

Food for Thought

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‘Food for Thought’ has been developed at the University of Leicester Botanic Garden through a three-year project funded by the Department for International Development. It uses the link between Leicester and its twin city, Masaya, in Nicaragua.

The project offers an interactive approach to global citizenship, featuring collaboration between the Leicester-Masaya Link Group and the University of Leicester Botanic Garden to make connections between the various stages of food and commodity production and development issues.

Case studies from Nicaragua introduce aspects of life in Central America and highlight the challenges and prospects experienced by small-scale producers in developing countries. By means of hands-on activities at the Botanic Garden, students encounter a wide range of crop plants growing in a tropical environment; they investigate the different stages of food and commodity production, from the farmer’s field to the market place (including artefacts that are made from plants) and take part in simulation activities to look at the economics of world trade (including fair-trade). By putting our local lives into this global context the project shows how people and places are interrelated.

We work closely with other organisations (*Just... fairtrade* and the *Co-op*) to provide follow-up sessions about trading practices, as well as practical support and information for a range of extended activities, such as arts-based projects and themed work.

The activities are appropriate for key stage 2 but, in addition, pupils from key stages 3 & 4 participate in supporting roles. We are currently working with local secondary schools and their feeder primaries, and plan to make *Food for Thought* one of the regular programmes we offer. Alongside citizenship, it links naturally into the geography, science and maths curricula.