

France - A European Country

France is a large country in Western Europe. Its capital, Paris, is known the world over for its beauty. The broad roads with flowerbeds on both sides, rows of trees, fountains, colourful lights and beautiful statues at the road junctions are worth seeing. Paris is spread on either bank of the Seine River. You can see the whole of Paris from the Eiffel Tower, built of steel in 1889. It was erected to celebrate hundredth anniversary of the great French Revolution which ushered in the modern era of democracy. The people of France overthrew the monarchy and sought to establish the principles of Liberty, Equality and Brotherhood of all people.

The French are also famous for their trendsetting fashion designing and very delicious food preparations. This is because France is a land of great diversities as it extends from the Alps to the Atlantic and from the cold north to the warm Mediterranean.

- ◆ Can you look at the map of Europe and find out the location of France?
- ◆ Name the Oceans and Seas surrounding France. In what way do you think France would benefit from them?
- ◆ France also shares boundaries with several countries. Name these countries with the help of the map of Europe.

S.No.	Direction	Frontier Country



Fig 6.1 Eiffel Tower

Mountains, Plains and Plateaus

- ◆ Look at the natural features of France in Map-1. You will notice that the northern and the western parts have broad plains. Name the rivers flowing through these plains.
- ◆ Look for mountains on the eastern and southern side of France, and write down their names.
- ◆ There is a large plateau situated in central France called the Massif Central.
- ◆ Which of these regions do you expect to be mainly animal rearing regions? Why do you think such regions may not be suited to agriculture?

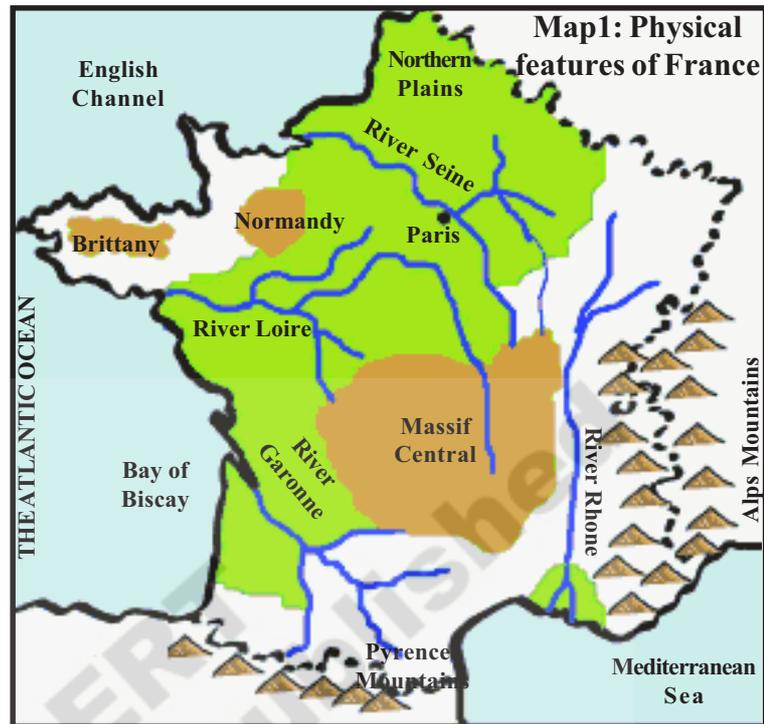


Fig 6.2 Port of Marseille, a harbour. Ships have anchored in the harbour. There are many such ports along the coast of France. What would the ships be used for?



Fig 6.3 An ariel view of the city of Paris. What can you tell about the way the city is organised?

Climate

Europe is not as warm as our country and it has long and severe winters. However, France, being on the west of the continent, does not experience as severe winters as countries like Poland and Russia in Eastern Europe. This is because it receives warm winds from the Atlantic sea. It gets cooler and cooler as we move from the coastal area to the interior of the continent.

Due to the moist Westerly Winds, which blow throughout the year, France gets showers all round the year. There is bright sunshine during a part of the day and before long the clouds gather and pour rain. Soon enough the sky clears up and there is sunshine again. Though it rains throughout the year it rains more in the winter. Occasionally it also snows in winters. Since the air is cool, the rainwater does not dry up quickly and moisture remains in the air.

