

NATURAL RESOURCES

INTRODUCTION

- Natural resources can be defined as ‘variety of goods and services provided by nature which are necessary for our day-to-day lives’.
- Eg: Plants, animals and microbes (living or biotic part), Air, water, soil, minerals, climate and solar energy (non- living or abiotic part).
- They are essential for the fulfilment of physiological, social, economical and cultural needs at the individual and community levels.

TYPES OF NATURAL RESOURCES

They are of two types of resources namely Renewable and Non-Renewable Resources.

1. Renewable resources:

The resources that can be replenished through rapid natural cycles are known as renewable resource. These resources are able to increase their abundance through reproduction and utilization of simple substances.

Ex: Plants, (crops and forests) and animals.

- Some examples of renewable resources though they do not have life cycle but can be recycled. Ex: Wood and wood-products, pulp products, natural rubber, fibers (e.g. Cotton, jute, animal wool, silk and synthetic fibers) and leather.
- In addition to these resources, water and soil are also classified as renewable resources.
- Solar energy although having a finite life, as a special case, is considered as a renewable resource in as much as solar stocks is inexhaustible on the human scale.

2. Non-renewable resources:

The resources that cannot be replenished through natural processes are known as non-renewable resources. These are available in limited amounts, which cannot be increased. These resources include fossil fuels (petrol, coal etc.), metals (iron, copper, gold, silver, lead, zinc etc.), minerals and salts (carbonates, phosphates, nitrates etc.). Once a non-renewable resource is consumed, it is gone forever.

- Non-renewable resources can further be divided into two categories, viz.

A) Recyclable and

B) Non-recyclable

A) Recyclable: These are non-renewable resources, which can be collected after they are used and can be recycled. These are mainly the non-energy mineral resources, which occur in the earth’s crust (Ex: Ores of aluminum, copper, mercury etc.) and deposits of fertilizer nutrients (e.g. Phosphate rock and potassium and minerals used in their natural state (asbestos, clay, mica etc.)

B) Non-recyclable: These are non-renewable resources, which cannot be recycled in any way. Ex: Fossil fuels and uranium, which provide 90 per cent of our energy requirements

NATURAL RESOURCES AND ASSOCIATED PROBLEMS:

- The main problem associated with natural resources is unequal consumption.
- A major part of natural resources are consumed in the 'developed' world. The 'developing nations' also over use many resources because of their greater human population. However, the consumption of resources per capita (per individual) of the developed countries is up to 50 times greater than in most developing countries.
- Advanced countries produce over 75% of global industrial waste and greenhouse gases.
- Energy from fossil fuels consumed in relatively much greater quantities in developed countries. Their per capita consumption of food too is much greater as well as their waste.