

Subject	Geography
Unit/Topic	GCSE - Sustaining Ecosystems

Key Vocabulary	Definition
Agriculture	Human management of the environment to produce food (farming). The numerous forms of agriculture fall into three groups: commercial agriculture , subsistence agriculture and peasant agriculture .
Antarctic Treaty	An agreement to regulate international relations with respect to Antarctica, Earth's only continent without a native human population. For the purposes of the treaty system, Antarctica is defined as all of the land and ice shelves south of 60°S latitude.
Biodiversity	The existence of a wide variety of plant and animal species in their natural environment.
Biosphere	The part of the Earth which contains living organisms. It contains a variety of habitats , from the highest mountains to the deepest oceans.
Biotic and abiotic	The non-living and living parts of an ecosystem, respectively. For example, abiotic factors can be the temperature, air, water, soil sunlight, anything physical or chemical.
Climate	The average atmospheric conditions in a region. A statement of climate is concerned with long-term trends. Thus the climate of, for example, the Amazon Basin is described as hot and wet all the year round; that of the Mediterranean Region as having hot dry summers and mild wet winters.
Coral Reefs	A ridge of rock in the sea formed by the growth and deposit of coral.
Ecosystem	A natural system comprising living organisms and their environment . The concept can be applied at the global scale or in the context of a smaller defined environment. The principle of the ecosystem is constant: all elements are intricately linked by flows of energy and nutrients.
Ecotourism	Tourism directed towards exotic, often threatened, natural environments, intended to support conservation efforts and observe wildlife.

Grassland	A large open area of country covered with grass, especially one used for grazing.
Hot Desert	A barren area of landscape where little precipitation occurs and consequently living conditions are hostile for plant and animal life. The lack of vegetation exposes the unprotected surface of the ground to the processes of denudation. About one third of the land surface of the world is arid or semi-arid.
Indigenous people	Ethnic groups who are the original settlers of a given region , in contrast to groups that have settled, occupied or colonized the area more recently.
Interdependent	(of two or more people or things) dependent on each other.
Logging	The activity or business of felling trees and cutting and preparing the timber.
Mineral extraction	Mining for minerals
Nutrient cycle	The cycling of nutrients through the environment .
Polar	North and South pole
Soils	The loose material which forms the uppermost layer of the Earth's surface, composed of the inorganic fraction, i.e. material derived from the weathering of bedrock, and the organic fraction –that is material derived from the decay of vegetable matter
Sustainable development	The ability of a country to maintain a level of economic development, thus enabling the majority of the population to have a reasonable standard of living.
Temperate forest	Vegetation type with a more or less continuous canopy of broad-leaved trees. Such forests occur between approximately 25° and 50° latitude in both hemispheres.
The Arctic	The regions around the North Pole.
Tourism	The commercial organization and operation of holidays and visits to places of interest.
Tropical rainforest	The dense forest cover of the equatorial regions, reaching its greatest extent in the Amazon Basin of South America, the Congo Basin of Africa, and in parts of South East Asia and Indonesia. There has been much concern in recent years about the rate at which the world's rainforests are being cut down and burnt. The burning of large tracts of rainforest is thought to be contributing to global warming . Many

	governments and conservation bodies are now examining ways of protecting the remaining rainforests, which are unique ecosystems containing millions of plant and animal species.
Water cycle	The cycle of processes by which water circulates between the earth's oceans, atmosphere, and land, involving precipitation as rain and snow, drainage in streams and rivers, and return to the atmosphere by evaporation and transpiration.
Whaling	The practice or industry of hunting and killing whales for their oil, meat, or whalebone.

