



Source Search (6-8)

Suggested Grade Level: 6-8

Time: 30 minutes

Subject: Social Studies, Economics, Geography, English Language Arts, Speaking and Listening, Agriculture, Farm to Table

Overview:

Where does it come from? In this lesson, students will learn that agriculture provides nearly all of the products we rely on in any given day by participating in a relay where they match an everyday item with its “source.” Source Search stimulates students to connect the products they use every day (such as food, clothes, transportation, technology, and furniture) to agriculture. Students will participate in a relay where they will match an everyday item with its “source.”

Key Concepts for 6-8:

- Natural resources are materials or substances that occur on or in the earth naturally.
- Natural resources such as water and land are used by farmers to grow crops and raise livestock, which can provide us with food, fiber, fuel, and shelter.
- Natural resources such as minerals mined from the earth or petroleum fuels mined from below the earth's surface are used to make glass, metal, and some plastics.
- We depend on natural resources for the items we rely on day-to-day. They should be used and managed wisely.
- Processing and manufacturing raw goods from farms or natural resources into food, tools, machines, and other items increases their value.

Objectives:

1. Define the four sources of products: farms, stores, factories, and natural resources.
2. Categorize everyday items into four groups according to their source or origin.
3. Identify many items used in daily life that come from agriculture.

Background Information:

If you were to take a moment to look around and identify the items you rely on every day, they would likely include food, clothing, modes of transportation such as a car or bike, building materials such as steel and wood, various technological devices such as cell phones or computers, and several tools or machines. Where did these items and

the raw products used to make them originate? Many people might recognize that farms provide us with whole, raw foods like fruits, vegetables, milk, meat, and eggs. They may even recognize that foods such as bread, pasta, cheese, frozen chicken nuggets, and canned foods also come from a farm, but are first prepared and packaged at a food processing facility. However, in reality, agriculture also provides us with a wide variety of raw materials used to make clothes, books, cosmetics, medicines, sports equipment, and much more.

Everything we make and use in society can be found in our environment or produced on farms using natural resources such as land and water. Resources such as metal and glass are made from minerals that are extracted from the earth through the process of mining. Most plastics are a byproduct of oil, which is extracted from beneath the Earth's surface. Other items we rely on day-to-day are agriculture products. Farms come in numerous sizes and locations and produce many different products, ranging from food and clothing to fuel and building supplies.

While many day-to-day items were built, processed, or manufactured at a factory and eventually sold at a store, it is important for students to understand that they each began as a resource of the natural world and/or a product of agriculture.

Kansas Connections:

Agriculture is the backbone of Kansas. The agriculture industry shapes our economy, communities, culture, and state identity. Kansas farmers provide everyday items like food, fiber, and fuel to people across the United States and the world.

Principal Crops

Visitors to Kansas often remark about our endless fields. Kansas ranks #1 nationally in total cropland, with 28,340,827 acres devoted to farming. These acres support several principal crops essential to the United States, most notably wheat and sorghum (milo). Kansas is often called the “Breadbasket of the World.” As of 2024, Kansas ranked #1 in winter wheat production, harvesting 307,450,000 bushels, about 22% of the U.S. total. Kansas farmers also ranked #1 in sorghum production, with 182,000,000 bushels grown in 2024. Sorghum is often used to make animal feed, but it can also be used to produce products such as ethanol and gluten-free food. Corn and soybeans are two of the most important crops grown in the United States, especially throughout the Midwest. In Kansas, corn ranks 7th nationally. Corn is processed into products such as cornmeal, corn syrup, cornstarch, and snack foods like chips and tortillas. It’s also a common ingredient in breakfast cereals and is used to produce ethanol. Kansas also ranks 11th in soybean production. Soybeans are a versatile crop used to make livestock feed, cooking oil, and biofuel. Did you know that sunflowers are the state flower of Kansas? Kansas ranks 8th nationally in sunflower production, contributing both oil-type and confectionery varieties. Oil-type sunflowers are grown for their seeds, which are pressed to make cooking oil, while non-oil (confectionery) sunflowers are typically used for birdseed and snacks.

