

## Mystery of the Missing Food

Emma was anxious to get to school. She wanted to tell her class about how she spent her school break. When morning meeting started, she waited for the right time.

“Any class news?” asked the teacher.

Emma was the first to raise her hand. She was so excited, she could hardly stay in her seat.

“Emma,” said the teacher, “You must have something special to share.”

“I do,” said Emma. “Yesterday my brother and I solved a food mystery.”

“Wow! It sounds like you had a very interesting break. Please take my chair and tell us all about it.”

The class quietly gathered around to hear Emma tell her story.

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On the first day of break, Dad let Robby and me go to Olivia’s Market after breakfast. Mom said we just needed a few things, but when we got there many shelves were empty. Almost every department was missing something.

The dairy department didn’t have any milk.

The produce department only had a few fruits and vegetables.

There was no whole wheat bread in the bakery department.

The eggs were all gone.

The meat department was out of ground beef.



Milk



Fruits



Vegetables



Whole Wheat  
Bread



Eggs



Ground Beef

## Mystery of the Missing Food

Olivia told us that the food delivery trucks never came. She didn't know why. We got permission from Dad to spend some time with Olivia. We wanted to help her figure out the mystery of the missing food.

Olivia had a plan. We would start at the beginning. We would talk to the farmers and ranchers who grow the food and raise the animals.

First, we visited the local farms, orchards, and groves that provide fresh produce for Olivia's Market. We wanted to ask them why so many fruits and vegetables didn't make it to the store.

Next, we visited the hay and grains farmers. The missing bread was made from oats and wheat. We wanted to know why the grains didn't get delivered.

Next, we visited the dairy farmer to talk about the dairy cows and milk production. Dairy cows are important because they produce the milk we buy at the market. We wanted to know why the milk wasn't delivered.

Our last visits were to the ranchers who raise beef cattle and chickens. The eggs we buy in the market come from local chicken farms. That's where the chickens lay their eggs. The beef we buy in the market comes from beef cattle that are raised on a cattle ranch. What prevented delivery of the beef and eggs? We wanted to know.

We had a great time and learned a lot! By now, our heads were spinning. We had a lot to think about.

The next day Robby and I had a picnic with Olivia to discuss what we learned from the farmers and ranchers we visited.

Each food producer had a special problem that prevented food delivery to Olivia's Market. We made a list.

1. The vegetable plants on the farms were not growing well. They didn't produce many vegetables.
2. The fruit trees in the orchards and groves didn't produce as much fruit. There was little to pick at harvest time.

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3. The hay and grains farmer had a hard time getting his crops to grow. The soil was too hard and dry.
4. The dairy farmer had to change what his cows ate. He couldn't find good hay and grain. Dairy cows need to eat good hay and grain to produce a lot of milk.
5. The rancher had a hard time finding good hay to feed his cattle. Without enough hay, he had to sell some of his cattle.
6. The chicken farmer couldn't get the best feed for her birds. Her chickens didn't have a balanced diet. She also said that chickens don't lay as many eggs in hot weather.

We thought about the list for a while. It was hard to figure out why the food producers were having so many problems. Then Robby spoke up. "I think I know the answer. Each food producer told us that their problems started when there was a drought."

"The drought, oh yes, the drought!" exclaimed Olivia. "I forgot how a drought can affect my food supply. That's why so much food was missing from my market! The farmers and ranchers were having trouble getting food to me because of the drought. Long periods of dry, hot weather can cause a food shortage."



Corn Farm in a Drought

Plants and trees need a lot of water to grow well. When the weather is hot and dry for a long time, not as much food can be produced for people and animals.

As it turns out, we are all connected! Olivia depends on the farmers and ranchers to produce and deliver food products to her market. We depend on the market to have food on the shelves. That means we depend on the farmers and ranchers, too. And, we all depend on good weather to help grow the food we need.

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When Emma finished her story, the class clapped loudly. Her teacher was impressed. "Emma, you and Robby and Olivia are very good problem-solvers. Thanks for sharing your story with us. It helps us remember where our food really comes from. It all starts with the farmers and ranchers who grow the food and raise the animals."

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The rains did come. The drought did end. Over time the farmer's fields, orchards, and groves started producing more food. The chickens started laying more eggs. The dairy cows started producing more milk. More beef cattle could be raised on the ranch. Best of all, the food delivery trucks started making deliveries to Olivia's Market once again. There was no more missing food.



Dairy Farm



Hay Farm



Wheat Farm



Chicken Ranch



Cattle Ranch



Corn Farm



Apple Orchard



Orange Grove