

Geography

The word agriculture is derived from Latin words “ager” or “Agri” meaning soil and culture meaning cultivation. The transformation from a plant to a finished product involves three types of economic activities. These are primary, secondary and tertiary activities.

- Primary activities include all those connected with extraction and production of natural resources. Agriculture, fishing and gathering are some good examples.
- Secondary activities are concerned with the processing of these resources. Manufacturing of steel, baking of bread and weaving of cloth are examples of this activity.
- Tertiary activities provide support to the primary and secondary sectors through services. Transport, trade, banking, insurance and advertising are examples of tertiary activities.

Agriculture is a primary activity. It includes growing crops, fruits, vegetables, flowers and rearing livestock. In the world, 50 % of persons are engaged in agricultural activity. Two-thirds of India’s population is still dependent on agriculture. Favorable topography of soil and climate is vital for agricultural activity. The land on which the crops are grown is known as arable land.

Farm System:

- (i) Agriculture or farming is a system in which seeds, fertilizers, machinery and labour are important inputs.
- (ii) Ploughing, sowing, irrigation, weeding, and harvesting are some of the operations.
- (iii) The outputs from the system include crops, dairy, wool and poultry products.

Type of Farming:

- (i) Farming depends upon the geographical conditions, demand of produce, labour and level of technology.
- (ii) Subsistence farming and commercial farming are the two types of farming.

Subsistence Farming: Subsistence farming is practices to meet the needs of the farmer’s family

Intensive Subsistence Agriculture: In this farming, the farmer cultivates a small plot of land using simple tools and more labour. Rice is the main crop. Other crops include wheat, maize, pulses and oil seeds.

Primitive Subsistence Agriculture: Primitive subsistence agriculture includes shifting cultivation and nomadic herding.

- **Shifting Cultivation:** In shifting cultivation, after cultivation the soil is abandoned and the cultivator moves to a new plot. Shifting cultivation is also known as ‘slash and burn’ agriculture.

- **Nomadic Herding:** In nomadic herding, herdsman move from place to place with their animals for fodder and water along defined routes. Sheep, yak and goats are the herding animals.

Commercial Farming: In commercial farming crops are grown and animals are reared grown and animals are reared for sale in market.

Commercial Grain Farming: In commercial grain farming crops like wheat and maize are grown for commercial purpose. This farming practiced in temperate grasslands of North America, Europe and Asia.

- **Mixed Farming:** In mixed farming, the land is used for growing food and fodder crops and rearing livestock.

- **Plantation:** Plantations are a type of commercial farming where single crop of tea, coffee, sugarcane, cashew, rubber, banana or cotton are grown.

- **Major Crops:** A variety of crops or many crops are grown to meet the requirement of the growing population. Major crops of India are: Rice, Wheat, Millets, Maize, cotton, jute, coffee, tea.

- **Agriculture Development:** Agriculture Development refers to efforts made to increase farm production in order to meet the growing demand of increasing population.

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of the increasing population. This can be achieved in many ways such as increasing the cropped area, the number of crops grown, improving irrigation facilities, use of fertilizers and high yielding variety of seeds. Mechanization of agriculture is also another aspect of agricultural development. The ultimate aim of agricultural development is to increase food security.

Developing countries with large populations usually practice intensive agriculture where crops are grown on smallholdings mostly for subsistence. Larger holdings are more suitable for commercial agriculture as in the USA, Canada and Australia. With the help of two case studies of farms, we can understand agriculture in developing and developed countries.

- **A Farm in India:** A typical Indian, rajeev Lal has a farmland of about 1.5 hectares. He purchases high yielding varieties of seeds from the market every alternate year.
- **A Farm in the USA:** The average size of a farm in the USA is about 250 hectares. The farmers grow corn, soyabean, wheat, cotton and sugar beet.

Major Crops

A large variety of crops are grown to meet the requirement of a growing population and supply raw materials for agro-based industries. Major food crops are wheat, rice, maize and millets. Jute and cotton are fiber crops. Important beverage crops are tea and coffee.

Rice

Rice is the staple diet of the tropical and subtropical regions. Rice needs high temperature, high humidity and rainfall. It grows best in alluvial clayey soil which can retain water. China leads in the production of rice followed by India, Japan, Sri Lanka and Egypt. In favorable climatic conditions as in West Bengal and Bangladesh 2-3 crops are grown in a year.

Wheat

Wheat requires moderate temperature and rainfall during the growing season and bright sunshine at the time of harvest. It thrives best in a well-drained loamy soil. Wheat is grown extensively in the USA, Canada, Argentina, Russia, Ukraine, Australia and India. In India, it is grown in winter.

Millets

They are also known as coarse grains and can be grown on less fertile and sandy soils. It is a hardy crop that needs low rainfall and high to moderate temperature and adequate rainfall. Jowar, bajra and ragi are grown in India. Other countries are Nigeria, China and Niger.

Maize

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Maize requires moderate temperature, rainfall and lots of sunshine. It needs well-drained fertile soils. Maize is grown in North America, Brazil, China, Russia, Canada, India, and Mexico.

Cotton

Cotton requires high temperature, light rainfall, 210 frost-free days and bright sunshine for its growth. It grows best on black and alluvial soils. China, USA, India, Pakistan, Brazil and Egypt are the leading producers of cotton. It is one of the main raw materials for the cotton textile industry.

Jute

Jute was also known as the 'Golden Fiber' and was responsible for the Golden Revolution. It grows well on alluvial soil and requires high temperature, heavy rainfall and humid climate. This crop is grown in tropical areas. India and Bangladesh are their leading producers.

Coffee

Coffee requires a warm and wet climate and well-drained loamy soil. Hill slopes are more suitable for the growth of this crop. Brazil is the leading producer followed by Columbia and India.

Tea

Tea is a beverage crop grown on plantations. This requires a cool climate and well-distributed high rainfall throughout the year for the growth of its tender leaves. It needs well-drained loamy soils and gentle slopes. Labour in large numbers is required to pick the leaves. Kenya, India, China, Sri Lanka produce the best quality tea in the world.

Important Terms

Agriculture: Derived from Latin words in which ager or agri means soil and culture means cultivation. It is the science and art of cultivation of the soil, raising crops and rearing livestock. It is also called farming.

Sericulture: commercial rearing of silkworms.

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Pisciculture: Breeding of fish in specially constructed tanks and ponds.

Viticulture: Cultivation of grapes.

Horticulture: Growing vegetables, flowers and fruits for commercial use.

Mixed farming: The land is used for growing food and fodder crops and rearing livestock.

Organic farming: It is the type of farming in which organic manure and natural pesticides are used instead of chemicals. No genetic modification is done to increase the yield of the crop.