

Get busy on the Virtual Farm Walk

www.virtualfarmwalk.org



Discovering why the world's soil and farmland is precious

The farmers you meet in the fields on the Virtual Farm Walk use the soil very carefully. They know soil is precious. Do you know why?

Materials: a melon, apple or other round fruit
a knife
a globe (optional)



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1 Our wonderful world is covered by seas and continents. It's where we live and where farmers grow the food to feed us.

Our world is a spinning globe. How much of it is farmland?

We can use a round fruit like a melon to represent our wonderful world. Let's discover how much of it is land for farmers to use.

2



3 Our world is covered by a lot of sea water. *Cut the melon into four pieces.* Three of the four pieces ($3/4$) represent the seas and oceans of the world.

Only one quarter of the surface of our world is land.

A quarter of our world is land.

4

Of this land, half of it is unsuitable for farming because it is too hot and dry (deserts), or cold (ice caps) or covered in forests.

So we have cut this quarter in two. *Cut the quarter into two pieces.* Only $1/8$ th of our world is land suitable for farming.





5 Of that 1/8th of the world not all is farmland. Our homes, schools, towns, cities, roads and factories cover up land.

To represent this we need to reduce our slice even further. *Cut the 1/8th of our melon into 4, and just keep one slice.*

What we are left with is 1/32 (or just over 3%) of the world's surface. This represents the little farmland we have in the world.

6

The soil on the surface of the world is not very deep. To show that, we need to cut off just the surface of the segment. *Carefully cut the peel off.*

It's a tiny strip from the original melon.



7

What a small piece of melon!

This little piece of the fruit represents the very small amount of our world's surface that is soil or land available to farmers.

This is all the land farmers have for growing the food to feed us all, more than 6 billion humans.

This is why every vegetable garden and field in our world is precious. It's why soil everywhere must be respected and used very, very carefully.

8



Follow-up issues to discuss (perhaps while you enjoy eating parts of the fruit you cut up!)

How can gardeners and farmers look after their soil?

Some ideas to talk about and find out about include: making and using compost; fertiliser to replenish fertility; not growing the same crop on the same soil year after year; preventing soil erosion from wind blowing or rain washing it away; putting big wide tyres on farm machinery to avoid squashing the soil; taking care not to harm all the beneficial creatures that live in a healthy soil, such as earthworms.