

Environmental impacts - Key terms and definitions

Cut along the dotted lines and shuffle the **KEY TERMS** and **DEFINITIONS**.

KEY TERM - Land clearing	DEFINITION - The removal and/or destruction of vegetation on the land. This may be done using a bulldozer or even by having two bulldozers connected with a chain that drags the chain through the landscape. This contributes to biodiversity loss and the ability of soils to retain water.
KEY TERM - Climate change	DEFINITION - A change in the global climate caused by a rise in greenhouse gas emissions in the atmosphere. In 2020, agriculture was responsible for 13% of Australia's greenhouse gas emissions.
KEY TERM - Soil degradation	DEFINITION - A decline in the health of the soil. This can mean the soil has fewer organisms living in it that help keep the soil healthy and keep the nutrients moving through the soil or that the soil is compacted and unable to retain water.
KEY TERM - Pesticide use	DEFINITION - Chemicals that are sprayed onto plants (sometimes from low-flying planes) to keep pest insects away. These chemicals can blow or get washed into surrounding native vegetation and waterways, causing harm to native species.
KEY TERM - Chemical fertiliser use	DEFINITION - Chemicals that help to improve the soil, which encourages plants to grow quickly and more strongly. These can be sprayed onto the plants or the soil. They can reduce the quality of the soil by harming the organisms that live there and their ability to create and cycle nutrients through the soil naturally.
KEY TERM - Biodiversity loss	DEFINITION - A decline in the diversity of native plants and animals in an area, which then affects the overall health of the local ecosystem. Native animals are also the natural predators of many of the pests that impact crops, so without them, farmers need to use more and more chemicals to manage crops.
KEY TERM - Soil erosion	DEFINITION - The topsoil is where all the best nutrients for growing healthy plants can be found. When it is degraded, in poor health or not covered in plants, it is more susceptible to being washed away in a flood or blown away by the wind (have you ever seen one of those dust storms? This is how these happen!)
KEY TERM - Soil salinity	DEFINITION - This is caused when there is an imbalance in water being able to move through the soil, which causes the natural water table to rise up and bring salt with it. This salt then meets the topsoil, where the plants grow best, but with the salt there, the plants are unable to grow. This is often caused by land clearing.
KEY TERM - Water pollution	DEFINITION - Chemicals get into waterways after being washed or blown off of farms. These end up in rivers and even the ocean, causing harm to natural river or marine ecosystems. Sometimes it's not even chemicals; it can also be too much animal poo from animals that aren't native to an area (like cows or pigs in Australia). This poo can choke the natural environment, even when it is diluted.
KEY TERM - Water for the environment	DEFINITION - Farms use a lot of this for their plants and animals, which means there's not so much left for the environment. This is compounded when there are extreme weather events like droughts, and farmers need more of this stuff for their animals and crops, which leaves even less for nature.