

DISCOVERING NEW ZEALAND

Multi-level classroom activities introducing students to the importance and diversity of agriculture in New Zealand.
Years 5-8 (Adapt for lower and higher levels)



Science & Social Studies Curricula

Strands: Making Sense of the Living World, Planet Earth
Resources and Economic Activities

Learning Intentions:

- Investigating and being able to describe the importance of agriculture to New Zealand
- Being able to list the wide diversity of land based activities in New Zealand which come under the general heading of agriculture and where they take place.
- Planning and implementing a survey and/or personal contact to find out more about a local agricultural activity.

Skills Used and Developed:

- Research • Information • Communication

Further Curriculum Links: Technology, English

Teacher Notes

- Most students in New Zealand live in cities. Many have never visited a farm or are aware of the importance that agriculture, horticulture and forestry plays in terms of our country – both as a major employer and as the major contributor to New Zealand's export earnings.
- The unit is designed to raise student awareness about agriculture in New Zealand, and in particular, the wide diversity and specialisation throughout the country.

Finding Out What We Know

- Find out how many students in the class have visited a farm.
 - *what type of farm was it?*
 - *what work was carried out on it?*
 - *share any interesting experiences.*
- What do the students understand by the meaning of agriculture? What does the dictionary say?
- Help the class settle on a simple definition of agriculture, **eg**
 - *agriculture is when we use the land to grow crops and raise livestock such as sheep and cows*
- In groups, challenge the class to brainstorm and make a preliminary list of all the agricultural activities they think are carried out in New Zealand.

What Region Are We In?

- Have students use their atlases and help them identify the agricultural regions (on map at right) of New Zealand. In what agricultural region is their school?
- List the main towns and cities of each region?
- Discuss any major geographic features of each region, **eg**
 - *mountains* - *lakes* - *rivers*



Let's Conduct Some Web Research?

- Tell students that they can find out the main agricultural activities carried out in each region by going to the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF) website.

www.maf.govt.nz > Choose a topic > select publications
> select 'An Overview of New Zealand Agriculture'

- Each group investigates one or two regions and reports back to the class on the main agricultural activities carried out in their assigned regions. Have them pay attention to, and discover the climatic and geographic features of each region which makes it particularly suitable for the agriculture activities listed.
- Group write brief reports on the features and agriculture of their region. Attach reports as part of a NZ agricultural region wall map display.





- From their research, have students compile a new list of all the agricultural activities carried out in New Zealand. Compare with the original list.

- Are there any agricultural products on the list that surprised the students, **eg**
 - wine, deer, kiwi fruit, flowers, fresh vegetables

Why is Agriculture So Important?

- Explain that if we add up all the money that people earn from the things they do and the things they sell then New Zealand earns about \$100 billion per year (*GDP*). We call this our economy.
- Tell students that the agricultural and forestry industries produce about \$20 billion (20%) of all the money we earn each year. This is why agriculture is so important to New Zealand.
- Using a dairy or sheep farmer as an example, help the students mind map all the people who make all or part of their living from helping farmers, **eg**
 - farm workers
 - shearers
 - cattle/sheep truck drivers
 - veterinarians
 - feed suppliers
 - fencing material suppliers
 - local shops
 - meat workers
 - bankers ...
- Try mind map exercises with other agricultural activities, **eg**
 - viticulturalists
 - flower growers
 - forestry
- Tell the students that it is estimated that agriculture employs about 216,000 people in New Zealand – that is nearly 12% of all our workers. This is also why agriculture is so important to New Zealand.

What is Farming Really Like?

- Ask each student to make an imaginary choice as to what agricultural occupation they would like to take up as a job for life. Share reasons with the class for making this choice.
- Introduce the idea of job descriptions. Challenge students to write a job description for the agricultural occupation they have chosen.

continued...

- Link into your school and local community networks to enable the students to make contact with people who are in the agricultural sector in your district.
- Involve the class in making arrangements for:
 - inviting several agriculturalists to talk to the class
 - arranging a visit to a farm or plant
- During visits, take lots of pictures!
- To get the most from the talks or visits, have students plan a series of questions that they would like answered. They should aim to find out just how close the job description they wrote is to the reality of the job, **eg**
 - why did you choose ... as a job?
 - what are the major expenses you have
 - what do you do on a typical day
 - does your job change from season to season?
 - has the job changed during the years you have done it?
 - how does weather affect what you do?
 - what training or special education did you need?
 - do you get any holidays?
 - what do you like most/least about being ...
 - how many people do you employ?
 - what special equipment or buildings do you need?
 - do you use a computer to help with your work?
- After talks and visits are complete, have students:
 - share their opinions about occupations they have investigated
 - list the pros and cons of each occupation
 - re-write their job descriptions to better reflect the true nature of each occupation
- Have students write a brief report about the agricultural occupation they would most like to take up.
- Make use of all the photos taken and involve all the class in compiling a list to show the wide diversity of agricultural activities in your local region.
- Publish results on the school website.