

**TITLE:** Local Food Economy Game

**OBJECTIVES:** Players must shop for items needed for a spaghetti dinner. In doing so they must make choices between:

- Organic vs. conventionally-produced vegetables
- Locally grown vs. imported produce
- Supporting more expensive local businesses vs. lower-priced chains
- Convenience vs. quality.

After completion of the first round of the game, players have a chance to discuss the true costs of choosing organic produce (economic, health, environmental), the changes in the past century in where food is produced, and the impact of supporting or not supporting the local economy. After the discussion, players have an opportunity to play again.

**MATERIALS:** Name signs and tables for three stores, play money, price lists for each store, icons of all items (tomatoes, onions, peppers, spaghetti sauce, pasta) with the label “Grown in.....” or “Made in.....” on each, situation cards, a poster for each store explaining where their money goes.

**NUMBER OF PLAYERS:** 1 facilitator who acts as the banker, 3 shopkeepers, 30 shoppers

**PROCEDURE:**

1. The three shopkeepers set up their “stands” on three tables spread around the room, display their wares, and hang their signs. Each shopkeeper can decide whether or not to display the price list.
2. Give each player \$10. Shopkeepers should have \$30 in \$1’s to make change, and the banker should also have money.
3. Tell the players that they are preparing a spaghetti dinner for tonight and will need to purchase the ingredients to make it: pasta and sauce. They can either buy pre-made spaghetti sauce or make it themselves from tomatoes, peppers and onions. The shopkeepers each have different items to offer that the shoppers may wish to buy. Shoppers should listen carefully as the merchants describe the items that they have for sale and consider factors such as price, quality, health, convenience, and environmental and economic impacts as they make their purchases.
4. Now the three shopkeepers will each be given one minute each to “pitch their products.” They should let buyers know where the items were grown or made and whether or not they are “organic.” They can stress convenience, quality or price as appropriate. The purpose is to let the buyers know what is available, to get them thinking about different reasons to choose things, and to simulate some of the hype that we are subjected to in food advertising.
5. Before the shopping begins hand everyone a situation card. (If there are extra cards, you might give some people two.) These cards describe a situation that may affect the purchasing decisions of the shoppers. The shoppers must role-play based on the card(s) they receive. Players who owe money or get to collect money should do so through the banker.
6. Give players 10 minutes to shop.



7. At the end of ten minutes ask players to take a seat with their purchases. Have participants describe what they bought and the decision-making process they went through to make their purchases. How did the situation cards affect their decisions? What factors were important to them? Price? Organic? Quality? Convenience? Source? How do the different factors affect different groups of people? Was everyone able to purchase what they would have liked to? Did anyone come up with a creative solution for purchasing? How does this type of situation make them feel as a consumer? Does a simulation like this seem realistic?

8. When the discussion is complete, ask the three shopkeepers to count their money and announce their "gross sales." (Remember to subtract the amount that they each started with.) Of course these are not profits because no costs have been subtracted. Ask the shopkeepers what their experience was with selling to this group. Why were they successful or not? What different strategies could they use to bring in more customers?

9. Now ask all the shoppers to line up - do not tell them why. When they are lined up tell them it is payday and the shopkeepers are going to pay their employees using the gross sales that each shopkeeper collected. Explain that this represents the money that gets returned by a business to the local community. Each shopkeeper should pay back the percentage of gross sales listed on the "Where Does The Money Go" sheet and explain why to the group. The supermarket owner should pay back first starting at the end of the line and continue down till his/her money is gone. Suzy picks up where he/she left off, followed by Fredo. The people at the end of the line will probably not get any money. The facilitator explains that because the local businesses have not been doing too well, some people are going to have to be laid off.

10. Now play the game one more time. Give everyone five more minutes to shop. Do not use the situation cards this time. Some people will not be able to buy anything.

11. When the last purchases are made, debrief the group again on what happened in round two. Did people make different purchases the second time? What considerations were important to them now? Did the discussion in round one or the results of the buying affect their purchases in round two? How did the unemployed people feel? Is there anyone who will not be able to eat tonight? What are the advantages/disadvantages to buying locally and supporting a local economy?

12. Finish the discussion by brainstorming a list of things individuals and the community can do to support local businesses.



**SITUATION CARDS  
(MAKE 5 OF EACH)**

- 1. YOUR SISTER NEEDS TO BORROW MONEY SO THAT SHE CAN HAVE HER ASTHMA PRESCRIPTION REFILLED. PAY \$2.00**
- 2. YOUR MOTHER WON \$10 IN THE LOTTERY. SHE GIVES YOU HALF. COLLECT \$5.00**
- 3. YOU NEED TO GET TO A JOB INTERVIEW TOMORROW. PAY \$3.00 TO BUY A TICKET FOR THE TRAIN.**
- 4. YOU STAYED AT SCHOOL TODAY UNTIL 6:00. YOU PROMISED YOUR FAMILY THAT YOU WOULD HAVE DINNER READY BY 6:30.**
- 5. YOUR FAVORITE GROUP RELEASED A NEW CD TODAY. IT'S ON SALE TODAY ONLY. PAY \$5.00.**
- 6. YOU BABY-SAT FOR YOUR NEIGHBOR'S TWIN TWO-YEAR OLD THIS AFTERNOON. YOU EARN \$5.00, BUT YOU'RE VERY TIRED.**
- 7. YOUR FATHER HAS BEEN SICK A LOT LATELY. YOU WANT TO MAKE HIM A VERY HEALTHY SPAGHETTI DINNER.**



## WHERE DOES THE MONEY GO?

(Make a poster of the appropriate inf. for each store)

### **SUPERMARKET** (pay back 25%)

1. Bought produce from Florida(-25%)
2. Spaghetti sauce was made in Italy(-25%)
3. Pasta was made in Tacoma, WA(-25%)
4. Hired employees locally(+25%)

### **SUZY'S SPAGHETTI SHOP** (pay back 75%)

1. Pasta was made locally(+25%)
2. Sauce was made locally(+25%)
3. Ingredients organically grown in CA(-25%)
4. Hired employees locally(+25%)

### **FREDO'S FARM STAND** (pay back 100%)

1. Produce organically grown locally(+75%)
2. Hired employees locally(+25%)



## PRICE LIST

Items	Supermarket	Suzy's	Fredo's
Sauce	\$4.00	\$6.00	
Pasta	\$2.00	\$3.00	
Tomatoes	\$1.00		\$2.00
Onions	\$1.00		\$2.00
Peppers	\$1.00		\$2.00

## SOURCE LIST

Items	Supermarket	Suzy's	Fredo's
Sauce	Made in Italy	Made in Boston from CA-grown, organic ingredients	
Pasta	Made in Tacoma, WA	Made in Boston	
Tomatoes	Grown in FL		Grown in Boston - organic
Onions	Grown in FL		Grown in Boston - organic
Peppers	Grown in Holland		Grown in Boston - organic

