**Reading Exercise: Desertification**

**Desertification** is a type of land degradation in which a relatively dry land region becomes increasingly arid, typically losing its bodies of water as well as vegetation and wildlife. It is caused by a variety of factors, such as climate change and human activities. Desertification is a significant global ecological and environmental problem.

**Causes**

1) Trees are being cut down at much larger scale than ever before to be used as fuel, to provide products we use in our daily life, or to simply create more space for agriculture to sustain growing human population. Once the trees and other vegetation in an area are gone, there is nothing left to hold the soil in place.

2) Our planet’s ecosystems sustain life only when balanced. They can cope with incremental challenges and adapt but beyond a certain tipping point they collapse. A rapid increase in the number of people demands higher amounts of natural resources and expands more and more over the landscape, leading to increased desertification.

3) Improper irrigation methods used in arid areas, such as canal irrigation, lead to a build-up of salt in the soil and make it difficult for crops and other plants to grow, increasing desertification. Similarly harmful is cultivation of already deteriorated lands. Through inconsiderate farming methods, farmers only speed up the process of desertification in exchange for poor quality crops with low economic value.

4) In arid regions, grass and other vegetation is necessary to keep the soil in place. If such vegetation is used as feed for cattle without sustainable control, there is nothing that remains to prevent soil from blowing or washing away, and if this process occurs long enough, it can lead to desertification.

**Effects of Desertification**

5) As desertification occurs, the soil can be blown or washed away, and valuable soil nutrients are lost. As the soil dries out, it hardens and it becomes difficult for any rainfall that does occur to penetrate below the soil’s surface. And what remains left is a lifeless pile of dust instead of a life-giving medium.

6) Due to drought conditions and a loss of productive land, local people find themselves and their livestock experiencing starvation.

7) Desertification events have been a major driver behind the movement of large human populations throughout history. When soils are not able to support their civilisation, people set on the move to look for better locations.

8) Species that once lived in a fertile and productive climate may not survive in a newly desertified region.

*For questions and answers to this lesson, see* [*www.ieltsliz.com*](http://www.ieltsliz.com)*.* ***Source:*** *The reading materials above have been adapted from* [*https://greentumble.com/causes-and-effects-of-desertification/*](https://greentumble.com/causes-and-effects-of-desertification/)