

Chapter 3: Agriculture

— Told as a Classroom Story —

Teacher: Mr Om Sikrwar | Characters: Arjun, Priya, Rohan, Sonu

Scene 1 — A Golden Morning in the Fields

One bright morning, four friends — Arjun, Priya, Rohan and Sonu — were walking past the fields near their village. A farmer was busily tilling his land.

Rohan (excitedly): "Uncle, what are you doing? This land was bare just last week!"

Farmer: "Son, I am preparing to sow wheat. I have already added manure and now I am ploughing the soil."

Priya: "So the bread we eat every day — it all starts right here!"

Mr Sikrwar Explains — What is Agriculture?

Mr Sikrwar (stepping forward): "Exactly, Priya! This is agriculture. The word comes from two Latin words — Ager meaning soil and Culture meaning cultivation. Agriculture is a primary activity."

Mr Sikrwar drew three circles on the ground with a stick and explained:

Activity	Meaning	Examples
Primary	Direct extraction from nature	Farming, fishing, gathering
Secondary	Processing raw materials into finished goods	Baking bread, weaving cloth, steelmaking
Tertiary	Providing services	Banking, transport, trade, insurance

Sonu: "So growing wheat is primary, baking biscuits is secondary, and selling at the market is tertiary!"

Mr Sikrwar: "Absolutely right! Well done, Sonu!"

Scene 2 — Types of Farming

Everyone sat beneath a mango tree at the edge of the field and drank water.

Arjun: "Sir, is farming done the same way everywhere in the world?"

Mr Sikrwar: "Not at all! Farming takes many forms. Let us go through them one by one."

A) Subsistence Farming

When a farmer grows crops only to feed his own family — not for sale — it is called subsistence farming. It has two forms:

1. Intensive Subsistence Farming — Small plots, high labour, two to three crops per year on the same land.
Practised in densely populated monsoon regions of South, South-East and East Asia.
Principal crop — rice.
2. Primitive Subsistence Farming — Two methods:
 - * Shifting Cultivation (Slash and Burn): Trees are felled and burnt; ash enriches the soil. Crops such as maize, yam and cassava are grown. Once fertility is exhausted, the plot is abandoned and a new one cleared.
Known as Jhumming (North-East India), Milpa (Mexico), Roca (Brazil), Ladang (Malaysia).
 - * Nomadic Herding: Herders move across semi-arid regions — Sahara, Central Asia, parts of India — with sheep, camels, yak and goats, following defined routes in search of fodder and water.

B) Commercial Farming

When crops and livestock are raised for sale in the market, using large tracts of land, heavy machinery and substantial capital, it is commercial farming.

Type	Key Features	Major Regions
Commercial Grain Farming	Wheat and maize; vast farms; sparse population; severe winters limit crops to one per year	Temperate grasslands of North America, Europe and Asia
Mixed Farming	Crops and livestock reared together	Europe, eastern USA, Argentina, south-east Australia, New Zealand, South Africa
Plantation Agriculture	Single crop over vast area; heavy labour and capital; transport network essential	Tea (India/Sri Lanka), Coffee (Brazil), Rubber (Malaysia), Sugar cane, Cashew

Scene 3 — Identifying Major Crops

A market stall nearby displayed a variety of crops. Mr Sikrwar handed each friend a different sample and explained:

Crop	Climate & Soil	Major Producers
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Rice	High temperature, high humidity, heavy rainfall; alluvial clayey soil that retains water.	China (largest producer), India, Japan, Sri Lanka, Egypt
Wheat	Moderate temperature during growing season; bright sunshine at harvest; well-drained loamy soil.	USA, Canada, Russia, Ukraine, Australia, India (winter crop)
Millets	Coarse grains; grow on less fertile, sandy soils; low rainfall; hardy crop. Varieties: jowar, bajra, ragi.	India, Nigeria, China, Niger
Maize	Moderate temperature, ample rainfall, lots of sunshine; well-drained fertile soils.	North America, Brazil, China, Russia, Canada, India, Mexico
Cotton	High temperature; light rainfall; 210 frost-free days; bright sunshine; black and alluvial soils.	China, USA, India, Pakistan, Brazil, Egypt
Jute — the Golden Fibre	High temperature; heavy rainfall; humid climate; alluvial soil.	India and Bangladesh (leading producers)
Coffee	Warm, wet climate; well-drained loamy soil; hill slopes preferred.	Brazil (leading producer), Colombia, India
Tea	Cool climate; gentle slopes; well-drained loamy soil; high, well-distributed rainfall.	Kenya, India, China, Sri Lanka (finest quality)