Not all crops are grown for food; some are grown for fiber. Kansas ranks #14 nationally in upland cotton production, harvesting about 200,000 bales, each weighing 240 pounds. One bale can produce up to 215 pairs of jeans, meaning that if Kansas used all its cotton just for denim, the state could make roughly 43 million pairs of jeans annually, enough for every Kansan to own more than a dozen new pairs every year!

Livestock

Livestock are another crucial part of Kansas' agriculture industry. As of January 2025, Kansas ranks third overall in cattle and calves with 5,950,000 head, just under 7% of the U.S. total. Kansas also ranked third in red meat production, processing 5,805,400,000 pounds. That's over 10% of the U.S. total. Beef provides high-quality protein and essential nutrients to the human diet, and Kansas farmers take pride in producing safe, nutritious, and high-quality beef for consumers across the country and around the world.

Some of the cows in Kansas are used for milk. Kansas ranks 16th nationwide for dairy cattle numbers, with 180,000 head making up around 2% of the U.S. total. Milk comes from healthy, well-fed cows that are raised on dairy farms. Milk is also used to make milk products like cheese, cottage cheese, yogurt, and ice cream. Dairy is crucial to our diet and provides calcium as well as essential vitamins and minerals. Kansas is also 11th in total hogs and pigs, with 2,010,000 head. This accounts for a little under 3% of the U.S. total. We are also 11th in pig crop, with 4,022,000 head, also accounting for about 3% of the nation's total. Pigs provide pork, bacon, and more (United).

Food processing is a booming industry in Kansas. According to Kansas Commerce, Kansas food manufacturing has an economic impact of around \$5.2 billion and makes up around 21% of the state's manufacturing industry. Processed meat includes ham, bacon, pastrami, sausage, lunch meats, and hot dogs (Kansas Commerce). We also use livestock for more than just food. Leather is a common livestock byproduct that comes from the hides of cattle, sheep, goats, and pigs. Leather can be used to make shoes/boots, purses, belts, and even footballs. Cattle can also provide us with byproducts that are used to make cosmetics, detergents, pet foods, livestock feeds, insecticides, crayons, soap, paint, antifreeze, floor wax, perfume, plastics, shoe polish, brake fluid, linoleum, and candles.

Exports and Industry

Kansas agriculture plays a vital role in supporting industries across the state, the nation, and the world. According to the Kansas Department of Agriculture, the state exported more than \$4.75 billion in agricultural products in 2024. The leading commodities included meat and edible offal (organs and other non-muscular animal parts), cereals, food industry residues, oilseeds, dairy products, eggs, and honey. That year, Kansas shipped goods to 94 foreign markets, with Mexico, Japan, China, Canada, and South Korea accounting for 90 percent of our state's agricultural trade. Kansas agriculture depends on exports (Kansas Agriculture)!

Did you know Kansas farmers, drivers, inspectors, and factory workers all play a role in producing pet food? The Midwest serves as an agricultural and manufacturing hub for

this industry. Kansas farmers supply the meat, vegetables, and grains that pets need to thrive, while workers across the state help ensure those ingredients are safely processed and delivered to homes nationwide.

Kansas also has abundant natural resources. According to Kansas.gov, over 41% of Kansas' net electricity generation comes from wind turbines. Kansas is also one of the top 10 ethanol-producing states in the nation. Kansas also relies on a few main water sources for home and industry. There are nine aquifers in our state, with the High Plains aquifer being the largest. There were 24 reservoirs constructed from 1940 to 1982, and the state owns/manages conservation storage in 15 reservoirs operated by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Natural water resources in Kansas supply not only irrigation water, but also serve as sources of recreation and therefore tourist dollars returned to the Kansas economy. Oil and natural gas are also mined in Kansas, as well as zinc, lead, coal, salt, gypsum, sand, and stone (Kansas.gov).

Kansas has tree farms! According to the Kansas Forest Service, "Many people are surprised to learn that Kansas timber harvests contribute to the state's economy.

