

Agricultural Timeline Cards



**Earliest evidence
of Homo sapiens
(anatomically modern
humans)**

**Earliest evidence of
agriculture**

**Most species of farm
animals domesticated**

**Agriculture practiced
on every major
continent except
Australia**

**Widespread
adoption of industrial
agriculture**

Agricultural Timeline Teacher Guide

Refer to the **History of Agriculture primer** for references and additional details.

<p>194,000 BCE</p> <p>Earliest evidence of Homo sapiens (anatomically modern humans)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ For the vast majority of the time since our species’ arrival on the evolutionary scene, we acquired food by gathering it from the wild. ▪ Wild plant-based foods and fungi were important staples in the Paleolithic diet. ▪ While our ancestors’ search for food is often depicted as an epic conflict against woolly mammoths, woolly rhinos, giant elk, and other prehistoric megafauna, early humans also took to foraging for insects and scavenging the remains of dead animals.
<p>11,000 BCE</p> <p>Earliest evidence of agriculture</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ From as early as 11,000 BCE, humans began a gradual transition away from a hunter-gatherer lifestyle toward agriculture — the cultivation of crops and animals for food. ▪ Why did people give up hunting and gathering for farming? There are many plausible reasons, all of which likely played some role at different times and across different parts of the world: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ Changes in climate may have made it too cold or too dry to rely on wild food sources. ▫ Greater population density may have demanded more food than could be harvested from the wild, and farming provided more food per acre, even if it did require more time and energy. ▫ Overhunting may have helped push woolly mammoths and other megafauna to extinction. ▫ Changing technology, such as domesticated seeds, would have made agriculture a more viable lifestyle.
<p>6,000 BCE</p> <p>Most species of farm animals domesticated</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ By 6000 BCE, most of the farm animals we are familiar with today had been domesticated.
<p>5,000 BCE</p> <p>Agriculture practiced on every major continent except Australia</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The shift to agriculture is believed to have occurred independently in several parts of the world, including Northern China, Central America, and the Fertile Crescent — a region in the Middle East that cradled some of the earliest civilizations. ▪ Agriculture is thought to have been practiced sporadically for the past 13,000 years, and has been widely established for only 7,000 years. In the long view of human history, this is just a flash in the pan compared to the nearly 200,000 years our ancestors spent gathering, hunting, and scavenging in the wild. ▪ If the history of modern humans were compressed into a single year, we would not have started farming until the evening of December 7.
<p>1900s</p> <p>Widespread adoption of industrial agriculture (e.g., synthetic fertilizers, pesticides, monocultures)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ First introduced in the early 1900s, synthetic fertilizers dramatically increased crop yields, though not without consequences (covered in later lessons). ▪ They have been credited with feeding the lion’s share of a global population that grew from 1.6 to 6 billion over the 20th Century. ▪ Other aspects of industrial agriculture, such as the heavy use of pesticides, would soon follow. ▪ If the history of agriculture were compressed into a single year, we would not have introduced industrial agriculture until the evening of December 28.

Trends in Industrialization Handout

Trend	Description	Rationale	Impact
Specialization			
Mechanization			
Rise in chemical and pharmaceutical use			
Consolidation			
Market concentration			