- ◆ Mention two differences between the climate of France and the climate of our state.

The Four Seasons and Agriculture

In our country we have three seasons, winter, summer and the rains. However, most European countries including France have four main seasons. They are winter, spring, summer and autumn. The look of the land changes according to the season and the agricultural routine changes, too. The transformation of a place over these seasons can be seen in the pictures given in the next page.

Winter: As November approaches, it begins to get chilly. December onwards, it gets very cold and snow begins to fall once

in a while. It snows heavily on the mountains and less on the plains. The sun shines once in a while. The sun rises very late in the day, at about nine or ten O'clock and sets by four O'clock in the afternoon. The overcast sky makes it even darker. France has broad-leaved trees, which shed their leaves in winter and stand entirely leafless.

Due to excessive cold the domestic animals cannot be kept outdoors. They are kept in stalls and have to be fed there. That is why the farmers have to collect hay and other animal feed for use in winter. Crops do not grow and the fields lie fallow during winter.

- ◆ Farmers in our country too store fodder; do you know in which season this stored fodder is used?
- ◆ Do fields lie vacant in winter in our country too?
- ◆ What crops do we grow in winter in our country and why do they not grow in the same season in France?

Spring: The landscape begins to change as March comes. The days get longer and the nights shorter. The snow begins to melt and new shoots appear on trees. Fresh green leaves appear and colourful flowers bloom everywhere. Lush green grass begins to grow on the pastures.

The fields are ploughed in spring and sowing is also done during this season. Wheat, rye, barley, corn, sugar beet and oats are the principal crops.

- ◆ Which of these crops grow in our state and in which area?



Winter



Spring



Summer



Autumn

- ◆ Look carefully at the pictures above. They belong to different seasons. What differences can you identify?

Wheat is the most important crop of France. In those parts of France where it does not snow much, wheat is sown before the onset of winter as snow melts. They however grow very fast with the coming of spring. The productivity of such wheat crop is very high.

Another important crop is rye, a cereal with longish grains. It is used for making bread and is also fed to animals. It is also used for brewing beer. Though sugarcane does not grow in French climate, sugar beet does. Sugar beet is used for making sugar. Its waste material is fed to animals. All these crops are sown in spring and they mature in summer.

Summer: It is summer in France from June to August. It does not rain so much and there is more sunshine. The days are longer - longer than even in our country. The sun rises as early as four O'clock in the morning and sets after eight O'clock in the evening. Nevertheless it does not get very hot. The French summers are only as warm as our winters.

Summer is the season of agriculture in France. Crops mature in this season. There is no need for irrigation as the occasional showers are sufficient for the crops. At the end of summer the crops are ready to be harvested. It is in summer that the grapes are harvested too. Grapes are one of the most important crops of eastern and southern France. Grapevines are grown in vineyards. New leaves and flowers come in early summer and the grapes ripen by the

end of summer. France grows a number of varieties of grapes. These are mostly used for making wine, juice is pressed out of the grapes and it is fermented to get wine. French wines are famous all over the world.

- ◆ In which regions of Andhra Pradesh are grapes grown?



Fig 6.4 Vine yards in Burgundy in Southern France

In our country we have two agricultural seasons: *Rabi* and *Kharif* (winter and monsoon). Thus it is possible to grow crops for nearly eight to ten months in a year. On the other hand, in France and other European countries, cultivation is possible only for six to seven months.

Autumn: The climate changes once again in September and October. Tree leaves turn red and yellow and begin to fall. Agricultural operations are wound up. Hay is cut and dried for feeding farm animals in winter. Grapes and other fruits are plucked and used for making wine, jams and juices of various kinds and preserved in other ways.

- ◆ The four main seasons of France are 1..... 2..... 3..... 4.....
- ◆is the main agricultural season in France.
- ◆are important crops of southern France.

Fruits

Besides grapes, France also grows strawberries, cherries, apricots, plums, peaches and apples. These fruits are grown

in plenty in orchards. They present a beautiful sight with their riot of colourful flowers in spring. They are harvested in late summer.

These fruits are also grown in orchards in our country near Nainital and Shimla on the Himalayas, which have cold climates. In warmer climates, as in our state, we grow mangoes, banana, guavas and the like. These fruits do not grow in cold countries like France.

