

Name: _____

Date: _____

Agriculture

Instructions: Read the article to answer the questions below.

Agriculture, or farming, is one part of a food system that includes the people, businesses, and resources needed to produce, process, and transport food to consumers.

Agriculture includes both growing and harvesting crops and raising animals, or livestock. It provides the food and many raw materials that humans need to survive.

In many parts of the world, farmers grow only enough

crops and raise enough livestock to feed the farmer and the farmer's family. There is not much left over to sell or trade. This is called subsistence farming. These farms are usually very small with little technology.

Farms that provide food for many people are called commercial farms. Commercial farms are large. They can produce a huge amount of crops or raise large herds of livestock. These farms use advanced machines and equipment.

Raising Plants and Animals

The products of agriculture that people eat come from both plants and animals. Plant foods include fruits, vegetables, and grains. Meat, dairy (milk) products, and eggs are some of the most common animal foods.

People practice agriculture on farms, on ranches, and in orchards all over the world. Farmers raise crops and livestock in every climate and in all kinds of different soil. Some regions receive a lot of sunlight or rainfall. Others have colder or drier weather. All places have their own kinds of agriculture.

Plants and livestock need air, water, and nourishment to stay alive. If a plant does not have the kind of soil it needs, it may die. Similarly, animals also need to have the right climate and the right food to survive. Farmers try to raise the kinds of livestock and plants that will do well in their region. If they do not have perfect natural conditions, they try to create the best conditions possible. For example, many farmers in dry areas use irrigation, or artificial watering.



A farmer plows a field with a tractor. A plow is used to turn and break up the soil before the seeds are planted.

Methods

Most farmers follow the same steps to grow, harvest, and sell crops:

- plow the field
- plant the seeds
- water the crops
- harvest the crops
- process the crops
- ship to market

Many farmers use chemicals and pesticides (chemicals used to kill insects) to help their crops grow. However, these chemicals can harm people and the environment. Organic farming rejects the use of chemicals. Organic farmers use natural methods to protect the soil, help crops thrive, and ward off pests.

Food Distribution

The food people eat comes from farms. Crops all over the world make it to people's tables in much the same way. When crops are ready to be eaten (and sometimes before), they are harvested. Farmers and laborers use their hands or machines to pick all the crops. The crops are then boxed to be sent to the market. Sometimes, this market is a small, local market where people from the area come to buy fresh food. Other times, the food is loaded onto large trucks and shipped to supermarkets far away. Some fruits and vegetables are taken to factories where they are frozen or processed into canned goods.

1. What is the difference between subsistence farming and commercial farming?
2. Why do farmers grow different crops or raise different animals in different regions?
3. How does agriculture connect people across the world?

Agriculture Answer Key

1. What is the difference between subsistence farming and commercial farming?

Subsistence farming means farmers grow only enough food to feed themselves and their families on small farms with little or none left to sell or trade. Commercial farming means using advanced machines and equipment to produce large amounts of food for sale to feed many people.

2. Why do farmers grow different crops or raise different animals in different regions?

Farmers choose crops and animals that grow best in their region's climate, soil, and weather conditions. For example, some areas are dry or cold, while others have more sunlight or rain, so farmers raise what can survive and thrive there.

3. How does agriculture connect people across the world?

Agriculture connects people across the world through the way food is grown, processed, and distributed. Farmers grow food in one place, and it can be processed in another place. Then that food can be sold in markets near or far. Food grown in one part of the world can be enjoyed in other parts of the world.