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This studyguide, PHFS03M for Sustainable Natural Resources Use, was developed for the pilot run of the Programme for Household Food Security in agreement between the South African Institute Distance Education and the University of South Africa.

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The project for training household food security facilitators was initiated by the South African Institute for Distance Education (SAIDE) that received funding from the WK Kellogg Foundation to help facilitate the design and development of a programme aimed at further upgrading the skills of community development workers and volunteers. SAIDE approached the College of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences of the University of South Africa (UNISA, CAES) and the two institutions signed a memorandum of agreement in this regard. The programme was to be offered by UNISA as a Short Learning Programme. The project is being overseen by a Steering Committee, under the leadership of Dr M.J Linington (Dean, CAES, UNISA) and Ms J Glennie (Director, SAIDE).

This study guide for the module *PHFS03M Sustainable Natural Resources Use* is the third of six modules in the programme to be piloted with groups of community development workers linked to local government and volunteers linked to non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in the Eastern Cape. The Eastern Cape NGO Coalition (ECNGOC) has supported the strategy through advocacy and helping to link organizations with the project, thus enabling the recruitment of practising volunteers or community development workers who want to be trained and specialise in Household Food Security. The ECNGOC organized consultative meetings between the UNISA-SAIDE project team and a number of interested NGOs wishing to participate in the pilot project.

The NGOs organised community meetings and identified students at a number of sites who would participate in the pilot study. The NGOs and people to be acknowledged are Student Partnerships Worldwide (SPW), Transkei Land Service Organisation (TRALSO), The Directorate of Social responsibility in the Anglican Diocese of Grahamstown (DSR), Africare and an independent community development consultant. The project is managed by a Project Leader from SAIDE, Dr A Barlow-Zambodla, and has a designated Programme Coordinator from CAES, UNISA, Mrs FM Ferreira. Six writing teams participated in the curriculum development and design process, together with other stakeholders.

The teams were involved in the writing of study materials for each module and need to be acknowledged for their dedication to the task of developing the study packages. Their names are listed on the front page of each study guide. In addition acknowledgements go to a team of people involved in developing a resource package for Homestead Farming and Water Management for the Water Research Commission which was also involved in the curriculum design and development process and writing of this module.

The Programme in Household Food Security is an approved UNISA Short Learning Programme that serves to promote community engagement with UNISA by linking curriculum and tuition, research and community service with the delivery of higher education. This is in line with the UNISA vision:

“The African University in the service of humanity”.
The references used to develop and design the study materials are acknowledged for the use of their material, content, illustrations, ideas and activities. The material have been used for educational purposes to design and develop this material study package to train household food security facilitators for educational purposes in the writing of this study material:

Articles and illustrations have been adapted for use in this training material. These have been taken from publications where the publishers indicated that parts of publications or illustrations may be used for educational purposes provided that the sources been acknowledged. Where this has not been done and recognised as such, the writing team does acknowledge the relevant publications.

The publications used are:


International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. 2006. How to conduct a food security assessment: A step by step guide for National Societies in Africa, Geneva, IFRC.


# Table of Contents

## Introduction to the module

- Purpose of the module ................................................................. xi
- How Module 3 fits into the programme .............................................. xii
- Overview of Modules ....................................................................... xii
- Module 3 outcomes .......................................................................... xiii
- Brief outline of the units ............................................................... xiv
- What is in your study pack? .......................................................... xiv
- The teaching approach for this programme ...................................... xv
- How will you know what to do in the study guide? .......................... xvi
- The module map .............................................................................. xvii