Though it is a small component of the overall economy (less than 1% of total manufacturing receipts), it is certainly important," (Kansas Forestry). Most Kansas trees are converted into furniture, gun stocks, veneer, wooden pallets, dunnage, and other wood-derived products. Hammons Black Walnuts, a company that purchases, shells, and sells black walnuts in the U.S. (including at seven Kansas locations), indicates walnut shells are ground into powder and used to make products like abrasive cleaners, water filtration systems, cosmetics, soap, dental cleaners, skin exfoliants, and denture polishers. It is also used in making filler for dynamite, as an adhesive for plywood and particleboard, and on the seals of oil well drilling rigs (Hammons).

Materials:

**All items are included in the Source Search Kit*

<https://agclassroomstore.com/source-search>, which is available for purchase from agclassroomstore.com.

- Glue
- Colored index cards or card stock in 2 different colors (for mounting product pictures)
- Updated Source Search Picture Cards (provided)
- Source Search Item Reference List
<https://agclassroomstore.com/content/SourceSearchItems.pdf>
- Four boxes labeled "Stores," "Factories," "Farms," and "Natural Resources"

Instructional Format:

1. Review Background Information and Kansas Connections
2. Conduct engagement exercise
3. Prepare the activity.
4. Complete the activity.
5. Conduct assessment exercise.

Engagement:

1. Ask students what they did to get ready for school. Make a list of the common items used and foods eaten by the students in preparation for school each morning. Write the list on the board.
2. Choose several random items and ask the students where or how that item was created. For example, where was the food they ate for breakfast produced? What was used to make the car that drove them to school? Allow students to offer their prior knowledge as you discuss these items.
3. Inform students that they will be participating in an activity to learn about the sources of many day-to-day items.

Procedures:

Note: Some products may be from more than one source or category. For example, Plastic can be made from coal, natural gas, minerals, or plants, but is most often derived from crude oil. Most plastics are a byproduct of oil, which is extracted from beneath the Earth's surface. Glass is made by melting minerals together at a high temperature. Minerals are extracted from the ground through mining. Metals and steel come from minerals in the Earth's crust. They are extracted from the ground through mining. Food products may come from different types of farms.

Prepare:

1. Print and cut out the attached Source Search Picture Cards showing everyday items. Alternatively, print the resources from the lesson plan, laminate, cut, and get the baskets themselves in preparation to teach this lesson, as outlined in Materials. If you prefer to involve your students in the preparation stage (and have time), have them gather their own pictures of everyday items. Gather a variety of magazines or slick ads from the Sunday newspaper and instruct your students to cut out pictures that represent items they use regularly (food, cars, soap, clothes, computers, etc.) Avoiding duplication, select 36.
2. Randomly divide the 36 pictures into two groups. Use two colors of index cards (or card stock) and glue the pictures onto the cards. Laminate the pictures for future use.
3. Obtain four containers (boxes, plastic tubs, paper box lids, or paper grocery bags) and label each with one of the following: "Stores," "Factories," "Farms," and "Natural Resources."
4. Identify a suitable location for a relay race, such as an area outside, a wide hallway, or the gymnasium.

Activity

1. Divide the class into two teams. Divide the laminated pictures by color. You should have 18 pictures in each pile. If you are using red and blue index cards, you will have a red and blue team.

2. Take the students to the location of the relay race and place each team in a single-file line. Be sure to have all the pictures face down in front of the first person in each line. Locate the tubs 20-50 feet away from the lines.
3. Give students the following instructions: "This is the source relay. Your job is to place each card in the tub representing the original source of the everyday item that is pictured. When you are at the front of the line, pick up a card, look at the picture, then run to and place the picture in the correct tub based on the product's "source"— either "Stores," "Factories," "Natural Resources," or "Farms." Keep in mind that you are looking at the product, not the packaging. The next person in line goes when the person in front of them returns and crosses over the start line or hand-tags them. The returning player should go to the end of the line." *Optional Alternative: Rather than a relay race, you can also play the Source Search Kahoot game*
<https://create.kahoot.it/share/source-search> or Source Search Quizizz
<https://quizizz.com/admin/quiz/5eb407b5571ace001cb36e8e>. These online game quizzes may also be used as a formative assessment after the relay.
4. Ask students if they have any questions and clarify as needed. Begin the relay race and continue until all of the pictures have been sorted. The first team to finish the sort wins temporarily, but the ultimate winner will be determined by accuracy.

