

## Unit 1

# Agriculture

Agriculture is essentially a manipulation of ecosystems to produce or raise organic matter (crop plants or livestock) from the use of land. By employing various technologies and techniques, production can be maximized (use of fertilizers, genetic developments, irrigation, mechanization), while other methods are used to minimize loss of crops through pests and weeds (including use of pesticides, fungicides, herbicides, mechanical weeding, biological control).

The purpose of agriculture has traditionally and primarily been to meet the demand for agricultural products, mainly food, but also raw materials for fiber manufacture. Although the underlying purpose for agriculture has not changed, the nature, structure and ways in which these demands have been met have changed greatly over the last few decades, and will continue to do so.

Changes have resulted from a variety of factors. These include: patterns of consumption of agricultural products; food distribution and processing; genetic development of agricultural production and

other technological developments; the progressive globalisation of agricultural markets; and the influence of national and international agricultural policies.

The failure of European agriculture to meet demand during World War II and shortly after, made security of food production the main objective of agricultural policy from the late 1940s. Every country in Europe has encouraged its farmers to produce more food through a variety of mechanisms, including price support, other subsidies and support for research and development.

Stanners et al, 1995:447-8.

## Special Terms

Organic matter:	matter found in or produced by, living animals and plants, which contains carbon, hydrogen, oxygen and often nitrogen and sulfur.
Crops:	any product of the soil. In a narrow sense, the product of a harvest obtained by labor, as distinguished from natural production or wild growth.
Crop plants:	a plant cultivated by man for its fruit, fiber, root, flower, etc.
Livestock:	any domestic animal produced or kept for farm or market purposes.
Mechanization:	to change a process so that it is run by machines rather than people.
Pest:	anything such as insect, animal, plant or other organism that causes injury or loss to a

Weed:	growing crop, or injury or irritation to domestic animals or man. a plant out of place. For example, a rose growing in a field of wheat is a weed.
Fertilizer:	any organic or inorganic material added to soil or water to provide plant nutrients and to increase the growth, yield, quantity or nutritive value of the plants grown therein.
Herbicide:	any chemical used for killing plants.
Fungicide:	any chemical used for killing fungi.

## Practice Tasks



### a. Find words in the text that mean:

- Increase as much as possible: .....
- Plan of action: .....
- Lack of success: .....
- A chemical used to kill pests: .....
- Natural product which manufacturing processes turn into another: .....
- Period of ten years: .....
- Quantity used: .....
- Money paid especially by government to keep prices down, to help an industry etc.: .....
- A group of plants and living creatures interacting with each other and with their surroundings: .....

**b. Select one of the options to fill in the blanks.**

1. Living animals are capable of producing .....  
a) crops                  b) weeds                  c) organic                  d) subsidies  
matter
2. Another word for domestic animals is .....  
a) fungi                  b) farm                  c) food                  d) livestock
3. Government financial support is often termed as .....  
a) subsidy                  b) sum                  c) security                  d) objective
4. .... is when people resort to artificial application of water to soil.  
a) manipulation      b) irrigation                  c) production      d) globalization
5. Anything causing injury to a crop is considered to be a .....  
a) pest                  b) test                  c) herbicide                  d) fiber
6. A chemical used for killing plants is .....  
a) fertilizer                  b) pesticide                  c) fungicide                  d) herbicide
7. Through agriculture we can get ..... to produce fibers  
a) raw materials      b) food                  c) research                  d) techniques  
processing
8. .... Production can be affected by weeds.  
a) crop                  b) genetic                  c) biological                  d) international

## Topic Elaboration



Use the text to answer the questions:

1. Is agriculture important for people? If yes/no, why?  
.....
2. What techniques do farmers use to maximize crop production?  
.....
3. Name at least three factors that cause loss or minimization of crop production.  
.....
4. Is the agricultural policy of Greece compatible with the CAP. If yes/no why?  
.....
5. What was the main objective of the agricultural policies of the European countries after the second world war?  
.....

## Reading

Further

### The EU Common Agricultural Policy

The EU Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) is the single most influential agricultural policy in Europe. Before its 1992 reform, the heart of the policy, in most cases was the system of guaranteed high prices for unlimited production. These guarantees encouraged surpluses of produce such as cereals, beef, dairy products (milk) and wine. Quotas on some products were introduced during the 1980s but the purpose of these was to maintain guaranteed high prices.

Stanners et al, 1995:462.