

II Types of Subsistence Farming (5 types)

A. Shifting Cultivation

1. In shifting cultivation, subsistence farmers rotate the fields they cultivate (or farm) in order to allow the soil to replenish its nutrients, rather than farming the same plot of land over and over.

2. Shifting cultivation is different from crop rotation, in which the farmer changes the crop type, not the plot of land, in order to keep the soil healthy.

a) Farming the same type of crop repeatedly on the same plot of land leeches the soil of nutrients that are needed for healthy crops.

3. Shifting cultivation is often found in the tropical zones, especially in rain forest regions in Africa, the Amazon River Basin in South America, and throughout SE Asia, b/c topsoil is thin there. Rains wash away nutrients.

B. Slash-and-Burn Subsistence Farming

1. The common way that farmers in these regions ~~to~~ prepare a new plot of land for farming is through slash-and-burn agriculture.

2. The land is cleared by cutting the existing plants on the land then burning the rest to create a cleared plot of new farmland.
(called swidden)

3. Slash-and-Burn (swidden) is not dependent on advanced technology, only on human labor and the presence of extensive acreage b/c plots are frequently abandoned once the soil quality becomes poor and new land must be made swidden for a new crop.

4. Often swidden farmers will mix different seeds on the same plot of farmland, a practice known as intercropping.

(a) Intercropping helps grow food for a balanced diet and reduces the risk of crop failure.

5. Slash-and-Burn has caused some environmental problems in some areas.

(a) Rising population pressures are causing farmers to try and produce more food for more people on less land.

(b) Many swidden agriculturists are being forced to reduce the period of time the farmed land lies fallow, the period the farmland is not farmed and recovers from producing a crop.

(c) By farming too fast, the soils are damaged and never fully regain their nutrients.

6. Shifting cultivation is being replaced by more money making farming practices

Ex: Cattle, logging, cash crops.

C. Intensive Subsistence Farming

1. Intensive subsistence agriculture is when a farmer cultivates a small amount of land very efficiently to produce food for the farmer's family to eat.

(a) Usually found in fertile areas that are highly populated

Ex) China, India, SE Asia.

2. Subsistence farming is not intended for sale at the marketplace

3. Extensive subsistence agriculture is intended for low population densities with extensive amounts of available land.

4. Intensive subsistence farmers make the most use of their small plots of land to feed their families, often using ingenuity in their techniques.

Ex) terrace farming pyramids in SE Asia.

5. Rice is the dominant intensive subsistence ag. crop in Areas such as South China, India, SE Asia, and Bangladesh

6. In areas where it is too cold for rice, grains like wheat, corn and millet will be grown.

7. Often farmers will double crop which is planting and harvesting a crop on a field more than once a year.

Ex) Corn + Wheat

D. Pastoralism

1. A form of subsistence agriculture involving the breeding and herding of animals to produce food, shelter and clothing for survival.

2. Pastoralism is usually practiced in climates with very limited, if any, arable land, such as grasslands, deserts, and steppes.

3. Sometimes, pastoralism can be sedentary, when pastoralists live in one place and herd in another.

4. Can be nomadic, when pastoralists travel with their herds and do not settle in one place for very long.

Ex) Mongolia.

5. Often pastoralism involves the herding of cattle, sheep, camels, and goats and is practiced in arid climates in North Africa, Central & Southern Africa, the Mid East and Central Asia.

6. Nomadic pastoralists often practice transhumance, the movement of animal herds to cooler highland areas in the summer to warmer lowlands in winter.

7. Declining worldwide