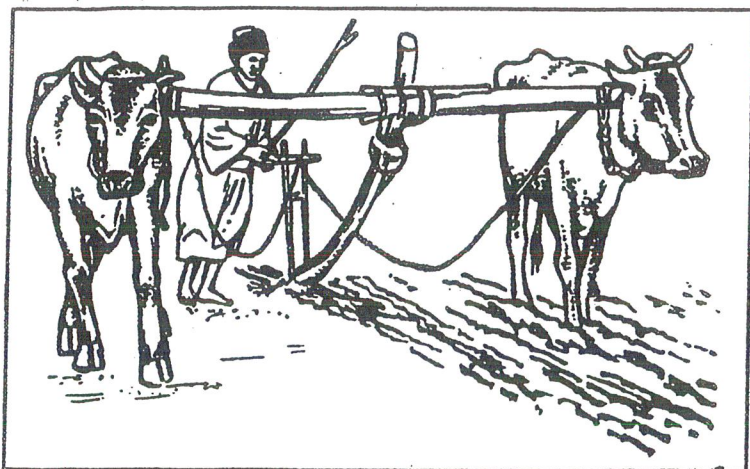


## Tutankhamen's Information Card #7

### Ancient Egyptians at Work



Agriculture was the chief industry in Ancient Egypt due to the fertile Nile Valley. Most of the Egyptians were farm labourers and worked on large estates of the royal family, the temples or wealthy landowners. They received crops as payment for their hard work. Some farmers were able to rent fields to grow their own food.

Very little rain falls in Egypt but the Egyptian farmer was able to grow crops year because he irrigated his land. Canals were built to carry water from the Nile River to their fields.

Every year, in July, the level of the Nile River rises. This was called the "Inundation". The land became flooded and the farmers had little to do. During this time they would work for the king on projects that he wanted built.

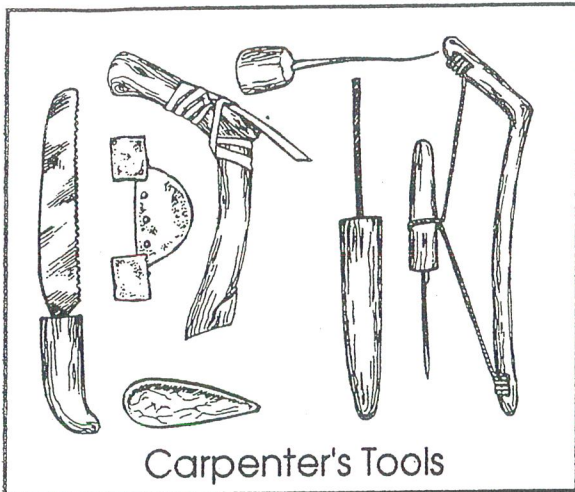
In November the water would go down leaving the land covered with a thick black layer of silt. The farmers worked quickly to break up the soil with large sticks to make the ploughing easier. The fields were then ploughed by cattle or men pulling wooden ploughs to make furrows. The furrows were hoed and the seeds were cast about by sowers. Animals were driven over the land to drive the seeds into the rich soil.

Water was let into the irrigation canals and the crops were weeded and cared for as they grew. While the crops were growing a tax official came and measured the land and decided how much the farmer had to pay in taxes.

In March, the crops were harvested by hand with sickles. They were gathered and taken to threshing floors. Cattle were walked over the crops to separate the wheat from the husk. The grain was tossed in the wind by the women to remove the husks. The grain was stored in granaries and the farmers waited anxiously for the next Inundation.

# ANCIENT EGYPT

The main crops grown were wheat and barley. Other crops grown were lettuce, beans, onions, figs, dates, grapes, melons and cucumbers. Many farmers grew flax to make linen. Dairy and beef cattle, goats, ducks, geese and donkeys were raised on farms. Some farmers kept bees to make honey.



Carpenter's Tools

Skilled craftsmen were mainly employed by the king to build temples, tombs, pyramids and monuments or by noblemen who had workshops on their estates. Some worked quietly in small towns and villages producing goods for the local markets.

A craftsman's son was expected to follow in his father's footsteps and learn the same trade. A boy's training began early so he could become highly skilled with his tools and to learn the rules of his craft.

Craftsmen produced manufactured products such as clothing, pottery, bricks, tools, glass, weapons, furniture, jewellery and perfume. Rope, baskets, mats and sheets of writing material were produced from plants.

Rich supplies of minerals were found in Ancient Egypt. Some of the Egyptian miners produced large quantities of limestone, sandstone and granite used in the construction of pyramids and monuments. Gold, copper and manganese were mined as well as such gems as turquoises and amethysts.

Thousands of people were employed by government officials or by the temples. Skilled architects, stonemasons, carpenters, decorators, engineers, artists, sculptors and painters were needed to build the huge buildings. The workmen were paid for their labours in food, wine, oil and clothing. Other people such as shoemakers, musicians, bakers, butchers, teachers, scribes, accountants and butlers worked at the various government buildings.

Painters and sculptors had to obey very strict rules when they completed their work. Everything that was drawn had to be exactly as it was and people could only be painted in certain poses. A picture drawn in a tomb was expected to "come alive" in the next world after the priests had said the correct prayers and spells. The pictures shown would then go on happening for all eternity.

Statues had to show people as they wanted to be forever young, strong and handsome. A mistake by a craftsman might harm the client forever in the next world.