

Topic: Subsistence vs Commercial Agriculture

Lesson Objectives:

By the end of this lesson, students should be able to:

- Define subsistence agriculture and commercial agriculture
 - Identify the characteristics of each system
 - Differentiate between the two systems
 - Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of each
 - Highlight the problems associated with both farming methods
-

1. Definitions

Commercial Agriculture

Subsistence Agriculture

Subsistence agriculture is a type of farming where the farmer produces food mainly for the consumption of themselves and their family. There is little or no surplus for sale.

Commercial Agriculture

Commercial agriculture is the practice of farming where crops and animals are produced primarily for sale in local or international markets. The main goal is profit-making.

2. Characteristics

Subsistence Agriculture

Small farm size (1–3 hectares)

Large farm size (10+ hectares, often in hundreds)

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2. Characteristics

Subsistence Agriculture

Simple tools like hoes, cutlasses

Use of advanced machinery like tractors, harvesters

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2. Characteristics

Subsistence Agriculture

Family labor

Low capital requirement

Hired skilled and
unskilled labor

High capital investment

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2. Characteristics

Subsistence Agriculture

Low productivity

Little or no use of fertilizers or chemicals

High productivity

Use of improved seeds, fertilizers, pesticides

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2. Characteristics

Subsistence Agriculture

Mainly for family consumption

Traditional methods of farming

Mainly for sale/profit

Modern scientific
methods of farming

3. Differences Between Subsistence and Commercial Agriculture

Feature	Subsistence Agriculture	Commercial Agriculture
Purpose	To feed the farmer's family	To make profit
Scale of Production	Small-scale	Large-scale
Technology	Manual tools	Mechanized equipment
Labor	Family members	Paid labor force
Market	No formal market	Local and international markets
Examples of Products	Maize, cassava for home use Cocoa, palm oil, rice for export/sale	

4. Advantages and Disadvantages

Advantages of Subsistence Agriculture

- Provides **food security** for rural families
 - Requires **little capital** investment
 - Preserves **traditional farming knowledge**
 - **Less environmental pollution** compared to mechanized farming
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Disadvantages of Subsistence Agriculture

- Low productivity and **poor yield**
 - Cannot meet the **food needs of a large population**
 - **No surplus for trade or storage**
 - Use of **primitive tools** makes work slow and laborious
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Advantages of Commercial Agriculture

- Produces **large quantities of food and cash crops**

- **Provides employment** for workers
 - Promotes **technological development** in agriculture
 - Generates **foreign exchange** through exports
 - Contributes to **economic growth**
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Disadvantages of Commercial Agriculture

- **High cost** of machines, fertilizers, and chemicals
 - Can cause **environmental degradation** (e.g., soil erosion, deforestation)
 - **Displacement of small farmers** and rural communities
 - **Overdependence on mechanization** may lead to unemployment in rural areas
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5. Problems of Both Systems

Problems of Subsistence Agriculture

- **Low technology adoption**
 - Lack of **storage facilities**
 - **Unpredictable weather patterns**
 - Pest and disease attacks
 - **Poor access to markets**
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Problems of Commercial Agriculture

- **High capital requirement** (machinery, land, labor)
 - **Soil depletion** from intensive farming
 - **Monoculture** (growing only one crop) increases disease risk
 - Environmental concerns like **pollution and erosion**
 - **Market price fluctuations** for cash crops
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6. Summary of Key Points

Concept	Meaning
Subsistence Farming	Farming for family use, small-scale
Commercial Farming	Farming for profit, large-scale
Main Difference	Purpose: family consumption vs profit
Challenges	Both face labor, climate, pest, and market issues

7. Conclusion

Both **subsistence and commercial agriculture** are important to the economy but serve **different purposes**. Understanding their **advantages, disadvantages, and challenges** helps in planning for a better agricultural future.