## UNIT 1  Natural resources and their importance

- Introduction ...................................................................................... 1
- Specific outcomes and learning outcomes ........................................... 1
- Key concepts .................................................................................... 2
- Start-up activity ................................................................................ 2
  1.1 What are natural resources? .......................................................... 5
    1.1.1 What are renewable resources? ................................................. 5
    1.1.2 What are non-renewable resources? ....................................... 7
  1.2 Water as a natural resource ............................................................. 9
    1.2.1 The water cycle ..................................................................... 9
    1.2.2 Rainfall in South Africa .......................................................... 13
    1.2.3 What is evapotranspiration? ................................................... 16
    1.2.4 What happens to water in the soil? ......................................... 21
    1.2.5 What are watersheds and catchments? ............................... 22
    1.2.6 Water management areas in South Africa ............................ 23
    1.2.7 What is topography? .............................................................. 26
    1.2.8 What are aspects, ridges and valleys? ................................. 28
  1.3 Soil as a natural resource ............................................................... 31
    1.3.1 What is soil? .......................................................................... 33
    1.3.2 What is soil texture? .............................................................. 37
    1.3.3 What is soil structure? ........................................................... 39
  1.4 Biodiversity as a natural resource ................................................. 43
  1.5 Energy resources .......................................................................... 43
    1.5.1 Non-renewable energy sources ............................................ 43
    1.5.2 Renewable energy sources .................................................. 43
3.4 Managing biodiversity ................................................................. 127
  3.4.1 Abusing biodiversity .............................................................. 127
  3.4.2 Considerations when using biodiversity .............................. 128
  3.4.3 Consider permaculture groups when you choose plants
      for your area ........................................................................... 131
3.5 Managing energy resources .......................................................... 133
  3.5.1 Abusing energy resources ...................................................... 133
  3.5.2 Consider using renewable energy to cook your food ......... 134
3.6 A design plan for your area ............................................................ 138
  3.6.1 Farming with Water Case Study: Mr Phiri ......................... 139
  3.6.2 Water for Food Case Study: MmaTsepho Khumbane .......... 143
  3.6.3 Creating a design plan for your area .............................. 147
  3.6.4 Steps for your design plan .............................................. 147
Concluding remarks ............................................................................. 152

UNIT 4 Taking action for household food security ............................. 153
  Introduction .................................................................................. 153
  4.1 Build good working relationships ......................................... 155
    4.1.1 Be honest ........................................................................ 156
    4.1.2 Be calm and polite ......................................................... 156
    4.1.3 Be fair .......................................................................... 156
    4.1.4 Be well informed .......................................................... 156
    4.1.5 Be helpful .................................................................. 156
    4.1.6 Take the long view, and celebrate your small successes ... 156
  4.2 Portfolio Activities and the “Triple A” Cycle ....................... 157
  4.3 Your main task in this unit are Portfolio Activities ............... 158
    4.3.1 Assessing (collecting information) ............................... 159
    4.3.2 Analysing information ............................................... 164
    4.3.3 Taking action ............................................................. 167

Glossary .......................................................................................... 175

Bibliography .................................................................................... 183
### UNIT 1  Natural resources and their importance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Activity 1.1</td>
<td>Renewable resources under threat</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity 1.2</td>
<td>Renewable and non-renewable natural resources</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity 1.3</td>
<td>A simple model of the water cycle</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity 1.4</td>
<td>Finding out about rainfall from maps</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity 1.5</td>
<td>Finding out about rainfall in your area</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity 1.6</td>
<td>Make your own terrarium</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity 1.7</td>
<td>Reading maps on evapotranspiration</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity 1.8</td>
<td>Water use in your management area</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity 1.9</td>
<td>Measuring angles using a protractor</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity 1.10</td>
<td>Considering aspects, ridges and valleys</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity 1.11</td>
<td>Identifying soil types</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity 1.12</td>
<td>Identifying soil texture, structure and depth</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity 1.13</td>
<td>Using biodiversity as a resource</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity 1.14</td>
<td>Making choices regarding natural resources</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity 1.15</td>
<td>Natural resources and processes provided by the sun and Earth</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity 1.16</td>
<td>Your place in the cycle of nature</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity 1.17</td>
<td>Feeding relationships in a dam</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### UNIT 2  Resources and food security

