

Interdependency Web

Standards of Learning

Social Studies 1.7, 3.8

Objective

Students will:

- Investigate specialization and interdependency in the production of goods and services
- Model interdependency by forming a web

Materials

- Interdependency Web Tags (laminated and hung on string for wearing around the neck)
- Ball of yarn

Background Knowledge

Most students believe that the food they eat and the clothes they wear are made and bought at the grocery store, supermarket, department store, and produce stand. They are not aware of the fact that goods that go in clothes and are sold in the market grow on farms and go through a process of production, processing, distribution, and consumption. It is important to explain to your students what these steps mean and the time that goes into them. Production is the growing or making of a good like cotton. This is usually where specialization comes into play because a farmer or producer usually focuses on one good that they produce because it is more profitable that way. Producers choose what they are good at. Processing is the step cotton has to go through when it is picked, cleaned, and made into the blue jeans that we wear. Distribution is when the clothes that your students wear come to the stores that your students buy them in. Lastly, the consumption step is when students come to the store and buy the clothes or food that they want. They consume them. It is important to explain to students how the process that goods go through can be seen as a cycle because the consumers buy the products so that producers can continue to grow. The farmer cannot afford to grow cotton if the consumer does not buy the blue jeans. The consumer cannot get their blue jeans if the farmer does not grow the cotton. The farmer cannot sell his cotton if the processing plant or the distribution trucks do not do their job of cleaning and carrying the cotton. Consumers cannot get their blue jeans either.

This lesson serves as a great way to strengthen your students team building skills as they work together to produce blue jeans from cotton. They are able to experience working in groups and relying on each other so that the whole group can succeed. Students explore complex economic concepts while learning about cotton production and products. The hands-on “economic web” will aid in student understanding.

Procedure

1. Have students brainstorm all of the places that they can get the goods and services that they need and want. (Grocery store, department store, produce stand, etc.)
2. Pose the question—How do these goods and services get to the stores we shop at? Accept reasonable answers.
3. Read the book from *Plant to Blue Jeans* and discuss the steps that goods go through to get from farm to you. (production—processing—distribution—consumption)



4. Discuss with students how producers usually focus on the production of one particular good. Connect the concept of being an expert in one product with the term “specialization.”
5. Pose the question—Was the producer in the book *From Plant to Blue Jeans* able to do everything he needed to do to make his cotton into what the consumer wanted by himself? (No. He relied on the processing plant to take the seeds out of the cotton, process the cotton into yarn, turn the yarn into the fabric for our clothing, etc. He also relied on the distributors to carry the cotton from his farm to the processing plant and then from the processing plant to the stores where consumers get them.)
6. Have students stand in a large circle.
7. Distribute the Interdependency Web tags to the students and have them read over their card to themselves.
8. Tell the children that they are going to receive the ball of yarn and their job will be to hold onto a piece of the yarn then toss the ball of yarn to someone else in the group that they depend on to be successful at their job. They identify those people who help by reading the back of their tag. Give the ball of yarn to one student and let the process begin.
9. Once everyone has had a chance to receive the yarn and toss the yarn, discuss with the students how producers and consumers and everyone in between depend on each other for the things they need and want. The web created from the activity demonstrates how we are all connected. This dependency can be best described by the term “interdependency.”
10. Pose the following question—what would happen if one of the people in our circle no longer existed? Accept all reasonable answers.
11. Instruct the students that represent the producers to drop their yarn. Have the students observe what happens to the web. Then have another group of students drop their yarn and observe what happens.
12. Pose the following question—Based on what we have seen through this activity, what can we conclude about the importance of everyone in our economy (producers, consumers, processors, distributors)? Reinforce the idea that we have the things we need and want because we depend on others and others depend on us. This makes everyone in our economy important.
13. Discuss how the students will make a difference in the future of our economy based on the career choices they make, the goods and services they value, and the decisions they make as voting citizens.

