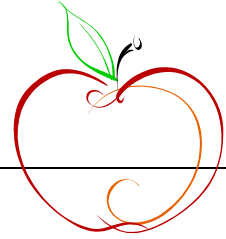# How Much Land do we Have?

Use an apple to represent planet Earth. Carry out the following sequence:

1. Slide the apple into quarters.

2. Set aside three of the quarters. What does this represent? (oceans) What fraction do you have left? (1/4)

3. Slice this land into half.

4. Set aside one of the pieces. The portion set aside represents the land area that is inhospitable to people: the polar areas, deserts, swamps, rocky mountains, etc. What fraction do you have left? (1/8) The piece that is left is land area where people live, but do not necessarily grow the foods needed for life.

5. Slice the 1/8 piece into four sections.

6. Set aside three these pieces. These pieces represent the areas too rocky, too wet, too cold, too steep, or with soil too poor to actually produce food. They also contain cities, suburban sprawl, highways, shopping centres, schools, parks, factories, parking lot, and other places where people live but do not necessarily grow food. What fraction do you have left? (1/32)

7. Carefully peel the skin off the 1/32 slide of the Earth. This tiny peeling represents the surface, the very thin skin of the earth's crust upon which humankind depends. It is a finite and irreplaceable amount of land which averages only a few feet in depth. Due to erosion and overfarming, we lose 25 billion tons of it every year. It can take hundreds of years for one inch of topsoil to form.

Protecting our land resources is very important. Advanced agricultural technology has enabled the world to feed many of its people. But, with a fixed land resource base and an ever-increasing number of people to feed from that fixed base, each person's portion becomes smaller and smaller.