Discussion:

1. After the relay is over and the pictures are sorted, return to the classroom or have the students gather around you in a suitable location to go through the cards and discuss the correct answers. As you hold up each picture, the students can show whether they agree or disagree with the sort using the "thumbs up" or "thumbs down" signal, or another response as chosen. Use the attached Source Search Items Reference List for the correct answers and explanations for each card. You can also refer to the Source Search e-Learning lesson video (National AITC: Source Search <https://youtu.be/V6oEE9uU79g>) for a recorded explanation. If you choose to keep score to identify a winner, have a student keep a tally for each team of the cards placed in the correct box.
 - **Farms:** Explain that if the item contains ingredients or raw products from a farm, the item is in the correct box. Examples include food items such as cereal, cookies, and milk, or clothing items made from natural fibers such as cotton (jeans) or wool (coat). Some items from a farm that are not eaten or worn include paint (this contains linseed or soybean oil) or fuel such as ethanol. *Note: After most relays, the "Farms" container will typically have only a few items in it.*
 - **Natural Resources:** Explain that items in this tub should be products we get from the ocean, from plants or animals that occur naturally without management from humans, or from mining. Examples of items that should be in this box are: fish or shrimp (wild; however, note that fish and shrimp can also be farmed), cars, salt, water, plastic (plastic starts as oil, which is mined),

synthetic fabrics (polyester, petroleum or oil products), computers, cell phones, and any metallic items. Wood products may be in this box, but many wood products come from timber grown on farms. Let the class decide how to divide these. You might decide to “split the difference,” put one (the shrimp) into the “*Farms*” box and the wood into the “*Natural Resources*” box. Remind your students that this is the “source” search. What is the “real” source of the things we use every day? Nearly all are grown or mined – farmed or extracted from the natural world. *Note: This tub is also likely to contain only a few items.*

- **Factories:** Explain that a factory is a place where raw ingredients are changed into the useful items we need or want: wood into furniture, ore into steel for cars, wheat into bread, and potatoes into chips. A factory assembles items for later sale at a distribution center or store. With this information, ask students, “Are there any items that can originally be sourced to a factory?” (No.) Proceed by sorting every card in the “*Factories*” box into either the “*Farms*” or “*Natural Resources*” container. After doing this, your students should understand that all originally sourced products have either been grown or mined.
 - **Stores:** Move to the box labeled “*Stores*.” After receiving the explanation about factories, check for understanding by asking, “What type of things can be sourced to a store?” Students should realize that, like the “*Factories*” container, nothing should be in the “*Stores*” container; this is just where we purchase the items; it is not their original source. Clarify that factories and stores rely on raw ingredients from the farm and the natural world. Every picture or product should now be in either the “*Farms*” or “*Natural Resources*” container.
2. To increase the level of understanding, ask students, “What natural resources do farms need in order to produce the products used to make all of these items?” (*Soil, water, light, and air are natural resources that farmers rely on.*) To illustrate, place the “*Farms*” box inside the “*Natural Resources*” box.
 3. Now that students have discovered the source of many of the things they use each day, help students see that agriculture is also the source of many careers. Ask students the following series of questions:
 - What is the primary ingredient of cheese? (*milk*)
 - What kind of farm is milk produced on? (*dairy farm*)
 - Beginning on a dairy farm where the milk is produced and ending at your home where cheese is consumed, how many careers played a role in providing cheese for us to eat? (*Allow students time to begin thinking about the answer to this question.*)
 4. Begin drawing a career web on the board. Explain that there is an interconnected web of careers that depend on one another to produce the food we eat. Using the notes below, briefly describe how these careers are connected to the dairy farm and are necessary to produce the milk that is used to make cheese. Be sure to also explain that the web could be much larger. This is only a small sample.

