

CROSS-CURRICULAR A HOLE LOT OF FUSS



STUDENT INFORMATION SHEET



SECTION 2

AGRICULTURAL LAND CLASSIFICATION

Agricultural land in England and Wales is classified and put into groups according to its agricultural and economic value. The agricultural value is measured by the quality of the land and the economic value by the quality of the crop produced on the land.

This land value is determined by physical factors which influence agricultural productivity and can decrease the output of the land. These factors are soil, site and climate.

SOIL

Soil characteristics which influence agriculture are texture, depth and stoniness. Soil which is very stoney reduces crop production because of the poor quality of the soil. For this reason the value of the land will be reduced.

SITE

The site of the land and factors such as gradient and flood risk can also influence agriculture and land value. Land which floods a lot will have a low agricultural output for various reasons and the land value will also be relatively low.

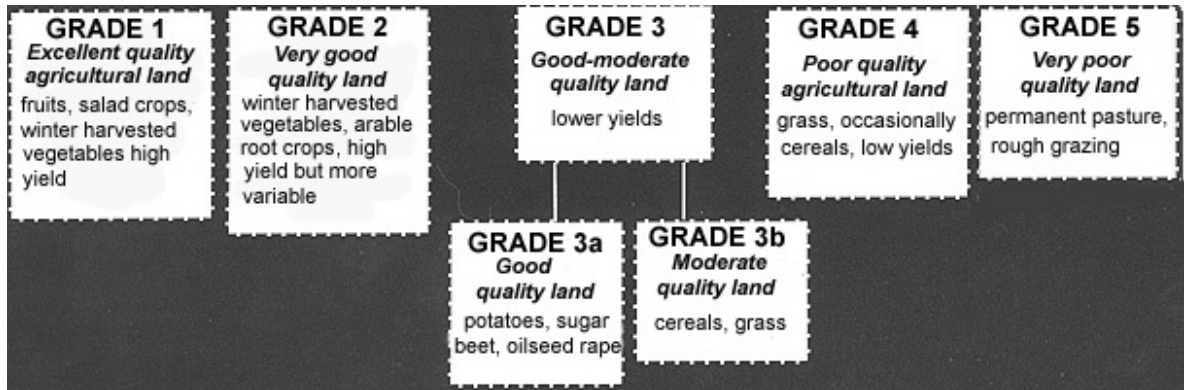
CLIMATE

Factors such as temperature, rainfall, exposure and frost risk also affect agriculture and crop production. Frost severely damages plants and reduces output. Therefore, land which is at risk from this will be worthless.

CLASSIFICATION

Agricultural land is classified into 5 categories. The diagram below shows these classifications, as well as examples of the crops grown on the land.

LAND CLASSIFICATIONS



Approximately half the land in England and Wales is classified as Grade 3.

PLANNING

Agricultural land is classified in this way to protect it from development. It is recommended that land in grades 1, 2 and 3a, which is the best and most productive agricultural land, should be protected against any development. If development of this land is being considered, planning authorities should bear in mind that once developed, a return to the best quality agricultural land is not a possibility. Therefore, development of this land should not be permitted unless other, less valuable sites, have been considered first.

The land in grades 3b, 4 and 5 is less valuable and less significant because land quality and crop production are much lower. Therefore, less importance is placed on the loss of this through development. However, in upland and hilly areas, land in these grades often has special rural economic importance for local people who farm sheep. Because of this the policies for the protection of land are the same whatever the grade.

When considering a planning proposal, the local planning authorities are able to consider the cost of the development against the value of the land which is to be developed. In any planning proposal it must be remembered that once land is built on, the natural habitats and landscape features are lost and may not be replaceable.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Agricultural Land Classifications of England and Wales (Revised Guidelines and Criteria for Grading the Quality of Agricultural Land) - available from the DEFRA website - www.defra.gov.uk/corporate/publications/pubcat/ag.htm#a9

Planning Policy Guidance: The Countryside - Environment Quality and Economic and Social Development - available from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister's website - www.planning.odpm.gov.uk/ppg/ppg7/