

Cereals



Ploughing the land in autumn before the winter frosts and snow



Smoothing out the soil in spring before planting

The cereal farmer's year

Cereals	Jan.	Feb.	March	April	May	June	July	August	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.
Autumn sown wheat, barley	Crops growing slowly during winter		Fertilizer added	rolling	Spraying with weed killer		Harvesting		Straw baled and stacked	Ploughing, cultivating, → sowing/drilling		
Spring sown mostly barley, some wheat												

The machines opposite are harvesting a crop of wheat on a hot sunny day in August. The one on the right is moving away from us cutting the wheat as it goes. Inside the machine the grain is separated from the stalk or straw. This is known as 'threshing'. The straw is then left behind the harvester in a long trail on the ground. Later on, other machines will scoop this up and pack it into bales to be taken to the farm buildings. When the harvester is full of grain, a lorry or tractor and trailer will pull alongside. The long arm will swing over the trailer and the grain will be emptied into it. We can see this happening with the harvester in the distance. All this is happening on an arable farm, which is a farm where only crops are grown.

Wheat, barley and oats are the main cereal crops grown in Britain. The grain is used for feeding people or as fodder for animals to eat. Cereals, like all crops, do best in certain conditions. Cereals are best grown on flat land with deep fertile soils. These give good anchorage for the plant roots and encourage high yields. Rainfall should be enough for the plants to be able to take up plenty of nutrients, but not be too high or diseases such as plant 'rust' may occur. Temperatures can be cold in winter as this helps to break up the soil, but warm sunshine in the summer is important to ripen the crop. The best areas in Britain for growing arable crops are in Eastern England, especially Lincolnshire and East Anglia.

The farmer prepares the soil by ploughing it (turning the top layer over) and harrowing (breaking it up into smaller crumbs) before drilling or planting the crops. Later, a combine harvester is used to harvest the crops, so you can see, a great deal of machinery is used on an arable farm. This is another reason why flat land is important.

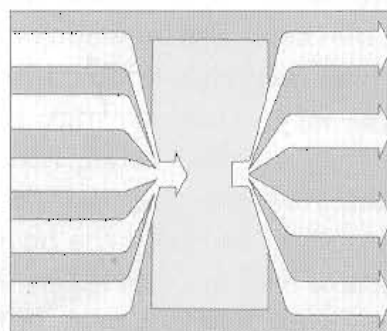


Combine harvesters at work in big hedgeless fields. Because of the cost of these machines some farmers hire them or pay other people to harvest their crop for them

- 1 Describe the fields being used for crop growing in the photograph. What do you notice about their size? Is the relief flat and gentle or steep and rugged? What is there about the fields that allows machines to be used? What sort of land would not be suitable?
- 2 Copy the diagram of the farmer's year, but instead of showing 'winter' wheat show the main events of growing 'spring' wheat. These are a) Ploughing – November to February b) Cultivation, adding fertilizer and drilling the seed – March and April c) Harvesting – mid-August and September.
- 3 Some crops are sold to markets and greengrocers, others to factories to be processed or made into something else before being sold. What are some of the things that happen to wheat, barley, sugar beet, potatoes, peas?
- 4 Look at the inputs and outputs diagram below and the one on page 29. Draw a similar diagram for a cereal farm like the one shown in the photographs and described on this page.



Wheat (*above*) and barley (*below*)



Inputs and outputs diagram