Introduction to Agriculture

Hunter-Gatherer Societies and The Neolithic Revolution
Agriculture Defined

- The deliberate modification of Earth’s surface through cultivation of plants and rearing of animals to obtain sustenance or economic gain.
  - Intentional planting of crops and raising of domesticated animals
Geography of Agricultural Origins

Accepted Origins of Agriculture
Possible Origins of Agriculture

- Fertile Crescent
- Sahel
- Western Africa
- Ethiopia
- Northern China
- Southern China
- Southeast Asia
- New Guinea
- Mesoamerica
- Amazonia
- Andes
- Eastern US
Hunter-Gatherer Societies

• Before the Neolithic revolution humans hunted for animals, fish, and wild fruits and vegetables
  – Hunters and gatherer groups were small
  – The men hunted game or fished, and the women collected berries, nuts, and roots.

• Where they traveled, and how often, depended on seasonal growths of plants and migratory patterns of animals
Neolithic Revolution

• Eventually plant cultivation evolved from a process of trial and error, and accidental experiment.
  – The earliest form of plant cultivation, according to Carl Sauer, was vegetative planting, direct cloning from existing plants, such as cutting stems and dividing roots.
    • Seed agriculture came later

• Domestication of animals probably originated in Southeast Asia
  – Dogs, pigs, and chickens
Vegetative Planting Hearths

Map showing the distribution of vegetative planting hearths worldwide, with various routes and regions indicated.
Seed Planting Hearths