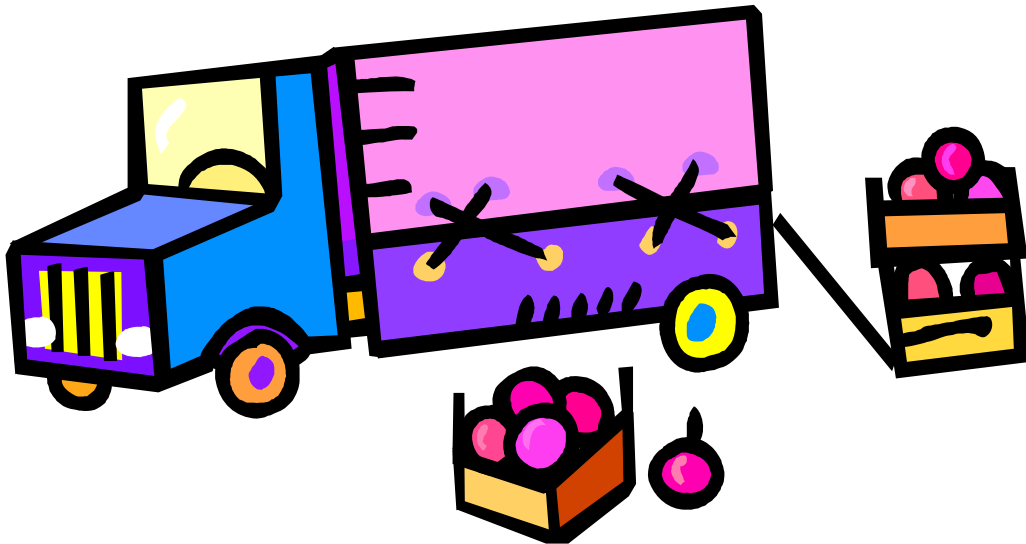


Extension

- Read other books about the sequence of events that a good goes through to get to the consumer.
- Show examples of interdependency between states, countries, continents.
- Research the amount of money a producer actually received after his/her good goes through the phases of production to get to the consumer.
- Look in *Farm Facts* (provided in workshop) for examples of interdependency.



DISTRIBUTOR



Distribution is a crucial step in bringing goods and services to the consumer. Truck drivers, pilots, train conductors, and ship captains make sure that goods are transported from the producer to the processor and then to the consumer.

Producers rely on distributors to carry goods from the farm to the processing plant and from the processing plant to the consumer.

Processors rely on distributors to carry goods from the farm and then to the consumer.

Sellers depend on distributors to bring them the products they sell in their stores.

Consumers are grateful for distributors. Without the distributor, consumers would have to go directly to the producer or processing plant to get the goods they want or need.



STORE/MARKET



Stores are where we go get the good we want and need. Consumers rely on stores and markets to provide them with the freshest product at a location that is convenient.

What would stores do without **producers**? Stores/markets rely on producers to provide them with the goods to sell to the consumer. Likewise, producers rely on stores to sell their goods to the consumer.

Processors provide stores and markets with goods that are fresh and ready for the consumer.

Distributors deliver the goods that stores need for sale to the counter.

Consumers are grateful for stores. Without stores conveniently located where consumers can quickly and easily shop for items, the consumer would have to do a lot more work to get the good they need and want. Likewise, stores and markets are grateful for the consumers. Consumers are the ones who buy the products and keep a store in business.

The **marketing** industry really helps stores and markets advertise the products they are selling to the consumer. With attractive marketing, consumers are drawn to purchase products from certain stores.



PRODUCER



Producers are the foundation of almost every industry. Producers make, raise or grow the goods we rely on in our everyday lives. Producers have a very important role in the future of our lives and our economy.

Producers send their goods to **processors** who make sure that the goods are packaged appropriately, preserved, and at their freshest for the consumer.

Distributors carry the goods from the producer to the processor and then from the processor to the stores and markets.

The **marketing** industry creates advertisements for the goods raised or grown by the producer. This helps the producer's goods sell.

