

MODULE 1

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UNIT 1 SCOPE OF AGRICULTURE

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Simply defined, “agriculture” means cultivation and tillage of the soil of a field, in order to prepare a suitable seedbed, eliminate weed growth and improve the physical condition of the soil. However, modern “agriculture” covers all activities essential to food, feed, fibre production, including techniques for raising and “processing” livestock, and increasingly widening areas of human efforts and practices to ensure survival and sustainable development.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

This study unit is expected to:

- increase the student’s understanding of the multi-faceted nature of agricultural practice
- encourage capacity building in the various entrepreneurship opportunities for self-reliance.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Definition of “Agriculture”

Agriculture is the production of food, feed, fibre, fuel and other goods by the systematic raising of plants and animals. It encompasses farming, tending of orchards and vineyards and ranching.

3.2 Agricultural Activities

Farming covers a wide spectrum of practices, ranging from subsistence agriculture (traditional production of food for family consumption and animal feeding), intensive agriculture, industrial agriculture to animal traction and farm mechanization. All these activities have a common objective of maximization of financial income from grain, produce or livestock.

In modern times, agricultural activities include pastoralism (nomadic farming), horticulture, fisheries, aquaculture, apiculture, forestry, wildlife conservation, food science technology, production of industrial chemicals and drugs, application of chemical fertilizers, wood ash and limestone, pest control, soil management, hydroponics, crop improvement, irrigation and sanitary engineering, packaging, processing and marketing of agricultural products. In advanced countries of the World, airplanes, helicopters, trucks and tractors and combines are involved in seeding, spraying operations for insect and disease control, harvesting, aerial top dressing and transportation of perishable products. The use of radio and television for disseminating vital weather reports, etc. as well as computerization of farm operations are also agricultural activities.

3.3 Classification of Agricultural Practices

Agriculture can be distinctly classified into “primary” and “secondary” branches.

3.3.1 Primary Agriculture

This involves farming in all its branches. These include certain specific farming operations such as cultivation and tillage of soil, production, cultivation, growing and harvesting of any agricultural or horticultural commodity and the raising of livestock, bees, poultry and fur-bearing animals. Other primary activities include dairying (including putting the milk in containers, cooling it, and storage on the farm), the production, cultivation, growing and harvesting of trees or timber products by a farmer or on a farm, the production and processing of crude gum

(oleoresin), gum spirits of turpentine and gum resin from a living tree and by the producing farmer. The employment of man in any of these direct farming activities is called agriculture, irrespective of whether he is employed by a farmer or the activity takes place in enclosed houses (greenhouse or mushroom cellars) or on an open field in a village, city, industrial premises or non-farm premises.

3.3.2 Secondary Agriculture

This includes operations other than those which fall within the primary activities of agriculture. These are either farming or non-farming practices performed either by a farmer or on a farm leading to, or in addition to, such farming or non-farming operations. Typical examples are the separation of cream from milk, bottling of milk and cream, or making butter and cheese by a farmer or on a farm, when not performed on milk produced by other farmers or produced on other farms.

4.0 CONCLUSION

In this unit, you have learned about the meaning of agricultural activity, classes of farming and non-farming activities and the diverse nature of farming. This knowledge will facilitate the understanding of the subsequent study units in this course.

5.0 SUMMARY

Agriculture involves direct (primary) and non-direct (secondary) farming practices which deal with the production of food, fibre, animal feeds and processing of agricultural products for man's use.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. Define the term "agriculture" in its broad sense.
2. List four modern farming activities.
3. State the difference between primary and secondary agriculture.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

US Department of Labor in the 21st Century. www.dol.gov

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