Professor of Dairy Science in the Department of Animal Sciences at Washington State University in Pullman, Wash., argued that low-input production systems reduce productivity, and that environmental impact must be measured per unit of food produced.

Dr. Capper reported her work that demonstrates how our modern food transportation system, utilizing large-capacity tractor-trailers to transport food to a network of local grocery stores near consumers' residences, consumes less fuel per unit of food than other systems involving consumers driving to a farm that is further than their local grocery store. Her work showed that the tendency to use "food miles" as an indicator of environmental impact often fails to tell the whole story.

Dr. Capper's work was the subject on an earlier AFTC notice: "Buying 'Local Food' Less Energy Efficient," dated November 09, 2009:

<http://www.truckline.com/Federation/Conferences/AFTC/NewsandUpdates/Buying%20Local%20Food%20Less%20Energy%20Efficient.pdf>

Dr. Capper's testimony can be found on the House Agriculture Committee website at:  
<http://agriculture.house.gov/testimony/111/h120209/Capper.doc>