

Name: _____

Agriculture & Natural Resources in Ancient Greece

Demeter was the Greek Goddess for Agriculture in Ancient Greece, many Greeks worshiped her in hopes their crop would be successful.



Agriculture was the foundation of the Ancient Greek economy. Nearly 80% of the population was involved in this activity. During the early part of Greek history, diet was based on cereals, mainly barley. The Greek word for grains is *sitos*, though usually translated as wheat, could be any type of cereal grain). It did not take long for demand of barley to outpace production capabilities, as *arable* (fertile land that can grow plants) land was limited. The need for more land to grow food also explains Greek *colonization* (when people move and make a new place their home).

Greek land was well suited for olive trees, which provided olive oil. The growing of olive trees dates back to early Greek history. Olive plantations are a long-term investment: it takes more than twenty years for the tree to provide fruit, and it only fruits every other year. Grapes also do well in the rocky soil, but demand a lot of care. These core crops were added to by gardens (cabbage, onion, garlic, lentils, chick pea, beans fig, almond, apple, and pear trees) and herb gardens (sage, mint, thyme, savory, oregano).

Goats and sheep quickly became the most common livestock because they are less difficult to raise than cows. Goat and sheep also provide meat, wool, and milk (usually in the form of cheese). Pork and poultry (chicken and geese) were also raised. Oxen were rare and normally used as a work animal, though they were occasionally used as sacrificial animals. Donkeys, mules and their mixes were raised as pack animals. Horses were raised on the plains of Thessaly and Argolis; it was a luxury animal, signifying aristocracy.

Natural resources of gold and silver were available in the mountains of Thrace in northern Greece and on the island of Siphnos, while silver was mined from Laurion in Attica. Supplies of iron ores were also available on the mainland and in the Aegean islands. Wood was exploited, primarily for domestic use, as homes and wagons were made of wood. The Greek forests located in the highlands were destroyed for goat and charcoal production; it was not long before it had to be imported especially for ship production.

Name: _____

Checking for Understanding

What was the main food the Ancient Greeks ate?

What is arable land? How did the lack of arable land affect the Ancient Greeks?

What makes growing olive trees so difficult?

What animal was a sign of luxury for the Ancient Greeks? Where were they raised?

Critical Thinking

The Ancient Greeks had to import their wood from other countries, because they cut too much of it down. What lessons can we learn from the ancient Greeks about not over using our natural resources? What are the environmental impacts on nature, and the economic (money) impacts on the society? *(full sentence answers please!)*
