Farms and Markets

How growing conditions and buyers shape commercial agriculture

WG.C.5.2 "Describe the characteristics of modern commercial agriculture including major production regions, variations within major zones, and the effects of markets."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline the products and locations that identify each farming region, circle differences within a region, and number two ways markets affect farm decisions. Use your marks to explain why commercial farms do not all produce or sell in the same way.

From Field to Buyer

1. At a grocery store, a bag of flour, a carton of milk, and a box of strawberries may have traveled from different farming regions. Commercial farms produce mainly for sale, not just for the people who grow the food. In the U.S. Midwest, farms grow large fields of corn and soybeans. Much of the harvest becomes animal feed, food ingredients, or fuel. In the Great Plains, many farms produce wheat, while ranches raise cattle. Machines, storage bins, roads, and food processors link these farms to buyers across the country and overseas.

2. A major farming zone is not uniform. In the eastern Great Plains, more rainfall supports crops such as corn and wheat without irrigation in many places. Farther west, drier conditions favor grazing or require pumped water for crops. California's Central Valley is another major production region, known for fruits, vegetables, and nuts grown for distant markets. Its northern Sacramento Valley has extensive rice fields, while the southern San Joaquin Valley produces many almonds and grapes. Irrigation allows intensive farming through dry summers, but limited water supplies raise costs and can restrict planting choices.

3. Market demand can change what farmers plant and where harvests go. A wheat grower may store grain until a buyer offers a better price, while a berry grower must sell quickly because fresh fruit spoils. Refrigerated trucks help California growers reach distant stores, but fuel and shipping costs reduce what remains of a sale. If overseas buyers pay more for soybeans, Midwest farms may devote more land to that crop the next season. These choices also depend on soil, rainfall, and water rights: a high price cannot make a dry field grow rice without enough water.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Compare the main products of the Midwest and Great Plains. What helps farms in both regions reach buyers?

2. How does rainfall help explain different farming patterns in the eastern and western Great Plains?

3. Describe two different production areas within California's Central Valley. What makes farming through its dry summers possible?

4. How do storage and shipping affect a wheat grower's sales differently from a fresh-berry grower's sales?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

A cooperative on a warm plain 30 miles from a large city has little irrigation water and access to a refrigerated truck. In four to five sentences, propose a crop and sales plan, explain how water and the nearby market shape it, and compare its sales strategy with one region in the reading.

ANSWER KEY

Farms and Markets

HIGH SCHOOL · WG.C.5.2

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline the products and locations that identify each farming region, circle differences within a region, and number two ways markets affect farm decisions. Use your marks to explain why commercial farms do not all produce or sell in the same way. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Compare the main products of the Midwest and Great Plains. What helps farms in both regions reach buyers?	**Midwest farms grow corn and soybeans; Great Plains farms produce wheat and raise cattle. Machines, storage bins, roads, and food processors help connect farms to buyers.**
2	How does rainfall help explain different farming patterns in the eastern and western Great Plains?	**More rainfall in the east supports crops without irrigation in many places. The drier west favors grazing or requires pumped water for crops.**
3	Describe two different production areas within California's Central Valley. What makes farming through its dry summers possible?	**The northern Sacramento Valley has extensive rice fields, while the southern San Joaquin Valley produces many almonds and grapes. Irrigation supports farming through dry summers.**
4	How do storage and shipping affect a wheat grower's sales differently from a fresh-berry grower's sales?	**A wheat grower can store grain while waiting for a better price. A berry grower must sell quickly to avoid spoilage, and refrigerated shipping helps reach distant buyers but adds costs.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The cooperative could grow a small acreage of tomatoes with drip irrigation and sell them fresh to city grocers. Because water is limited, it should plant only as much as it can reliably irrigate. The nearby market and refrigerated truck would help it deliver ripe tomatoes before they spoil. Unlike Great Plains wheat growers, who can store grain while waiting for a better price, this cooperative would need to sell its harvest quickly.

Accept other plausible crops if the plan addresses limited water and a nearby buyer. The comparison should identify a specific region from the passage and an accurate difference in how its products are sold.