Consumers drive the decisions that producers make about their goods. In other words, producers make decisions about the goods they raise or grow based on what the consumer wants or needs.

Stores and markets are where the goods that the producer raises and grows are sold to the consumer.



CONSUMER



Consumers are an important part of our economy. Consumers buy the goods and services that producers make or grow. Based on the wants and needs of the consumer, important decisions are about how goods are produced, processed and sold.

Producers rely on the consumer to buy the goods they raise or grow. It is the consumer that determines how a producer grows the goods they produce.

Distributors bring goods to the consumer so they don't have to travel far and wide to get the goods they need and want.

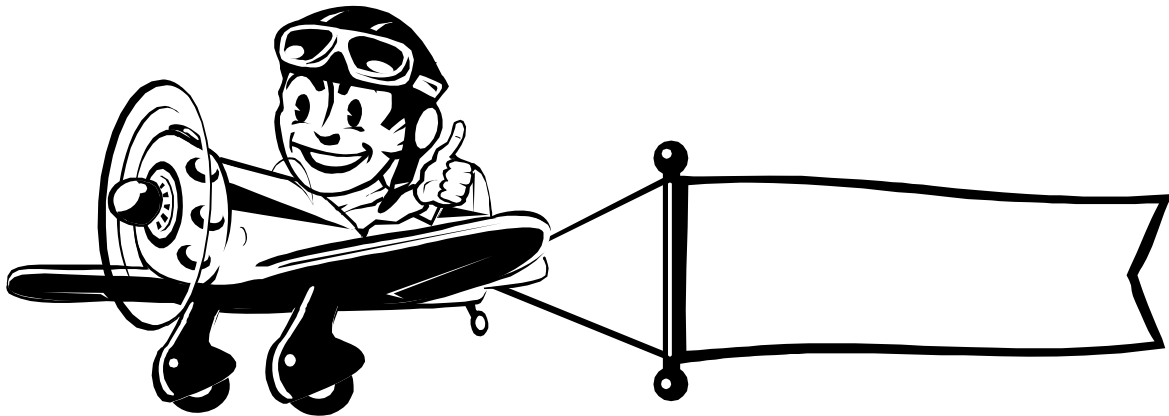
The **marketing** industry helps sell goods and services to the consumer. Through advertisements and marketing campaigns, consumers learn about products so they can make informed economic choices.

Processors make sure that goods are cleaned, packaged and preserved just the way the consumer likes it! The processing of goods makes them more appealing to the consumer.

Stores and markets are where the goods that the producer raises and grows are sold to the consumer. Consumers spend a lot of money at stores!



MARKETING



Marketing agencies spend a great deal of time coming up with creative ways to tell consumers about products. The marketing industry can help or hurt the sale of a certain good or service.

Consumers trust marketing agencies to provide them with information about goods and services that will help them make informed economic choices.

Distribution vehicles can sometimes be used for advertising.

Producers rely on the marketing industry to make their goods appealing to the consumer. The more a good is marketed, the more it will sell and earn the producer money.

Processors help create a product that is easy to market. By cleaning, packaging, and preserving goods, processors provide marketing agencies with many ways to sell the consumer on a product.

Stores and markets definitely depend on the marketing industry to make their store a success! By promoting the goods that are sold in a store, more consumers will shop in the store.



PROCESSING



Processing is an important part of making any good consumer friendly. Processors provide the consumer with goods that are clean, fresh and conveniently packaged.

Consumers want to spend their money on goods that are clean, fresh and conveniently packaged. Processors help prepare goods to satisfy the consumer.

Distributors help bring goods from the producers to the processing plants and then carry goods that have been processed to stores and markets.

Producers trust that processors will take their goods and prepare them for market. If the processor prepares the goods correctly, it can help the producer sell more of the product because it will be more appealing to the consumer.

Marketing agencies help create the design that appears on the packaging that processors use.

Stores and markets rely on processors to prepare goods in a way that is appealing to the consumer. After all, appealing to the consumer helps a store sell more and make more money.

