

Agriculture



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The physical environment and natural resources of England are more favourable to agricultural development than those of other parts of the United Kingdom. A greater proportion of the land consists of lowlands with good soils where the climate is conducive to crop growing. The majority of English farms are small, most holdings being less than 250 acres (100 hectares); nonetheless, they are highly mechanised.





Wheat, the chief grain crop, is grown in the drier, sunnier counties of eastern and southern England, where new, stronger varieties have become increasingly widespread and average yields have risen significantly.



Barley is grown mainly for livestock feed. The acreage under oats is gradually declining. Corn (maize) and rye are also grown. Principal potato-growing areas are the fenlands of Norfolk, Cambridgeshire, and Lincolnshire; the clay soils of Humberside; and the peats of North Yorkshire.



Sugar-beet production depends heavily on government subsidy because of competition from imported cane sugar. In recent years, acreage and yield for rape have increased. Grass and its variants are grown for feeding livestock.



The growing of vegetables, fruit, and flowers, known in England as market gardening, is often done in greenhouses and is found within easy trucking distance of large towns, the proximity of a market being of more consequence than climatic considerations.



The fertile (clay and limestone) soil of Kent has always been conducive to fruit growing. Cultivation was first established there on a commercial scale in the 16th century. The county of Kent is a major supplier of fruits and vegetables (apples, pears, black currants, cauliflowers, and cabbages).



Hereford and Worcester is noted for its plums, while Somerset and Devon specialise in cider apples.

The agriculture of England is primarily concerned with livestock husbandry and, in particular, with milk production.



Dairying is important in every county, though the main concentrations are in western England. The quality of dairy cattle was improved considerably after World War II. The higher-yielding dairy breeds, including the Frisian and Ayrshire, have become more numerous than the once-dominant Shorthorn.



