

Bananas

Food miles travelled: 5000 km

Growth

Most of the bananas we eat in the UK are grown on huge plantations in tropical countries such as Costa Rica. Banana plants are grown from a bulb in rich, well-drained soil. They thrive in hot climates where the temperature is around 27°C and rainfall is high.



Harvest

Bananas are ready to harvest around nine months after planting. The fruit is picked by hand when it is still green, to be ripened later. Harvesting takes a lot of work, and the pickers are careful not to bruise the fruit.

Packing

After the bananas are inspected, they are protected with padding and packed carefully into boxes. They are then kept briefly in dark, cool storage rooms.

Transportation

The boxed bananas are loaded into large, refrigerated containers and taken by lorry to ports such as Puerto Limón. The containers keep the fruit at temperatures of 13°C. They are then loaded onto large ships, ready to sail across the Atlantic Ocean. It takes around 10 days for the ships to reach the UK from South America.

Distribution

The ships arrive at UK ports such as Portsmouth. The bananas are taken by lorry to huge ripening factories, in locations such as Basingstoke, where they are ripened for about a week. Finally, more lorries take the bananas to shops and supermarkets across the country, ready to be sold.

Amazing fact

Bananas grow upside down. They are curved because they grow up towards the Sun.

Chocolate

Food miles travelled: 5000 km

Growth

Chocolate is made from cocoa beans which grow on cacao trees. Most of the cocoa and chocolate we eat in the UK is grown on farms in countries such as Ghana. Cacao trees thrive in hot climates, but they also need plenty of rain and well-drained soil. The cocoa beans develop inside large, pale pods.



Harvest

Cocoa bean pods are ready to cut down when they are ripe and golden. The cocoa workers then spread the beans between banana leaves or in boxes and leave them to ferment for several days. Next, the beans are dried out to stop them from rotting.

Packing

After the cocoa beans are dried, they are sorted and weighed. They are then poured into sacks, before being taken to buying stations. Some chocolate companies will select and buy the beans at this stage, before they enter the UK.

Transportation

The sacks of cocoa beans are taken by lorry to major ports, such as Tema in Ghana. They are put into climate-controlled containers and loaded onto large ships, ready to travel to the UK.

Distribution

The ships arrive at UK ports such as Portsmouth. The cocoa beans are then taken by lorry to chocolate factories, where they are roasted, crushed and mixed with other ingredients, such as milk and sugar. The manufactured chocolate is then packed into boxes and transported to distribution centres. They are then taken by lorries to shops and supermarkets across the country, ready to be sold to consumers.

Amazing fact

On average, a British person eats around 10 kg of chocolate every year!