

CHAPTER 7

Land and its Uses

OBJECTIVES

At the end of this chapter, students should be able to:

- state the meaning of land.
- state the characteristics of land.
- mention the uses of land

7.1 Introduction

Land is the foremost property of a farmer on which crops are planted and animals are raised. Human beings also erect shelter for themselves and their animals on it. In order to have good harvest, it is important that the land on which agricultural crops are grown should be fertile. The fertility of agricultural lands depends on the uses to which the land is put as well as its care and management. Land is the most important resource for agricultural production.

7.2 Meaning of Land

Land is defined as the hardened surface of the earth which supports the cultivation of crops and rearing of animals.

Land is an essential item in the economy of production and as such it is a desirable

asset in agriculture. Land is immovable and cannot be transferred. Minerals of different

kinds, soil, vegetation and animals exist on land. Where there is depression on land,

water gathers to form rivers, lakes, streams and oceans. On land exists soil which is the

base for all agricultural production.

7.3 Characteristics of Land

1. Land is a free gift of nature: It is not manufactured. It is a natural resource. It cannot be multiplied or expanded.

2. Land is limited in supply: It cannot be increased or decreased.

3. Land is immobile: It cannot be moved or relocated from one place to the other. It is fixed or static.

4. Land can appreciate or depreciate in value: Land can appreciate in value with time as a result of development. Land can also depreciate with time which can be as a result of natural hazards like erosion, desert encroachment and flooding.

5. Land is scarce: Land is scarce in some areas while it is vast in some areas. In Nigeria there is a lot of land mass in the North than in the South. Therefore, land must be preserved for the interest of its various uses and posterity.

7.4 Uses of Land

The purpose for which land is used is very important, since land when used carelessly will affect its quality and productivity. The use of land is classified into two groups, namely:

1. Agricultural uses of land
2. Non-agricultural uses of land

Agricultural uses of land

(i) Crop production: Land forms the basis for establishment of arable and permanent crops. It is required that the land for such production must be fertile, flat and free from natural hazards. Food is produced for man and animals, e.g., rice, yam, potatoes, sorghum, millet, cowpea and vegetable. Food is also used as raw material for industries, e.g., oil palm, cocoa rubber and kolanut. During crop production such land should be maintained by application of organic and inorganic fertilizer, irrigation and drainage.

(ii) Livestock production: These are established on land such as sheep, goat, cattle and poultry. Most of the time, land is also used to establish pasture for the upkeep of these animals.

(iii) Forestry: Forests are developed on lands that are not fertile or where there is a vast area of land available due to low population density. Land is used to generate forest products which are utilized by man for various purposes.

Forests provide wood which is used for construction purposes.

Examples of forest reserves in Nigeria are:

- Sakoba forest reserve in Edo State.
- Mamu forest reserve in Anambra.
- Omo forest reserve in Ogun State.
- Afi River forest reserve in Cross-River.
- Samga River forest reserve in Plateau State.
- Awba Hill forest reserve in Oyo State.
- Anara forest reserve in Kaduna State.
- Okomu forest reserve in Edo State.
- Zamfara forest reserve in Zamfara State.

Uses of Forests

- The forest provides wild fruits and bush meat.
- It provides herbs for medicinal purposes.
- The forest serves as tourist centres.
- The pulp from the forest is used in paper industries.
- The forest helps to reduce atmospheric pollutants making the environment conducive for dwelling.

(iv) Wild life and game reserves: Game reserves are biological gardens established to preserve species of plants and animals in their natural habitat.

Large areas of land are set apart for this purpose. Some animals are preserved and saved from extinction. Examples of game reserves in Nigeria include:

- Borgu game reserve in Niger State.

â Yankari game reserve in Bauchi State.

â Zugurman game reserve in Niger State.

â Kainji National park in Niger State.

Some of the animals found in wildlife parks include elephants, lions, monkeys, leopards, snakes, zebra, turtles, tortoise, crocodiles, birds and hippopotamuses.

(v) Zoological gardens: Establishment of zoological gardens are carried out on land where animals of various kinds are looked after for tourist and recreation relaxations. Examples of some zoological gardens are:

â University of Nigerian Nsukka zoological garden.

â Nekede zoological garden.

â Agodi garden, Ibadan.

â Jos zoological garden.

â University of Ibadan zoological garden.

â Obafemi Awolowo University zoological garden.

(vi) Fishery: Land is used for fish farming and the raising of other aquatic organisms. In order to produce fish and other aquatic animals, men resort to construction of fish ponds and dams.

Non-agricultural uses of land

This is the use of land for all other purposes apart from agricultural purpose.

(i) Housing: Land is used for the construction of residential and industrial buildings.

(ii) Recreational facilities: Recreational parks and gardens are constructed on land. They provide facilities for relaxation and amusement.

(iii) Games and sports: Stadia and other sporting facilities are constructed or erected on land.

(iv) Road construction and bridges: Construction of roads and bridges are important for development and commercial activities. Lands that could be used for agriculture are used.

(v) Mining/drilling activities: Land where minerals are located is used for mining purposes. For example, coal and tin deposits are mined in Enugu and Jos, respectively.

(vi) Industrial layout: Areas of land are mapped for industrial layouts. Examples are Nigerian breweries and the Nigerian bottling company.

(vii) Transportation and road networks:

Land is used for the construction of motor parks, railway, airports and other networks.

(viii) Market: Large areas of land are used in building of markets for business transactions.

(ix) Construction of towns and villages: Land is used for the development of towns and villages.

