

7

THRESHOLD

AGRICULTURE

Up until about 11,000 years ago, humans—who had spread throughout the world—survived by foraging for food. Everything changed when certain groups of humans began to farm. Populations exploded. Societies became more diverse. Collective learning accelerated.

1 MILLION YEARS AGO

5000 YEARS AGO

1000 YEARS AGO

Thousands of years ago
1000 900 800 700 600 500 400 300 200 100

Years ago
5000 4600 4200 3800 3400 3000 2600 2200 1800 1400

Years ago
1000 900 800 700 600 500 400 300 200 100

7 THRESHOLD AGRICULTURE

INGREDIENTS

Increasingly dense human communities

Knowledge about the environment

Accumulated through collective learning over many generations



GOLDBLOCKS CONDITIONS

Warmer climates after the last ice age

Enable the proliferation of plants and animals in many regions

Increasing competition for resources

Forces foragers to find ways to increase production from their environments



NEW COMPLEXITY

Domestication of plants and animals

Increases access to food and energy sources

Villages, cities, and agrarian civilizations

Generate new social systems and complex infrastructures

Enable rapid acceleration of collective learning and even greater innovation