

# The Secret Life of a French Fry

Life Science, Technology, Food Safety, Environmental Perspectives

## Materials:

- "Happy Meal" from fast food restaurant

**Time: 20 minutes**

**Grade Level: 3 - 4**

## Background:

Many people do not get the connection of where their food comes from. Many do not know that one out of every four people are employed in production agriculture or an agriculture-related business. This lesson teaches about those connections.

## Ahead of time:

Purchase a children's "Happy Meal" at a fast food restaurant. The Meal will be your prop for the class.

## Standards:

**Standard 3:** Life Science

**Standard 5:** Science & Technology

**Standard 6:** Personal Experience & Environmental Perspectives

## Procedures:

1) Ask the students the following questions...

- Did you know there are lots of jobs that go into making your favorite happy meal?
- Do you think your chicken nuggets or hamburger just fly onto your plate from outer space?
- NO? If not, then where do they come from?

2) Lead the students through the thought process...

• Chicken egg (fertilized) • Chick grow to chicken raised on good nutrition and good health program • Chicken is transported by truck to the packing plant (truck driver is one job). What happens at the packing plant? Chicken is harvested at the plant (someone else's job)...

• The chicken is formed into chicken nuggets just the right size, (MacDonald's quality control inspector. All the while, there is another inspector looking over the shoulder's of the packing plant employees... What is HE doing? Right, he's making sure there aren't any extra things in our food or things that might make us sick. He is the Food Safety inspector. We're glad he has a job related to agriculture!

• Oh, What about the boxes and bags the meat is put into before it is shipped to a local fast food restaurant near you? That business provides a job for a number of people.

- Then we have the truck driver whose job is to transport the food in the box to a local restaurant.
- Someone at your local restaurant cooks your food, takes your order and cleans up after you.
- There is also the person's who built the restaurant, designed the advertising on the bags and on the radio... landscaped the grounds, built the play equipment.

There are a LOT of jobs involved in getting our food to us everyday!!

3) Now let's think about the Secret Life of a French Fry.

- Seed Potatoes planted, (several jobs)
- Potatoes cared for, watered fertilized, harvested. (1 job)
- Transported by truck to factory... (1 job)

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- Potatoes cared for, watered fertilized, harvested. (1 job)
- Transported by truck to factory... (1 job)
- At Factory what happens? (2-5 jobs)
- Food is cut up into equal pieces (several jobs)
- Food Quality Inspector (Specifications for the fast food restaurant)
- Food Safety Inspector
- Packaging and Boxing of the big box of fries ( ? jobs)
- Transported by truck to the local restaurant (1 job)
- Cooked at the Restaurant
- Served at the Restaurant

4) Then, if you want, you can go into the secret life of a pickle. This can go on as long as you want:

### **Follow-up Discussion Questions:**

1) Isn't it great that we have such a variety of high quality food that is safe and very affordable?

2) It all started way back when with the Cave Dwellers. They were hunter/gatherers.

a) Do you think they always had food/ NO! Why not!

b) Do you think they spent most of their day finding and hunting food?

- They decided to do something about it! They took the best seeds and decided to cultivate them plant them in rows, fertilize them, water them. And collect more seeds. They used some for new plants and stored the rest for winter food. They tamed animals and bred the best to the best to come up with a dependable meat supply.

3) Do you think they still spent most of their day growing and gathering and storing and processing their food?

- Today the farmers are much more efficient... do you know how many people one farmer can feed today? 144 people... WOW!

4) What does that mean to you?

- It means that YOU don't have to worry about where your food comes from. You use 19 cents of your disposable income to pay someone else to grow your food, to process your food and to get it to you so you can eat it!

- The one in four people who do work in agriculture are important to you because they have jobs and pay taxes that support your schools, and make good roads.

- We need to support all the people in agriculture and celebrate them and make sure we support them when public policy or laws come along that could affect your food supply. We need to be especially watchful of what the public does to protect natural resources.

**Idea:** Take it a step further by asking what can each of us do to help prevent global warming? (i.e. Global Warming can affect the climate the farmer grows his/her crops in. It can affect the rainfall and the temperature).