Scene 4 — India and the USA: A Tale of Two Farms

Sonu: "Sir, both India and the USA practise agriculture — so what makes them different?"

Mr Sikrwar: "Excellent question! Let me tell you about two farmers — Munna Lal from India and Joe Horan from the USA."

India — Munna Lal (Ghazipur, Uttar Pradesh)

Farm size: 1.5 hectares
 Crops: wheat and rice
 Tools: bullocks for ploughing; rented tractor; tubewell for irrigation
 Sells produce at the local mandi
 Keeps two buffaloes and hens
 Family members assist with all tasks
 Member of a co-operative society
 Occasionally borrows from a bank or the co-operative for seeds and implements

USA — Joe Horan (Iowa State)

Farm size: approximately 300 hectares
 Crop: maize
 Technology: satellite-linked computer; soil-testing laboratory
 Scientific fertiliser programme
 Modern heavy machinery throughout
 Manages the farm largely on his own
 Monitors soil and water resources precisely
 Takes careful measures to control pests

Priya: "So India is a developing country with small farms and intensive labour, while the USA is a developed country with vast farms and advanced technology!"

Mr Sikrwar: "Precisely, Priya. Both grow food, but the scale and the methods are worlds apart."

Scene 5 — Agricultural Development and the Final Lesson

Arjun: "Sir, can Indian agriculture be improved further?"

Mr Sikrwar: "Absolutely! That is what Agricultural Development means — efforts to increase farm production so as to meet the growing demand of an ever-increasing population."

Aspects of Agricultural Development:
Increasing the area of cultivated land
Using High Yielding Variety (HYV) seeds
Improving irrigation facilities
Using fertilisers and pesticides correctly
Mechanisation — tractors, harvesters
Training farmers in modern agricultural practices
Improving storage and market linkages
Ultimate aim: Food Security

Rohan: "So food security means every person has access to enough safe and nutritious food at all times?"

Mr Sikrwar: "Word perfect, Rohan. Food security exists when all people, at all times, have access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life."

Chapter Summary — From Mr Sikrwar's Notes

1. Agriculture is a primary activity — it involves growing crops, fruits, vegetables and rearing livestock.
2. Two main types of farming: Subsistence Farming and Commercial Farming.
3. Shifting cultivation (slash and burn) is also called Jhumming in North-East India.
4. Plantation agriculture involves a single crop grown on a large scale; transport networks are essential.
5. Rice — China is the leading producer; Wheat — USA, Canada, Russia, India; Cotton — China, USA, India.
6. Jute is known as the 'Golden Fibre'; India and Bangladesh are the leading producers.

7. Tea — Kenya, India, China, Sri Lanka; Coffee — Brazil is the largest producer.

8. India: small farms, intensive labour | USA: vast farms, advanced technology.

9. Agricultural Development aims ultimately at achieving Food Security for all.

Word Origin of 'Agriculture':

From Latin Ager (soil / field) + Cultura (cultivation / tilling).

The word literally means 'cultivating the soil'.

Related Terms:

Sericulture — commercial rearing of silkworms

Pisciculture — breeding of fish in specially constructed tanks and ponds

Viticulture — cultivation of grapes

Horticulture — growing vegetables, flowers and fruits for commercial use

*"Agriculture feeds civilisation." — Chapter 3 | Teacher: Mr Om Sikrwar | Class 8
Geography*