

Smart Farmers of the Past



The world's population is currently over 7.3 billion, with an expected population of over 8.5 billion by 2030. That's a lot of people to feed! How are we able to provide safe, nutritious food to all these people? The answer: through changes to the way we farm and the introduction of new machinery, equipment and technology.

But how did farmers around the world cope without these new advances? Farmers from the past were arguably some of the most skilled inventors and clever thinkers, as they had to find ways to grow crops using only their hands and very limited equipment. Ever since humans decided to stay in one place and make the most of the land, the drive to keep the soil at its best has led to some very clever answers to some tricky problems.

Terraces

Take hills and mountains, for example. High ground can be easy to defend, but hard to farm. Very often, any soil gets swept down the slopes whenever it rains or the snow melts, leaving only bare rock. Also, farming is much easier to do on level ground. That is why a number of hill-dwellers developed terracing.



Terraces are made by cutting flat sections into a hillside so that the slope is transformed into a series of steps. This gives the farmer narrow strips of land on which they can then grow fruit, vegetables and cereal crops. It also helps to retain water and silt, vital for plant growth, that would otherwise have been washed downhill.

Good examples of terraced farming can be seen in the paddy fields of southeast Asia which need plenty of water to grow rice. Across southern Europe, you will find grape vines and olive trees growing on steps cut into hillsides.

This technique was also developed in South America over a thousand years ago where they grew potatoes long before they were introduced to Europe.

LO: Comprehension

1. How many people are expected to live in the world by 2030? **8.5 Billion**
2. Why were farmers of the past clever thinkers? **they had to find ways to grow crops using only their hands and very limited equipment. Also accept: they were skilled inventors.**
3. In the **first** paragraph, **find and copy one word** closest in meaning to **healthy**. **Nutritious**
4. Look at the section: *Terraces*

Give **one** reason why it is difficult to farm on high ground.

any soil gets swept down the slopes whenever it rains or the snow melts / much easier to do on level ground (e.g. hill surfaces are not level/flat and this makes them difficult to farm).

5. How are terraces made?

by cutting flat sections into the hillside

- **the slope is transformed into a series of steps**

6. *It also helps **retain** water and silt...*

In this sentence, the word *retain* means:

Tick **one**:

- | | |
|-------------|--------------------------|
| section | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Lose | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| drain | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| keep | <input type="checkbox"/> |

7. Give **two** examples of where terracing is used well. **southeast Asia / southern Europe / South America**
8. What was grown in South America before it was introduced in Europe? **potatoes**