**Agribusiness: Sort It Out**

**Although agro-industrialisation has undoubtedly increased the world's agricultural output, reduced the cost of agricultural products and increased choice, it has also caused many problems. Some problems of agro-industrialisation include:**

**Task:** Copy and paste the statements under the table into the appropriate place in the table

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Deforestation:** |  |
| **Increase use of chemicals (eutrophication):** |  |
| **Overgrazing:** |  |
| **Disease:** |  |
| **Commercialization & cash cropping:** |  |
| **Greenhouse effect:** |  |
| **Overcultivation:** |  |
| **Transportation:** |  |
| **Unsustainable Irrigation:** |  |

The intensification of farming can lead to overcultivation. This basically means that too many crops are being grown in soil and it is not been given time to recover. If soil is overused then it will start to lose its fertility. This will either mean that it can be no longer used for agricultural purposes or that more fertilisers will have to be used. Once soil starts to lose its fertility it means that soil degradation is taking place. In an arid environment this might mean that desertification happens as well.  
  
This means farming too many cattle on a piece of land. The result of this is that all the vegetation is eaten. This reduces the stability of the soil making it more vulnerable to wind and water erosion. When this happens the soil becomes degraded and desertification can take place in arid environments.  
  
To increase the number and size of farms, huge areas of forest are often cleared. This is a particular problem in countries like Brazil and Indonesia where areas of rainforest are being cleared to make way for cattle ranches and/or palm oil plantations.  
  
In order to farm more intensively more chemical are often used. This can damage local biodiversity and disrupt food webs, it can cause air pollution and eutrophication. Eutrophication is caused by fertilisers running off into lakes and rivers causing excessive algae growth. The excessive growth stops water being oxygenated properly and prevents it from receiving sunlight.  
  
Although irrigation can be very useful, it can also cause massive problems if it is done unsustainably. If more water is taken for irrigation than is being replaced then a number of problems may happen including; aquifer depletion, salinisation, saltwater intrusion and subsidence. A classic example of unsustainable irrigation in and around the Aral Sea. Here so much water has been taken from the two rivers that feed the Aral Sea, that the Aral Sea has stored to reduce in size and its salinity has increased   
Cattle (cows and pigs) produce large amounts of methane. Methane is one of the worst greenhouse gases. Therefore if the amount of cattle is increased so will the amount of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere increasing the greenhouse effect and global warming.  
  
Agro-industrialization has led to an increase in agricultural products being transported around the world. Many perishable products (fruit and vegetables) are transported by air or in refrigerated containers, both of which release large amounts of greenhouse gases.  
  
When you have a greater number of animals living in closer proximity there is a greater chance of disease spreading and being passed between species. Scrapies which started in sheep got passed to cattle (BSE) and then humans CJD. Other diseases which have spread quickly and been transmitted to humans include swine flu, bird flu and foot and mouth disease.

As farmers switch to mono-cropping and producing goods to sell to agribusiness they become very dependent on the agribusiness. They need to buy all of their inputs such as seeds and fertilizers etc from these companies. Also because they produce the same product as many other farmers it makes them vulnerable to price fluctuations.