



U.S.D.A. – United States Department of Agriculture Reading Comprehension Worksheet

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In many parts of the world, farmers plant, grow, and sell food in markets. It used to be that not much thought went into the food that people bought. Hundreds of years ago, from time to time, people became sick and some even died.

Why this was happening? Most of the time, it was because food was contaminated things that are poisonous for us to eat. There were no controls and people could do as they wanted. This meant that buying food could be a high risk for our health.

During these times, several problems were found. One problem was that a farm that was growing fruits and vegetables was near cattle, pig, chicken or dairy farms. The livestock animals made waste. Rain and floods would carry waste and other things down hills to the fruit and vegetable farms. The waste carried germs, bugs and bacteria that would not hurt the fruits and vegetables, but later would harm people if these foods were eaten.

Many farms use chemicals to kill bugs and keep rodents, like mice and rats, and small animals away. The chemicals did not hurt the fruits and vegetables, or livestock, but when people ate the foods they got sick. These chemicals were poisons.

In America, people began washing their food in the 1900s. Some people knew to wash foods as far back as the 1700s. Washing fresh foods helped keeping foods safe to eat. America has grown so big, that the people wanted government to make rules and guidelines for the safe growing and handling of foods. This group of people became the U.S.D.A., United States Department of Agriculture.

The U.S.D.A. became responsible for many things. They would create rules and regulations for the safe growing, storage, handling, buying and selling of foods. The U.S.D.A. tested foods to see how nutritious foods were. They came up with the ways for everyone to understand food. For examples: they came up with a food pyramid, and myPlate. The U.S.D.A. created nutrition labels that are on bottles, jars, bags and boxes of food. The U.S.D.A. came up with ways to keep food safe from the farm to the table where we enjoy our food.

Agriculture is not just food, but any living thing that grows. So the U.S.D.A. also regulates cattle, poultry such as chickens, fisheries that hatch fish and other marine life. They also have rules as to what foods can be brought into the country when we travel around the world.

The U.S.D.A. works with other government departments or agencies to be sure that nothing harmful gets into our food supply.

The U.S.D.A. sets public policy about what can be cooked and served in public schools and government cafeterias. They also educate about healthier choice options to keep us strong and healthy. They work with doctors to provide safe vitamins and dietary supplements. The U.S.D.A. works with doctors and nutrition specialists to offer proper portion sizes of the foods we eat.



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Questions:

1. What government department protects us from unsafe foods?

2. Why was this agency made?

3. Do rats and mice belong on a farm? _____

4. Is washing fresh food a good thing to help us from getting sick? _____

5. When it comes to food, name 5 things the U.S.D.A. sets rules and guidelines for that keep us safe?

6. Name as many kinds of farms, what gets grown on them, as you can? _____

7. What item is found on boxes, bags, jars, and bottles on foods that is important from the U.S.D.A.?
