

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Core: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Farming and Agriculture in Egypt

**The Flooding Season:** Each spring, snow on the mountains would melt. The Nile River would flood. This was a very good thing. When the flood waters receded, they left behind fertile soil. Crops could easily be grown in this black, rich soil. The ancient Egyptians called this soil the "The Gift of the Nile".

**The Growing Season:** Farmers planted wheat, barley, vegetables, figs, melons, pomegranates, corn, and flax (which they used to make into linen.)

**The Harvest Season:** Once the crops were harvested, what could be dried or stored was stored. The Egyptians were very practical people. They knew they had to save what food they could in case the Nile did not flood! After the harvest, farmers repaired the canals that led water from the Nile to their crops, to get ready for the next flooding season.

Farming was not as easy as it might sound in ancient Egypt. Tools were simple. Cattle needed care to be useful. Snakes and jackals roamed the fields. Farmers had to barter a great many of their harvested crops for the things and animals they needed to plant more crops. There was little chance of life improvement. With only rare exceptions, once a farmer, always a farmer. That's how things were done in ancient Egypt.

Most of Egypt is a desert. The Nile River made a huge difference to the early people who settled along its shores. Without the Nile, there probably would not have been the ancient Egypt we learn about today. Certainly, things would have been far different!

**Irrigation:** Each year, the Nile would flood, spilling over with water flowing down from the mountains to the south. Flood waters could raise the Nile River 45 feet over normal heights. As the waters receded, the flood waters left behind rich soil. This soil allowed the ancient Egyptian to grow crops.

The crops needed water to grow. These early people invented a system of canals that they dug to irrigate their crops. They also built gates into these canals so that they could control the flow of water. They built reservoirs to hold water supplies in case of drought.

**Shadoofs:** The ancient Egyptians also used water wheels. The water wheels worked the shadoofs. A shadoof was simply a counterweight system, a long pole with a bucket on one end and a weight on the other. Buckets were dropped into the Nile, filled with water, and raised with water wheels. Then oxen swung the pole so that the water could be emptied into narrow canals or waterways that were used to irrigate the crops. It was a clever system, and it worked very well.

**Nilometers:** They also invented what is called a nilometer. A nilometer was used to predict flood levels. This instrument was a method of marking the height of the Nile over the years. Nilometers were spaced along the Nile River. They acted as an early warning system, alerting these early people that waters were not as high as usual, so they could prepare for a drought or for unusually high flood waters.

Because the flooding of the Nile was so important to these ancient people, nilometers were permanent structures and well constructed so that any prediction of flooding, or lack of it, would be as accurate as possible.

<https://egypt.mrdonn.org/farming.html>