

FOODMILES.COM • DATA REPORT

The State of Food Miles

What nearly ten million calculations reveal about how far our food really travels — drawn from a decade of real visitor data.

9.9M

CALCULATIONS RUN

26.5bn

MILES CALCULATED

3,788

AVG. MILES PER FOOD

Nearly ten million people have asked the same question

Since launching, the Food Miles calculator has been used to check the origin of a food item **9,888,474 times**. Every one of those checks calculates the great-circle distance between where a food was grown and where it's being eaten — and together, they add up to a picture of how far the modern food system really stretches.

26,554,812,769

Total miles calculated across every check

3,788

Average distance per food item (miles)

1,066,000

+

Times around the Earth, end to end

55,500+

Round trips to the Moon

To put that average in perspective: the typical food item checked on the site has travelled further than a direct flight from London to New York (3,459 miles). Laid end to end, the total distance calculated would take you past the Moon and back more than 55,000 times, or circle the Earth over a million times.

A note on scale, not judgement. None of this is a claim that imported food is inherently wrong — production method, growing conditions and how food is transported all matter more than distance alone (see "Putting Distance In Context", p.6). What this data does show clearly is just how interconnected the food on our plates really is, and which foods and routes dominate that picture.

Where these numbers come from

Every figure in this report is drawn directly from foodmiles.com's own usage data — the record of every distance calculation the public calculator has ever run, going back over a decade of real visitor activity.

How a distance is calculated

Each check takes a food item, an origin country and a destination country, and calculates the great-circle distance between the two — the shortest path between two points on the Earth's surface, the same method used in aviation and shipping distance calculators.

Data cleaning applied

Blank/empty food entries and a small number of unresolved origin selections were excluded from the food and country rankings, as they reflect incomplete form submissions rather than real journeys. "Total calculations run" is counted from the tool's internal record ID rather than current row count, so it still reflects every calculation ever performed, including a small number of duplicate records that were later cleaned from the underlying data.

This report deliberately avoids estimating the actual carbon footprint of each specific food journey shown here — real emissions depend heavily on transport mode (sea freight is vastly more efficient per mile than air freight) and other production factors this dataset doesn't capture. Where an emissions comparison is shown, it is explicitly an illustrative distance-equivalent, not a claim about real supply-chain emissions.

what people are actually asking about

The hamburger is the single most-checked item on the site by a wide margin — nearly double the next entry, and fitting for a food that's itself an assembly of many separately-sourced ingredients. Fresh produce dominates the rest of the list.

RANK	FOOD	CHECKS	AVG. MILES	TOTAL MILES
1	Hamburger	590,390	3,742	2,209,167,204
2	Banana	320,514	4,797	1,537,477,989
3	Apple	279,140	4,356	1,215,863,368
4	Tomatoes	150,744	2,316	349,175,620
5	Oranges	142,266	3,658	520,375,042
6	Strawberries	139,725	2,205	308,139,054
7	Rice	117,660	4,609	542,261,219
8	Pineapple	116,485	5,025	585,388,852
9	Grapes	105,004	4,023	422,443,813
10	Potatoes	104,345	2,674	279,023,940
11	Mango	88,022	4,597	404,620,654
12	Chocolate	71,659	3,983	285,414,474
13	Pasta	69,484	2,186	151,871,933
14	Blueberries	68,659	5,270	361,810,899
15	Avocado	66,980	4,877	326,661,522

Blueberries and pineapples travel the furthest on average among the top 15 — both well over 5,000 miles per check — while pasta and strawberries, often grown or made closer to where they're eaten, average under 2,300.

Where it's all coming from

The calculator's audience is heavily UK-based, and it shows: every one of the fifteen most common routes checked ends in the United Kingdom. Southern Europe dominates as a point of origin, followed by a long tail of far larger journeys from the Americas, Asia and Africa.

Most-checked origin countries

RANK	COUNTRY	CHECKS
1	Italy	394,184
2	Spain	375,587
3	United Kingdom	370,018
4	United States	355,118
5	China	313,828
6	India	245,079
7	Brazil	231,124
8	Australia	213,709
9	France	209,216
10	New Zealand	190,721

Most common routes

RANK	ROUTE	CHECKS
1	Spain → UK	312,692
2	Italy → UK	279,706
3	UK → UK	268,748
4	China → UK	197,634
5	India → UK	179,652
6	USA → UK	174,145
7	Brazil → UK	172,887
8	France → UK	149,932
9	New Zealand → UK	131,495
10	South Africa → UK	122,198

Notably, "UK to UK" is the third most-checked route outright — a reminder that a meaningful share of curiosity about food miles is about home-grown food too, not just imports.

Does distance actually matter?

It's a genuinely contested question — and the honest answer is: it depends what you're measuring.

The case that it matters

A 2022 study in *Nature Food* (Li et al., University of Sydney) found that food transport accounts for roughly **19% of total food-system emissions** — 3.5 to 7.5 times higher than earlier estimates had suggested. The same research found that fruit and vegetables are disproportionately costly to ship relative to their weight, and that wealthy countries like the UK drive a large share of the world's international food miles.

The case that it's overstated

Data from Our World in Data, drawing on Poore & Nemecek's widely-cited research, points the other way for most individual foods: transport typically makes up **less than 10%** of a food's total footprint, with production and land use dominating instead. By that measure, what you eat generally matters more for emissions than where it travelled from.

Both are true at once, at different scales: transport matters more in aggregate, across the whole food system, than it does for any single item on your plate. Distance alone is a poor proxy for a food's environmental impact — but it remains one of the most tangible, visible parts of the story, which is exactly why hundreds of thousands of people keep checking it.

The UK imported a record share of its food in 2025: domestic self-sufficiency fell to **60%**, down from 65% the year before, according to Defra. Fresh fruit and vegetables remain the single highest-value import category, at **£8.2 billion**.

Check your own food's journey

Every figure in this report started the same way every visitor's does — with a single question about a single food item. If you haven't already, try the calculator yourself at foodmiles.com, browse the full leaderboard of most-travelled foods and routes, or read the fuller research write-up behind these numbers.

foodmiles.com

Try the calculator

/leaderboard

Full most-travelled rankings

/research

The research behind the numbers

Sources

Li, M. et al. (2022). "Global food-miles account for nearly 20% of total food-systems emissions." *Nature Food*.

Our World in Data / Poore, J. & Nemecek, T. (2018), "Reducing food's environmental impacts through producers and consumers," *Science*.

Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra), 2025 UK food statistics.

All usage figures are foodmiles.com's own internal data, current as of September 2026.

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