- **Dairy Farmers:** Raise and care for cattle on farms where milk is produced.
 - **Veterinarians:** Assist farmers in maintaining the health and well-being of animals.
 - **Animal Geneticists:** Research how genetic traits impact the health and productivity of animals and help farmers make the best decisions regarding the genetics and breeding of their animals.
 - **Animal Nutritionists:** Formulate the diets of animals to meet their nutritional needs. Nutritionists help dairy farmers provide a healthy diet for their cattle at each stage of their lives.
 - **Inspectors:** Monitor the transportation of livestock animals and verify livestock ownership.
 - **Salesmen:** Help in many areas of agriculture by providing the right kinds of tools and equipment to accomplish a variety of jobs.
 - **Crop Farmers:** Produce feed for dairy farmers, such as corn, alfalfa, soybeans, etc.
 - **Soil Scientists/Agronomists:** Analyze the quality of soil and help farmers balance the nutrients to enable the growth of healthy crops.
 - **Plant Geneticists:** Study the genetic traits of plants and use methods of crossbreeding and hybridization to perpetuate desirable traits in plants.
 - **Feed or Seed Store Managers:** Provide farmers with access to the feed, seeds, and other farm supplies necessary for their farms.
 - **Truck Drivers:** Transport agricultural goods from production to processing, then to distribution to consumers.
 - **Engineers:** Design new technology to improve productivity and sustainability (for example, automated sprinkler systems, robotic milking equipment, etc.).
 - **Food Scientists:** Study the science of food preparation and formulate recipes (for example, developing different types of cheese-making methods).
 - **Mechanics:** Repair and maintain equipment such as trucks, tractors, and farming implements.
1. Once the web is complete, have students use colored pencils to color code their web and see how many career pathways contributed to the process of creating the product. You can project the Discover Agriculture poster <https://cdn.agclassroom.org/media/uploads/LP6/ag-career-resources-poster-5.pdf> for guidance.

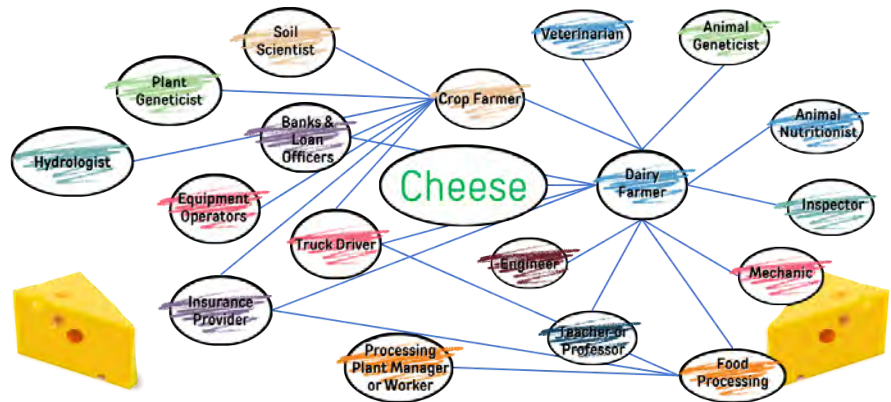
Extension:

1. If you have time, divide students into teams or small groups and give each group one Source Search Card from the relay race. Assign students to create a career web for that item and color code each career in the pathway it matches best (as seen on the poster). You can also review the Career

Information below and connect the “Mechanical Engineer” career to the web.



How many jobs did it take to produce your food?



2. Read the Kansas Connections section aloud. Have students share one Kansas product or resource mentioned and discuss everyday products that come from it.

Vocabulary

- **Agriculture:** the science or practice of farming, including cultivation of the soil for the growing of crops and the rearing of animals to provide food, wool, and other products
- **Mineral:** an inorganic substance needed by the human body for good health
- **Natural resources:** materials or substances such as minerals, forests, water, and fertile land that occur in nature and can be used for economic gain
- **Source:** a place, person, or thing from which something originates
- **Byproducts:** a secondary or incidental product, as in a process of manufacture. The result of another action, often unforeseen or unintended. In farming or manufacturing, byproducts are other useful products that result from growing or making the main or originally intended product; using byproducts means less waste.
- **Manufacturing:** Making products from raw materials.
- **Industry:** A group of businesses that make similar products or provide similar services.

