

FOCUS

The next part of the chapter explains how energy moves in an ecosystem. As you read pages 13, 14, and 15 find out how energy enters an ecosystem and how the interactions of organisms transfer that energy throughout the ecosystem.

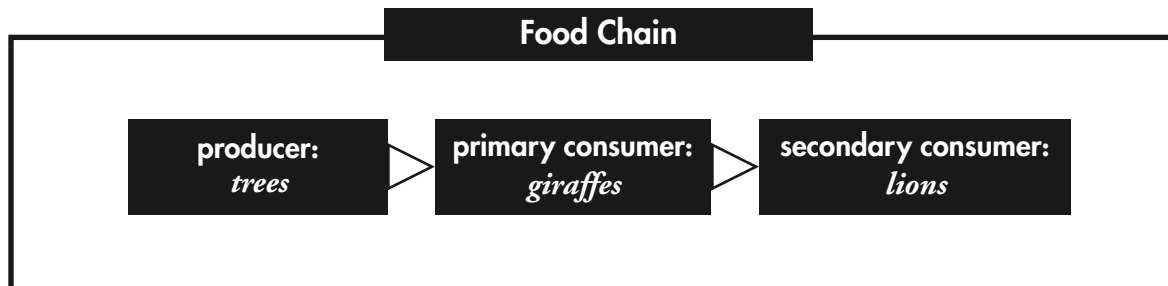
Producers and Consumers

Energy in most ecosystems begins with sunlight. **Producers** (plants) convert the sun's energy into food through **photosynthesis**. Some animals in the ecosystem gain their energy by feeding only on the producers. These animals are the herbivores, or primary **consumers**.

Predators and Prey

Animals that feed on other animals are called carnivores, or secondary consumers. Most carnivores are predators and are adapted to catch and kill their prey. A successful predator will hunt prey that is easy to catch, such as an old or injured animal. It would be a waste of energy to hunt and chase prey for a long time. In this way, energy is transferred from the producers to the primary consumers to the secondary consumers.

A food chain shows how each living thing gets its food. For example, a simple food chain links the trees, the giraffes that eat tree leaves, and the lions that eat the giraffes. Each link in this chain is food for the next link. A food chain nearly always starts with plant life and usually ends with an animal.



ACTIVE READER

1 Identify Underline the sentences in paragraph 1 that explain what a primary consumer is.

2 Compare What is the difference between a producer and a consumer?

A producer _____

A consumer _____

3 Question A question about competition I still need to answer is . . .