Arable Land: The Importance of Sustainable Land Management

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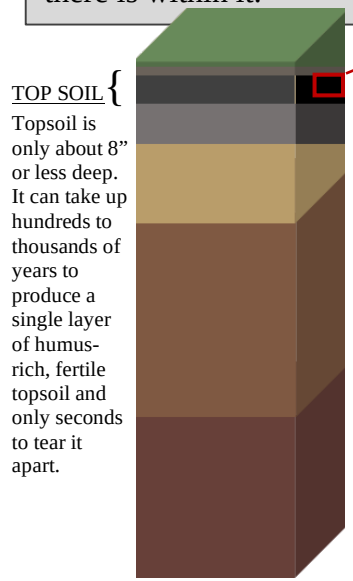
Arable land is land that can be ploughed and used for the sole purpose of growing crops. The more fertile the soil is, the more arable.

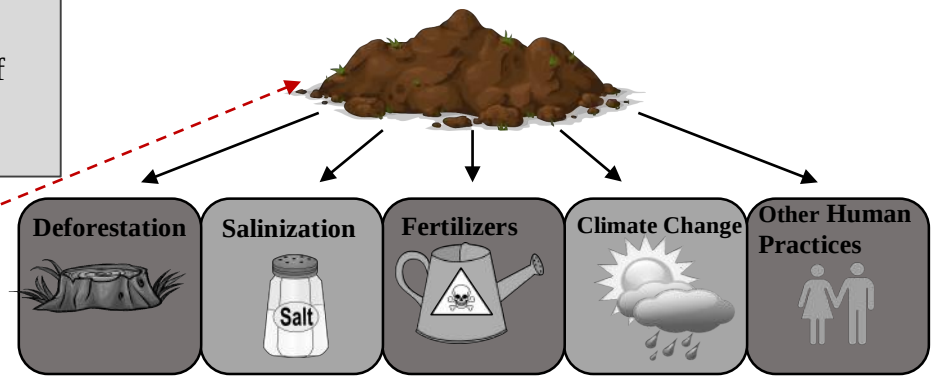
The fertility of soil is dependent on the amount of organic matter (or *humus*) there is within it.

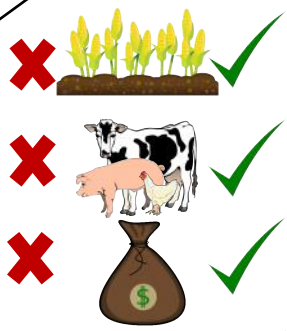


TOP SOIL

Topsoil is only about 8" or less deep. It can take up hundreds to thousands of years to produce a single layer of humus-rich, fertile topsoil and only seconds to tear it apart.

The misuse and mistreatment of the arable land leads to **desertification**- a phenomenon that can have catastrophic consequences. Unfortunately, there are many societal and economic drivers that promote this occurrence.

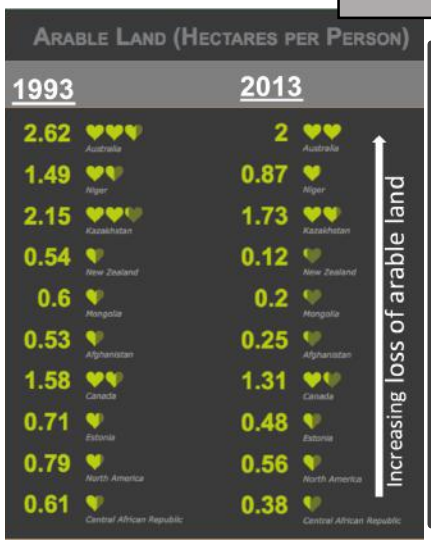




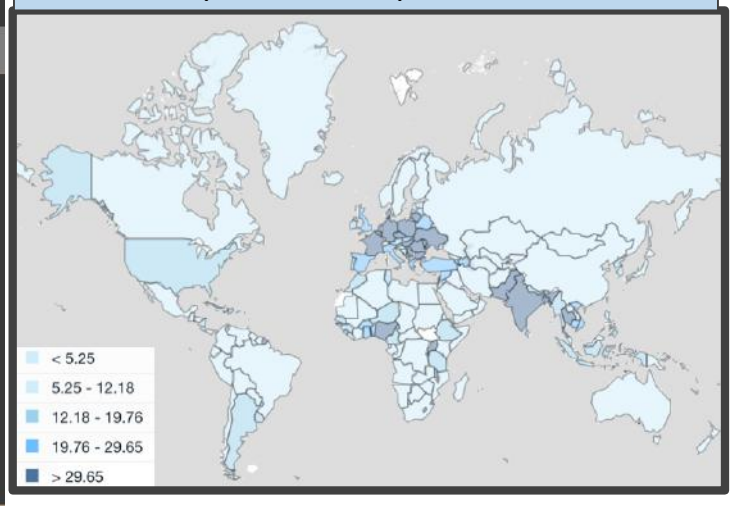
The Good News:
The preservation of arable land through ***sustainable land management*** tactics is an attainable goal that has many benefits. Examples of these include:

1. Using arable land-preserving farming techniques like:
   - Giving soil resting periods to naturally replenish its nutrients + fertility
   - Avoiding monoculture and farming on slopping land (leads to salinization)
2. Cutting down on the consumption of animals that are high on the food chain
3. Government and public support towards initiatives to preserve arable land such as the Economics of Land Degradation Initiative (ELD)
4. Enacting new policies like putting a tax on products that ultimately lead to the degradation of arable land and poor land use.

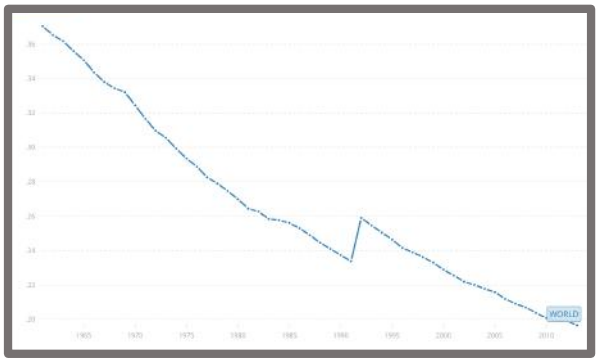
Top 10 countries that lost the most arable land from 1993-2013



Arable Land (% of land area)



Global decline of Arable Land per Capita from 1961-2013



To learn more, look up the ELD initiative at: http://www.eld-initiative.org/

*All data retrieved from the World Bank Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/

References:

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ELD Initiative (2013). The rewards of investing in sustainable land management. *Interim Report for the Economics of Land Degradation Initiative: A global strategy for sustainable land management*, 7. Available from: www.eld-initiative.org

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The World Bank Group- Food and Agriculture Organization (2016). Databank. Retrieved from http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/

Note: All images were taken from clipart (public domain) or created by the creator of this infographic (with the exception of the map and the “Global decline of Arable Land per Capita from 1961-2013” Graph that were produced on the World Bank Group site). Data from “Arable Land (Hectares per Person)” was taken from the World Bank Group site however the chart was produced independently of the site.