

# Junior Lesson Plan 4

## Dairy and the Environment

### Objective

To develop pupils' understanding of the relationship between weather, the environment and farming.

Duration: **30 minutes** (approximately).



#### SPHE:

Myself and the wider world ⇨ Developing citizenship ⇨ Environmental care

#### Geography:

Natural Environments ⇨ Weather

Environmental awareness and care ⇨ Caring for my locality



# Words of the Day

**Environment** – Everything living and non-living around you, including the air.

**Food miles** – It takes energy to grow, to make, to move and to store food. The further your food has to travel, the more energy is needed and the higher its food miles will be. Food miles is the distance food travels to get from the farm to our plates.

**Weather** – It describes the atmosphere in a place at a particular time, for example, how hot or cold and how wet or dry it is.

**Climate** – The climate describes the usual weather in a place over a long period of time.

**Climate change** – Humans have been doing a lot of activities that make gases which are gathering in the atmosphere. These gases act like a blanket causing the earth to slowly heat up. This means that climates are changing around the world.

## Group Discussion

Ask each group to discuss the following questions and to then share with the class. Note key points on the board

- 1 What is 'weather'?
- 2 What is 'climate'?
- 3 What is 'climate change'?
- 4 Can you think of any signs of climate change?

Expand on the ideas explored in groups by discussing climate change further as a whole class, using the 'Words of the Day' section and the following points:

- Using locally grown / sourced seasonal food uses fewer food miles.
- Using food with little or no packaging helps to reduce waste.
- A carrot from South Africa travels 6,000 miles.
- Walking to the shop for food rather than using the car reduces food miles.



# Class Discussion

Discuss the following points about the relationship between dairy and the environment:

- Due to where Ireland is on the planet we have a cool, temperate climate.
- Having this climate means that our cows can graze outdoors on lush green grass for up to 300 days a year (nearly a year).
- Due to our mild, wet climate, the dairy produced in Ireland uses up to 20% less water than most European countries.

Discuss the following points about the impact of climate change on farming:

- During extremely snowy weather, animals need to be kept in shelters during times of the year when they are normally outside.
- In bad weather, dangerous road conditions affect deliveries and collections of milk.
- When cows are unable to be outside on the grass, farmers have to give them extra food.
- Very dry weather conditions and less rain affects the amount of grass (food) available for the animals.
- Droughts and floods can reduce the size of a farmer's crop and can even destroy a crop.

# Pair Activity

Complete the Dairy and the Environment cloze passage.



# Personal Activity

Ask pupils to imagine they are farmers and to write an account of daily life as a dairy farmer. How do they care for the cows? How does weather affect life on the farm? How has extreme weather affected their life?

## Extension Activities

- 1 Invite a farmer to speak to the class about how climate change has impacted his / her farming. Ask pupils to write about it.
- 2 Ask pupils in groups to think of ways that they can reduce their food miles.
- 3 Encourage pupils to bring their School Milk cartons or bottles home to recycle.

## Bring it Home

Encourage your pupils to take home the message of the impact climate change has on the environment. As a homework activity, you can ask your pupils to:

- 1 List locally grown food they have at home.
- 2 Make a family contract to reduce food miles.

