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Q84

Which one of the following is the best description of the term 'ecosystem'? (a) A community of organisms interacting with one another (b) That part of the Earth which is inhabited by living organisms (c) A community of organisms together with the environment in which they live (d) The flora and fauna of a geographical area Official key: C.

UPSC Civil Services Prelims 2015 · General Studies · 2 marks · Environment and Ecology
Environment, ecology, climate, biodiversity - Prelims GS Paper I.

Explanation**(a)**

A community of organisms interacting with one another is a biotic community (or biocoenosis), not the full ecosystem, because the physical environment is missing. This option is not the key.

(b)

The inhabited part of the Earth is the **biosphere**, a planetary envelope, not a single ecosystem. This option is therefore wrong.

(c) Official key

An ecosystem is the biotic community plus the abiotic environment with which it interacts-energy flow and nutrient cycling included. That is the standard definition. This option is the official key.

(d)

Flora and fauna of an area are only the plants and animals, without **abiotic factors** or the system idea. This option is not the key.

Summary

Official key is (c) a community of organisms together with the environment in which they live. Ecosystem = biotic + abiotic. Option (a) is community only; (b) is **biosphere**; (d) is a species list. Tansley's term requires the physical setting. Only (c) is complete.

Related possible facts

These can be asked in a future Prelims paper.

A.G. Tansley

Coined 'ecosystem' in 1935

Abiotic factors

Light, temperature, water, soil, nutrients

Biome

Large-scale community type (e.g. tropical rainforest), not a synonym of biosphere

Biosphere

Global sum of ecosystems

Ecotone

Transition zone between two ecosystems

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