- ◆ Why do you think fruits that grow in France also grow in the Himalayas?

Southern France is warmer in comparison to the north. Hence some crops which do not grow in the north grow well here. Olives are grown in plenty in the south, especially near the coast. This tree grows well on stony slopes. In fact no other crop can be grown on such land. Oil is extracted from olives and is used as a cooking medium. Lemon, tangerine and oranges are grown extensively in south and these are used for preparing squashes and jams.

Animal Rearing and Fodder Crops

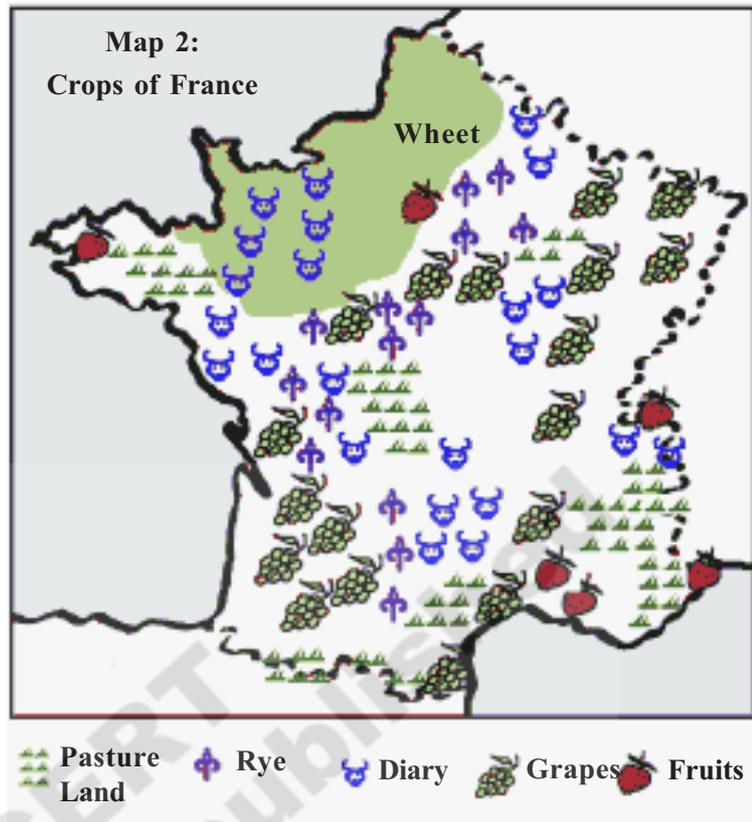
Animal husbandry is an important part of French agriculture. Unlike in our country animals are no longer used for working on the field or pulling carts. More than a hundred years ago animals like horses were used for tilling the land but today all farming operations are mechanised.

Milk, butter, cheese and meat are important ingredients of French food. Cattle are reared for their dairy products. Milk is made into cheese, which sets in large blocks like jaggery. Cheese is an important part of French cuisine.

The French also consume large quantities of milk, cream and butter. Pigs and cattle are also reared for their meat. There are different breeds of cattle for milk and meat. Sheep and goats are reared in the plateau and mountainous regions. They are reared for wool and meat.

You have just read that the grasses are short and juicy in cool and wet climates. Hence the grasses that grow in France too are short and juicy and cattle and sheep graze on them. However, the animal husbandry of France does not rely on them alone and a number of fodder crops are grown and the waste materials of a number of industries are used to feed the farm animals. The waste material obtained after extracting sugar from beetroot is also fed to farm animals.

- ◆ How is the climate of France suitable for animal husbandry?



French Farms

Most of the cultivation in France is carried on in large farms, most of them being more than 50 to 100 acres in size. Generally farmers build their houses in their own farms. That is why there are no large villages in France. The farmhouses are usually very large and have a number of rooms for different purposes. Sheds for animals, godowns for storing grains, coops and sties for poultry and pigs are part of the farm.

These big farmers hire labourers to work on their fields. They also use heavy machines like tractors and harvesters. Almost the entire product is sold in the market. Sometimes the farmers also hire machines from nearby cooperative societies.

- ◆ Find out the average size of farmer's land in your area.



