



The agricultural revolution as environmental catastrophe: Implications for health and lifestyle in the Holocene

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One of the most fundamental developments in the history of our species—and one having among the most profound impacts on landscapes and the people occupying them—was the domestication of plants and animals. In addition to altering landscapes around the globe from the terminal Pleistocene and early Holocene, the shift from foraging to farming resulted in negative and multiple consequences for human health. Study of human skeletal remains from archaeological contexts shows that the introduction of grains and other cultigens and the increase in their dietary focus resulted in a decline in health and alterations in activity and lifestyle. Although agriculture provided the economic basis for the rise of states and development of civilizations, the change in diet and acquisition of food resulted in a decline in quality of life for most human populations in the last 10,000 years.

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