

Core Activity Sheet 1.4

Botanica: background information

File

Botanica covers a large area and has a very varied climate with high mountains, tropical rainforest, desert, an amazing coastline and much more. It has a wealth of natural resources and is famous as a centre for plant research. There is a rich culture and a well-established system of traditional medicine using local plants. The traditional herbalists are well respected.

Botanica has many 'development' problems. It has a large debt to foreign banks and governments. This means that much of the farming land is used for 'cash crops' instead of crops grown to provide food for the local people. Cash crops are crops such as coffee, cotton, tea, rubber and cocoa, which are sold to other countries and provide money to pay back the debt. One of Botanica's main cash crops is flowers, which are sold to people in richer countries.

Fertilisers and pesticides used for the crops have polluted many of the rivers and lakes and caused other health problems for the plantation workers using them.

Many people whose land was taken over for cash crops have moved to the towns to find work. They live in shanty towns where they have built houses out of cardboard and other waste material. Life is hard and conditions are unhealthy with no water, toilets, power, waste removal or transport. People are always afraid that the security forces will destroy their homes and they will lose everything. This has happened recently to some shanty-town dwellers near Botanica's main airport. The government wanted to make the city more respectable for the arrival of foreign guests, so they bulldozed the shanty town and set fire to it to clear it.

Due to its beauty and variety, Botanica is a brilliant place for tourists. However, there are not many airports, good roads, hotels, etc. The government is very keen to develop tourism and is looking for ways to make it really successful.