Kansas Standards:

History, Government, and Social Studies

Standard 1: Choices have consequences.

1.1 The student will recognize and evaluate significant choices and consequences that have impacted our lives and futures.

- 1.2 The student will analyze the context and draw conclusions about choices and consequences.
- 1.3 The student will investigate and connect examples of choices and consequences with contemporary issues.

Standard 3: Societies are shaped by the identities, beliefs, and practices of individuals and groups.

3.1 The student will recognize and evaluate how societies are shaped by the identities, beliefs, and practices of individuals and groups.

3.2 The student will analyze context and draw conclusions about how societies are shaped by the identities, beliefs, and practices of individuals and groups.

3.3 The student will investigate and connect how societies are shaped by the identities, beliefs, and practices of individuals and groups with contemporary issues.

English Language Arts

6th Grade

Speaking and Listening

Comprehension and Collaboration

SL.6.1 Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups and teacher-led) with diverse partners on sixth grade topics, texts and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

7th Grade

Speaking and Listening

Comprehension and Collaboration

SL.7.1 Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups and teacher-led) with diverse partners on seventh grade topics, texts and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

8th Grade

Speaking and Listening

Comprehension and Collaboration

SL.8.1 Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups and teacher-led) with diverse partners on eighth grade topics, texts and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

National Agricultural Literacy Standards:

Agriculture and the Environment

- Recognize how climate and natural resources determine the types of crops and livestock that can be grown and raised for consumption (T1.6-8 g.)

Food, Health, and Lifestyle

- Identify sources of agricultural products that provide food, fuel, clothing, shelter, medical, and other non-food products for their community, state, and/or nation (T1.6-8 i.)
- Identify the careers in food production, processing, and nutrition that are essential for a healthy food supply (T1.6-8 j.)

Culture, Society, Economy, and Geography

- Consider the economic value of agriculture in America (T5.6-8 a.)
- Distinguish between careers in production (farmers and ranchers) with those that directly involve consumers (business and nutrition) (T5.6-8 b.)

- Identify agricultural products that are exported and imported (T.6-8 g.)

Supporting Resources:

Ag-Bites Activity <https://agclassroom.org/matrix/companion-resources/1140/>

Careers in Agriculture Video Series by Utah Agriculture in the Classroom
<https://agclassroom.org/matrix/companion-resources/166/>

Food and Farm Facts Booklet <https://agclassroom.org/matrix/companion-resources/22/>

Food and Farm Facts eLearning Module
<https://agclassroom.org/matrix/companion-resources/1353/>

Growing Today for Tomorrow Video by BASF Crop Protection
<https://agclassroom.org/matrix/companion-resources/411/>

How Farming Planted Seeds for the Internet by Patricia Russac/TED-ed
<https://agclassroom.org/matrix/companion-resources/594/>

How It's Made Documentary Series
<https://agclassroom.org/matrix/companion-resources/389/>

Pulp as Biodegradable Plastic in Disposable Food Containers Teacher Reference
<https://agclassroom.org/matrix/companion-resources/597/>

Renewable vs Nonrenewable vs Inexhaustible Resources eMagazine
<https://agclassroom.org/matrix/companion-resources/1028/>

Source Search Kit <https://agclassroom.org/matrix/companion-resources/901/>

The FOOD Museum On-Line Website
<https://agclassroom.org/matrix/companion-resources/433/>

What is Agriculture? Poster <https://agclassroom.org/matrix/companion-resources/304/>

Where the Food Comes From TV Series
<https://agclassroom.org/matrix/companion-resources/1390/>

Career Information: Mechanical Engineer

The agriculture industry doesn't run without machines and equipment. Mechanical engineers are often responsible for designing farm and factory machinery and equipment. Mechanical engineers use math, physics, and creative thinking every day to design machinery and mechanical systems. A mechanical engineer should be

methodical, creative, detail-oriented, and responsible. They often use online drafting systems like CAD. Students who are interested in becoming a Mechanical Engineer should take math and physics courses, as well as mechanics (if offered). Mechanical engineering careers typically require a minimum of a bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering.

