

Development of agriculture in Brazil - 2016 Q5B

I have studied the development of agriculture in Brazil.

Climate

Most of Brazil experiences a tropical climate. This means that temperatures are consistently warm, year around. This allows for a continuous growing season for Brazilian farmers.

On average, Brazil receives about 1000 to 1800mm of rainfall per year. This is higher in the Amazon region, which receives 2000mm of rainfall per year. This is due to convectional rainfall. In the east and south-east of Brazil, temperatures range from 16°C to 24°C. These temperatures, combined with the rainfall, means that this region is perfect for coffee cultivation. In southern and central Brazil most farmers grow soya, wheat and corn. This region contains most of Brazil's commercial farms. This is due to mechanisation, because farmers can farm lots of land with little effort. However, commercial farming is moving north-west towards the Amazon Rainforest. This is due to mechanisation also, because farmers can now farm a great deal of land with little effort.

North-east Brazil experiences a semi-arid climate, which is poor for agriculture. Extensive and subsistent farming takes place here. Some families living in the north-east of Brazil, such as those living in the Sertão, which is the poorest area of Brazil, abandon their land to move south to cities such as Santos, Rio de Janeiro, or São Paulo. They hope to find a better standard of living there, where farming is more productive.

Soil

The south-east of Brazil has terra rossa soil, which is very fertile and perfect for intensive cultivation. Coffee is grown here. The land surrounding the Amazon has tropical red soils, which is very difficult to cultivate. Farmers in the Amazon cut down trees for farmland instead. At first, the humus in the soil allows for intensive growing of 'cash crops', such as soya bean. However the nutrients in the soil are not replenished as there is no humus, so the soil loses its fertility. Intense heat of the climate bakes the soil into laterites, which are hard bricks of unusable soil. To

solve this problem, farmers must use artificial fertiliser. This is too expensive for most farmers in the Amazon, so many farmers just cut down more of the rainforest. 'Slash and burn' is the term used for the removal of vegetation for agriculture.

Ranching is popular in the Amazon Basin, as most of the arable farming takes place on the east coast of Brazil. The floodplain of the Amazon is fertile due to the alluvial deposits. Rich grasses grow here which has led to the development of ranching. Farmers have begun to grow corn and wheat on the floodplains, which has pushed ranching further towards the Amazon Basin.