

# Chapter 10

# Food and Agriculture



What food is this African girl carrying? Page 353



Why is this field deliberately flooded? Page 363

## KEY ISSUE 1

Where Did  
Agriculture  
Originate?

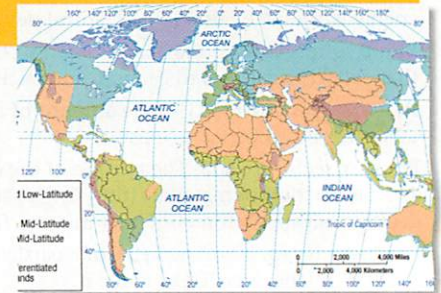


**Inventing Agriculture p. 347**

Agriculture was invented around 10,000 years ago in multiple hearths.

## KEY ISSUE 2

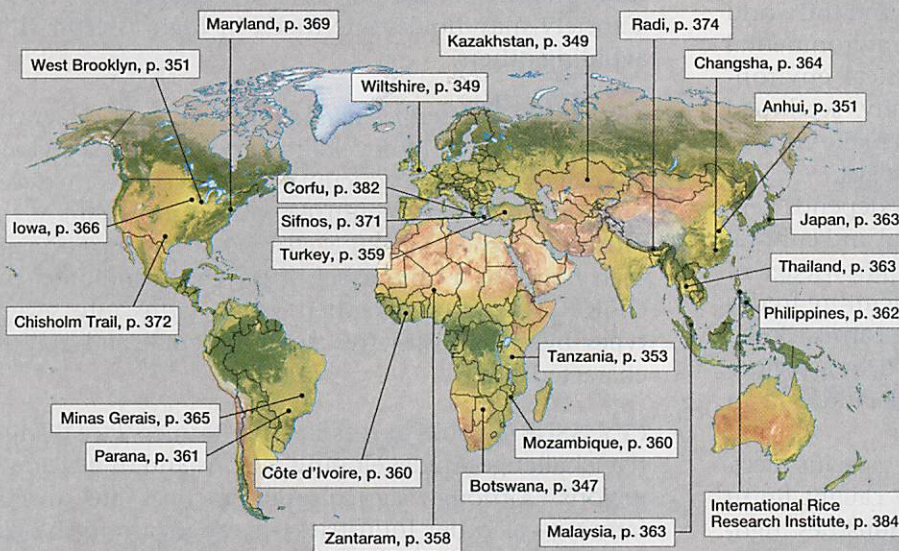
Why Do People  
Consume  
Different Foods?



**The Foods We Consume p. 352**

Humans consume most of their calories through grains.





▲ These farmers in northwestern India are harvesting wheat seeds by beating the stalks by hand. The farm produces about 1,500 kilograms (3,300 pounds) of wheat per year—enough to feed a family. In contrast, the average farmer in Kansas produces 175,000 kilograms (400,000 pounds) of wheat a year. In a developed country, the work of separating the seeds from the stalks is done by a machine, whereas in developing countries, most farmers can't afford machinery, so they must do the work by hand.

### KEY ISSUE 3

**Where Is Agriculture Distributed?**



### Agricultural Regions p. 360

Eleven major agricultural regions approach agriculture differently.

### KEY ISSUE 4

**Why Do Farmers Face Economic Difficulties?**



### Challenges for Farmers p. 374

Farmers have trouble making ends meet in both developing and developed regions.



# Introducing Food and Agriculture

The previous chapter divided economic activities into primary, secondary, and tertiary sectors. This chapter is concerned with the principal form of primary-sector economic activity—agriculture. The next two chapters look at the secondary and tertiary sectors.

Geographers study where agriculture is distributed across Earth. The most important distinction is what happens to farm products. In developing *regions*, the farm products are most often consumed on or near the farm where they are produced, whereas in developed countries, farmers sell what they produce.

Geographers observe a wide variety of agricultural practices. The reason why farming varies around the world relates to the distribution of cultural and environmental factors across *space*. Elements of the physical environment, such as climate, soil, and topography, set broad limits on agricultural practices, and farmers make choices to modify the environment in a variety of ways.

Farming is an economic activity that still depends very much on the local diversity of environmental and cultural conditions in each *place*. Despite increased knowledge of alternatives, farmers practice distinctive agriculture in different regions and, in fact, on neighboring farms. Broad climate patterns influence the crops planted in a region, and local soil conditions influence the crops planted on an individual farm.

Although individual farmers may make specific decisions on a very local *scale*, agriculture is as caught up in the globalization of the economy as other industries. Agriculture is big business in developed countries and a major

component of international trade *connections* in developing countries (Figure 10-1).

After examining the origins and diffusion of agriculture, we will consider the agricultural practices used in developing and developed countries. We will also examine the problems farmers face in each type of region. Although each farm has a unique set of physical conditions and choice of crops, geographers group farms into several types by their distinctive environmental and cultural characteristics.

- **KEY ISSUE 1** examines the origin and diffusion of agriculture. In each society, farmers possess very specific knowledge of their environmental conditions and certain technology for modifying the landscape. Within the limits of their technology, farmers choose from a variety of agricultural practices, based on their perception of the value of each alternative.
- **KEY ISSUE 2** looks at *local diversity* in the consumption of food and nutrition, as well as the distribution of global hunger. Values underlying the consumption of food are influenced by culture. Farmers select agricultural practices based on cultural perceptions, because a society may hold some foods in high esteem while avoiding others.
- **KEY ISSUE 3** describes *where* different types of agriculture are practiced in developing and developed regions. We will consider the agricultural practices used in developing and developed countries. We will also examine the problems farmers face in each type of region. Although each farm has a unique set of physical conditions and choice of crops, geographers group farms into several types by their distinctive environmental and cultural characteristics.
- **KEY ISSUE 4** looks at reasons *why* farmers face distinctive challenges in developing regions and in developed regions. Although agricultural practices are diverse, farming—as other industries—is caught up in the *globalization* of the economy.

▼ **FIGURE 10-1 U.S. WHEAT FARM** Two combine machines on a U.S. farm empty grain into a truck.