Assessment:

There are several ways to conclude and assess learning in this lesson.

- Ask students, "What natural resources do farms need in order to produce the products used to make all of these items?" (*Soil, water, light, and air are natural resources that farmers rely on.*) To illustrate, place the "Farms" box inside the "Natural Resources" box.
- As a bell-ringer beginning activity the day after completing this lesson, have students list the four main sources of products (*farms, stores, factories, natural resources*); students in older grades could also be required to list examples of each
- After conducting this activity, consider repeating the relay a second time using only two containers, "Farms" and "Natural Resources" to assess student understanding.
- Review and summarize the following key concepts:
 - Natural resources are materials or substances that occur on or in the earth naturally.
 - Natural resources such as water and land are used by farmers to grow crops and raise livestock, which can provide us with food, fiber, fuel, and shelter.
 - Natural resources such as minerals mined from the earth or petroleum fuels mined from below the earth's surface are used to make glass, metal, and some plastics.
 - We depend on natural resources for the items we rely on day-to-day. They should be used and managed wisely.
 - Processing and manufacturing raw goods from farms or natural resources into food, tools, machines, and other items increases their value.

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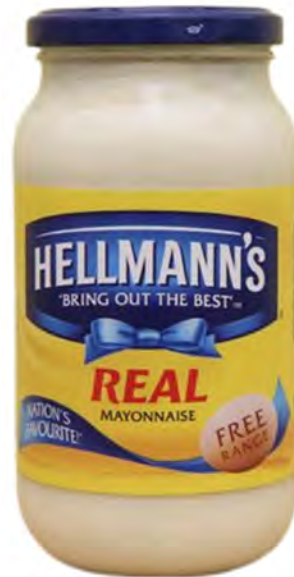
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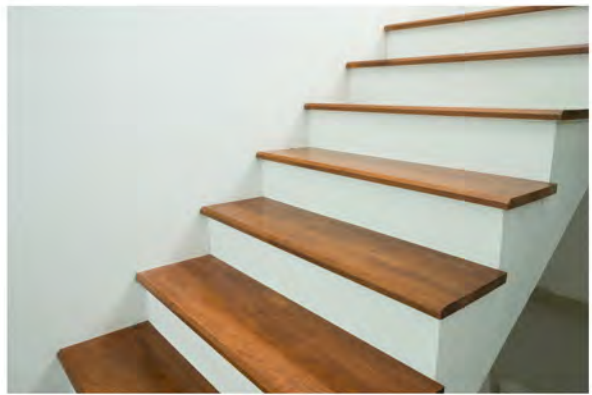
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Basketball



Car



Cereal



Cheese



Fleece Sweatshirt



Hot Dogs



Ice Cream



Juice



Milk



Mayonnaise



Pizza



Salad



Salt



Shoes



Shrimp



Stairs



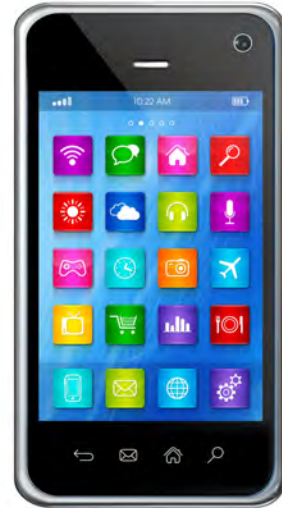
Water



Water Bottle



Berries



Phone



Cookies



Eggs



French Fries



Fruit



Hamburger



Leather Handbag



Jeans



Peanut Butter



Pet Food



Popcorn



Pet Food



Soda



Storage Container



Toilet Paper



Wheat Bread



Wool Coat