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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 globalization 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.

| 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 | any 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 growing crop, or injury or irritation to domestic animals or man. |
| Weed | 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

Task 1 *True or False?*

1. Loss of crops may be maximized with the use of pesticides. []
2. Agriculture aims only to meet food demand in the world. []
3. Mechanical weeding aims to protect loss of crops due to pests. []
4. Fiber production raw materials are produced by agricultural products. []
5. Land is not essential in agriculture. []
6. Adequate food production is one of the aims of agricultural policies. []

