

Examine the factors that influence the development of any one primary economic activity in a Continental/ Subcontinental region (not in Ireland) that you have studied

(30 marks)

In this answer I will discuss the factors that have influenced the development of agriculture in India. In India agriculture employs 65% of the workforce and has traditionally consisted of intensive subsistent farming for families to make a living. The development of this industry has been greatly affected by relief and soil.

**Relief** has influenced agriculture in the Indian sub-continent as to the north of India the area is dominated by a series of mountain ranges and this upland relief formed during the Tertiary Geological period 65 million years ago. These mountain ranges extend from the Hindu Kush in the north west, through the Himalayas to the north east of the country, dominated by the Himalayas. Here the main type of farming is goat herding as thin, fertile soils are prevalent. Travelling north the Ganges Plain is a large, fertile, low-lying region that extends west to east across the sub-continent from India to Bangladesh. This region is by far the most important agricultural region due to its fertility. One half of India's population lives here. The region contains one of the world's largest areas of fertile alluvial soils and as a result a very fertile agricultural plain for the planting of rice in the abundant padi fields. 90% of the total land area is cultivated. The dividing walls of the padi fields (bunds) are bound together by coconut palm, providing an extra revenue source.

Rice requires fertile, wet, alluvial **soils**. These soils are found along the Indus-Ganges plain. These soils are rich in silt, making the plain one of the most intensely farmed areas in the world. Agricultural production on the Indus-Ganges plain mainly consists of rice and wheat, grown in rotation. Other crops include maize, sugar cane and cotton. In other areas of India such as the Thar Desert, the soil is unable to support intensive agricultural activity. Laterites, also referred to as Red soils, develop where the majority of minerals, except for iron, are leached from the topsoil. In the Eastern and Western Ghats leaching is of huge importance in the creation of soil. Black soils occur in regions with both moderate rainfall and underlying basalt rock (Deccan Plateau). With a high clay content, and therefore moisture retention, black soils are ideal for irrigation (cotton farming in these regions). Also tank irrigation, where water is drawn from small reservoirs built along the course of small rivers, provides irrigation. This system was put in place through the "Green Revolution" which involved efforts to improve farming in response to food shortages in less developed economies by introducing new types of high yielding rice and wheat.