

## TERRACE FARMING

Long ago, farmers developed a method called **terrace farming** to grow crops on steep hillsides where it would be impossible to farm in the usual way. A series of step-like benches is constructed up the side of a hill. Walls made of stone or sod support each bench. Using this method, more land can be used to grow crops.

The growing space is in a series of narrow strips, not in one large field. When irrigation is added, farmers can control the amount of water each step receives. They create a series of **microclimates**, with each step having slightly different temperatures and moisture. Skillful farmers can match each type of potato or other plant to a step with the amount of water and the temperatures it needs to grow. Another advantage is that each level slows the flow of water runoff, so there is less erosion from rain and snow.

Building and maintaining the terraces and irrigation systems requires a lot of labor. Use of tractors or other traditional farm equipment is not practical in the narrow strips.

The Inca who lived in the highlands of South America used terrace farming. Ancient Inca cities were located high in the Andes Mountains. To sustain a large population, they had to develop a way to grow enough food.

In the harsh climate of the Andes, agriculture is difficult. There are cold temperatures at night, tropical temperatures during the day, and a lack of dependable rainfall.

Terrace farming and irrigation helped Inca farmers solve these problems.



To provide the labor to build this system, the government required citizens to work on the projects at different times in their life.

1. Why did Inca farmers use terrace farming?
2. How did skillful crop choices make terrace farming work better?