Fig 6.5 Cheese stored in cellars

- ◆ Do farmers in your area too hire tractors and harvesters?

Large holdings and mechanized farming enable French farmers to earn a good income. They live in comfortable houses equipped with modern amenities. They use gas and electric stoves for cooking. About fifty years ago most French farmers baked their own bread. Now they sell off most of their produce and buy their bread from the market daily. Several varieties of bread and cakes are available in nearby towns. Fresh meat, which is an essential part of French diet, is obtained from poultry, cattle and pigs of the farm. Meat is also preserved by smoking, drying or freezing. All houses used to have larders or cellars where meat, cheese and wine were stored. These are also now stored in large cold storages.

The farmers obtain most of their requirements from the nearby towns. Besides bread and other food items, they also obtain agricultural tools and machines from nearby towns. Their children too go to schools in the towns. According to the

French law it is compulsory for all children to attend schools run by the government. Thus all children in France have the opportunity to get educated.

Modern Agriculture

In France, as in other countries of Europe, agriculture is practised as a commercial enterprise, just as any industry. The

farmer makes his living by selling his entire produce and getting all of his requirements from the market. The agricultural technology they use also requires the use of hybrid seeds, chemical fertilisers, pesticides, etc.

- ◆ Do you know of similar efforts in our country to increase milk production?

Minerals and Industries

Unlike Germany and Britain, France does not have very large deposits of minerals. Nevertheless, coal and iron ore are available. You have read in the previous chapter that the availability of coal and iron in close proximity helps in the development of iron and steel industry. France has a developed steel industry, which has enabled her to develop machine and tool industries. France is especially famous for its aviation (air craft) industry. France has also developed several other industries. Look at Map-3 to find out the kinds of goods France produces and look at the location of those industries. In recent years mining



of minerals like coal has declined as France finds it cheaper to import coal from South Africa and the US.

Look at Map-3 and answer the following questions:

- ◆ Are Industries located all over France, or are they concentrated in some regions?
- ◆ Must region with mineral wealth also have developed industries?



Fig 6.6 Nuclear Power Plant - Cattenom

Sources of Energy and Industrialisation

You read about the importance of sources of energy for industrialization. Coal obtained from domestic sources takes care of only a very small part of the country's needs. Hence France has to import coal from the US and South Africa. France also does not have large deposits of petroleum or natural gas. France has to import petroleum from South Africa and the Arab countries.

In order to make good the shortage in sources of energy France took to nuclear energy. Today nearly 80% of France electricity is from nuclear energy. There are 61 nuclear reactors producing electricity in France. However there are problems in using nuclear energy. It produces radioactive waste material, which is very harmful to the health of human beings, animals and plants. As a result the government of France has decided not to

increase the production of nuclear energy based electricity. France therefore has to increase the share of other sources of energy. France already uses its hydroelectric capacities to the full. So it has been forced to explore the possibility of using some new sources of energy like tidal energy from the ocean tides, solar energy and biogas.

- ◆ What problems do you think France will face in using solar energy on a large scale?
- ◆ Find out where the electricity you use is made and which source of energy is used there?



people protesting against nuclear energy. Can you identify the symbol of nuclear energy? Which source of energy are they trying to promote?

Improve your learning

1. What advantages does France have from being surrounded by the seas and oceans on three sides?
2. Identify the Plain area of France and the main river that flows through it?
3. Describe any two examples that show relationship between the crops and climate.
4. How do natural factors help animal husbandry in France?
5. Find out what efforts have been taken to protect different species of cows from your region? Compare animal rearing as you experienced and as described about France.
6. What type of industries are located in Northern France? Why are they located there?
7. Compare the agriculture in France and your region with regard to the following points:
 - a) Seasons
 - b) Crops
 - c) Size of land holdings
8. List out the various crops of France from the lesson.
9. Locate the 'France' and its adjacent countries in the world map.
10. Is the problem of coal in France applicable to our country?
11. Look at the roof of the houses below in the city of Le Havre. In the chapter on Nigeria you will find the roofs in the city of Kano (Fig 8.1) and in chapter 4 on Oceans and Fishing, roofs of Bhavanpadu village (Fig 4.3). Compare them and think of the reasons for the different type of roofs.