7.5 Factors Affecting Land Availability for Agricultural Purposes

The following factors reduce the availability of land for agricultural purposes:

â **Land tenure system:** Land tenure is the system of land ownership including the rights and obligations governing its acquisition and disposal. In Nigeria, land is mostly acquired through inheritance and

shared among all beneficiaries. Due to increase in population, the fragmented land that was shared becomes too small for individual beneficiary to permit large scale farming. Similarly communal land tenure does not make land available too. Land is jointly owned by community. The utilization of such land must involve all the members of that community. At times, government holds such land in trust for the community and later releases such land for building industrial layouts/estates, thus making lands unavailable for agricultural activities.

â **Climatic condition:** Climatic elements comprise rainfall, wind, light, temperature and humidity. They determine the changes in season and distribution of crops and animals. In Northern Nigeria low annual rainfall and other unfavourable conditions limit crop production.

â **Soil type:** Different types of soils exist on land. Sandy soils have low water retention capacity, and minerals are leached. Such soils are found in desert, they are not suitable for agricultural production while the soil that is rich in clay is difficult to till and heavy. They are liable to water logging and it is not suitable for growing varieties of crop. The choice of land for agricultural activities should be governed by the type of soil in relation to type of crop under consideration. Loamy soil is most ideal for cultivation of crops.

â **Topography:** This influences the type of crop which should be grown on a particular land. Land located on mountainous or hilly areas is not suitable for crop production. Soil here is shallow and can only grow sparse grass vegetation.

â **Population pressure:** The population of the world is on the increase. Population density varies from place to place. The land is fixed, resulting in smaller individual holdings. In every community, individuals need residential buildings. While in the community there is need for the establishment of amenities such as schools, civic and recreation centres. These factors may make farmers seek land elsewhere for farming.

â **Capital:** Capital is needed to develop land. Farmers who are unable to access necessary finance may sell land to others who may use it for purposes other than farming.

â **Labour cost:** High cost of labour limits the farmer's farm size. Most subsistence farmers depend on family labour. Where these are not available the farmer may discontinue his farming activities and sell off his land to those who will use it for non-agricultural purposes.

â **Roads:** Access roads to rural areas help in opening up communities as well as helping in the evacuation of agricultural produce. Most lands that could be used for agricultural purposes are utilised.

â **Government laws:** The land use decree of 1978 prevents individuals from owning land. The law makes it mandatory that government owns the land. People wishing to obtain land must apply for it. Most often, it has been observed that land is granted for housing and industrial purposes instead of agricultural activities.

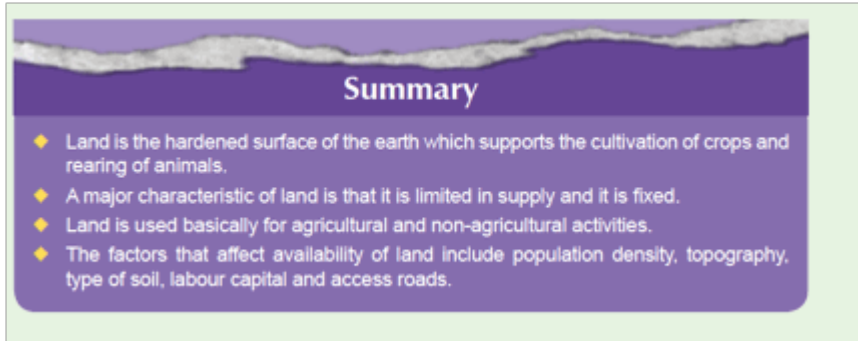
â **Mining and drilling:** Mining and drilling activities also limit land that should be utilised for agricultural activities.

Urbanisation: This is the expansion of towns and cities to accommodate more people, industries and social amenities. All these occupy areas of land that would have been used for agricultural production.

Activity 1: Visit a nearby village and observe the different activities going on.

Activity 2: Record the number of agricultural uses of land and non-agricultural uses.

Activity 3: Discuss your findings with the class and write down your report.



Revision Questions

Essay Questions

1. (a) What is land?
(b) Mention six uses of land.
(c) State four ways through which an agricultural land may appreciate in value. (*WASSCE June 2003*)
2. (a) Define land.
(b) State two major classifications of land based on uses and give examples in each case.
(c) List six factors that influence the availability of land for agricultural production and explain two of the factors.
3. List eight ways in which non-agricultural land can be used. (*NECOSSCE 2002*)
4. (a) State six major uses of land in Nigeria.
(b) Discuss briefly five factors affecting land availability for agricultural production. (*WASSCE June 1988*)
5. (a) State four merits of each of the following:
(i) Agriculture
(ii) Forestry
(iii) Wildlife conservation
(b) List four non-agricultural uses of land. (*WASSCE June 2001*)

Objective Questions

1. All the following factors can influence the use of land except
(a) topography.
(b) population density.
(c) population graphy.
(d) climatic factors.
2. Which of the following statements about land is not correct?
(a) It is a basic requirement for production.
(b) Its supply is limited.
(c) Indiscriminate use can cause it to deteriorate.
(d) It can be relocated.
3. In West Africa, greater part of land is used for
(a) livestock production. (b) market. (c) building houses. (d) game

reserves.

4. Which of the following uses of land should be given more attention in Nigeria for self sufficiency in animal production supply?

- (a) Construction of roads
- (b) Building of research centres
- (c) Construction of fish ponds
- (d) Building of agricultural and forestry structures

5. One of the following forest reserves is located in Edo State.

- (a) Sakoba
- (b) Shasha
- (c) Omo
- (d) Mamu

Answers to Objective Questions

1. (c) 2. (d) 3. (a) 4. (c) 5. (a)