

History of Agriculture

History of Agriculture – Study Notes

1. Why Agriculture Matters

- **Foundation of civilization** – surplus food → permanent settlements, specialization, trade.
 - **Driver of social, economic, and environmental change** – population growth, urbanization, land use, climate impact.
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2. Chronology & Key Phases

Period	Approx. Dates (global)	Main Characteristics	Representative Regions
Pre-Agricultural / Foraging	??10?000?BCE	Nomadic hunting?gathering; low population density	Worldwide
Neolithic Revolution	10?000–6?000? BCE	First systematic cultivation & animal domestication; emergence of villages	Fertile Crescent (Mesopotamia), Levant, Anatolia, Nile Valley
Early River? Valley Civilizations	6?000–3?000? BCE	Irrigation, plow, grain surpluses; state formation	Mesopotamia, Egypt, Indus, Yellow River (China)
Bronze Age Agriculture	3?000–1?200? BCE	Metal tools, expanded trade, crop diversification	Mediterranean, Near East, Central Asia
Classical & Imperial Agronomy	1?200?BCE–500 ?CE	Large?scale estates, tax? based farming, spread of crops via empire	Greece, Rome, Maurya, Han China
Medieval Agrarian Systems	500–1500?CE	Feudal manors, three?field rotation, rise of market towns	Europe, Islamic world, Song China
Columbian Exchange	1492 onward	Transfer of crops, livestock, pathogens between Old & New Worlds	Global (Atlantic world)
Industrial Agriculture	18th–20th?C	Mechanization, synthetic fertilizers, hybrid seeds, agribusiness	Europe, North America, later worldwide

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Green Revolution	1940s–1970s	High-yield varieties, irrigation, pesticides ? dramatic yield rise	Asia (India, Pakistan, Mexico), Latin America
Sustainable & Precision Agriculture	1990s–present	GPS, sensors, biotech, agro-ecology, climate-smart practices	Global

3. Core Innovations & Their Impact

Innovation	Approx. Origin	What It Changed
Domestication of Plants	10?000?BCE (wheat, barley, rice, maize)	Reliable food source; selection for larger seeds, non-shattering
Domestication of Animals	9?000?BCE (goat, sheep, cattle, pig)	Meat, milk, labor, manure for fertilizer
Irrigation (Canals, Shadufs)	6?000?BCE (Mesopotamia, Egypt)	Cultivation in arid zones; larger, predictable yields
Plow (scratch & later heavy plow)	4?000?BCE (Mesopotamia) ? 1?000?BCE (Northern Europe)	Soil turnover, deeper root growth, expansion into heavy soils
Crop Rotation & Fallow	2?000?BCE (Roman “triennial” system)	Soil fertility maintenance, reduced pest buildup
Metal Tools (bronze, iron)	3?000?BCE (Bronze) ? 1?200?BCE (Iron)	Faster land preparation, larger fields

**Seed Selection &