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Activity 2.1</td>
<td>Environmental components that influence food security</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity 2.2</td>
<td>Finding out about resources of two villages</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity 2.3</td>
<td>Read a resources map</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity 2.4</td>
<td>Draw a resources map of your area</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity 2.5</td>
<td>Read a transect diagram</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity 2.6</td>
<td>Draw a transect walk diagram</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity 2.7</td>
<td>Interpret information on major diseases</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity 2.8</td>
<td>The rapid transmission (spread) of HIV/AIDS</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity 2.9</td>
<td>Gender-related use and control of resources</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity 2.10</td>
<td>The inheritance rights of women</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity 2.11</td>
<td>Gender-related use and control of resources in an area</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNIT 3</td>
<td>Using natural resources wisely</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
<td>----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Start-up activity</td>
<td>..........................................................</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity 3.1</td>
<td>Healthy and unhealthy water tables</td>
<td>..........................................................</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity 3.2</td>
<td>Audit of a catchment in your area</td>
<td>..........................................................</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity 3.3</td>
<td>Selecting water-wise plants and animals for your area</td>
<td>..........................................................</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity 3.4</td>
<td>Be water-wise with dish drying racks</td>
<td>..........................................................</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity 3.5</td>
<td>Make a line level</td>
<td>..........................................................</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity 3.6</td>
<td>Using a line level to measure slope</td>
<td>..........................................................</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity 3.7</td>
<td>Interfering with the balance in soil</td>
<td>..........................................................</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity 3.8</td>
<td>The effects of chemicals on soil</td>
<td>..........................................................</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity 3.9</td>
<td>Causes of soil erosion in your area, and possible solutions</td>
<td>..........................................................</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity 3.10</td>
<td>The wise use of biodiversity in your area</td>
<td>..........................................................</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity 3.11</td>
<td>Good and bad practices with regard to biodiversity</td>
<td>..........................................................</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity 3.12</td>
<td>Plants for the seven permaculture groups</td>
<td>..........................................................</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity 3.13</td>
<td>Making a solar cooker (Optional)</td>
<td>..........................................................</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity 3.14</td>
<td>Creating a design plan for your area</td>
<td>..........................................................</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>UNIT 4</th>
<th>Taking action for household food security</th>
<th>153</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Portfolio Activity 4.1</td>
<td>Gender related exercise to establish use and control of resources</td>
<td>..........................................................</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portfolio Activity 4.2</td>
<td>(Option 1) Draw a Resource Map of your area</td>
<td>..........................................................</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portfolio Activity 4.2</td>
<td>(Option 2) Draw a Transect Walk diagram</td>
<td>..........................................................</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portfolio Activity 4.3</td>
<td>Best water, soil and plant practices</td>
<td>..........................................................</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portfolio Activity 4.4</td>
<td>Creating a design plan for a homestead garden in your area</td>
<td>..........................................................</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portfolio Activity 4.5</td>
<td>Write a reflection report</td>
<td>..........................................................</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# List of Figures

## Introduction to the module
- Figure 1.1 The ghowa (ghoba) plant (Hoodia spp) ....................................................... xi
- Figure 1.2 The “Triple A” Approach .............................................................................. xv

## UNIT 1 Natural resources and their importance
- Figure 1.3 Looking at the issue from different perspectives ........................................ 3
- Figure 1.4 Utilising natural resources in rural and urban areas .................................. 7
- Figure 1.5 Classifying natural resources ................................................................. 9
- Figure 1.6 The water cycle ....................................................................................... 10
- Figure 1.7 The water cycle in Kouga (Eastern Cape) ................................................ 10
- Figure 1.8 Models of the water cycle ...................................................................... 12
- Figure 1.9 Average annual rainfall for South Africa ................................................ 13
- Figure 1.10 Seasonality of rainfall in South Africa ................................................... 14
- Figure 1.11 Rainfall is measured in millimeters in a rain-gauge ................................. 15
- Figure 1.12 How evapotranspiration works ............................................................... 16
- Figure 1.13 A terrarium to demonstrate evapotranspiration .................................... 18
- Figure 1.14 Map showing December evapotranspiration potential in South Africa .... 19
- Figure 1.15 Map showing the July evapotranspiration potential in South Africa ......... 19
- Figure 1.16 What happens to underground water? .................................................. 21
- Figure 1.17 The top of a watershed with two catchment areas .................................. 22
- Figure 1.18 The 19 water management areas in South Africa .................................... 23
- Figure 1.19 Contour lines ......................................................................................... 27
- Figure 1.20 A protractor .......................................................................................... 27
- Figure 1.21 A sundial ............................................................................................... 29
- Figure 1.22 Ridges and valleys in your catchment showing the mid-slope area that is best for farming ................................................................. 29
- Figure 1.23 Organisms present in soil ..................................................................... 32
- Figure 1.24 The movement of water and minerals in the soil .................................. 32
- Figure 1.25 Soil sample mixed with water to show layers ........................................ 36
- Figure 1.26 Creative ways of using natural resources for energy ............................. 45
- Figure 1.27 The sun and the Earth as providers ...................................................... 47
- Figure 1.28 The cycle of nature ............................................................................. 49
- Figure 1.29 A simple food chain .......................................................................... 51

## UNIT 2 Natural resources and food security
- Figure 2.1 The dimensions of food security: necessary and complementary .......... 60
- Figure 2.2 Components of the environment that influence food security ............. 61
List of Tables

UNIT 1  Natural resources and their importance ......................................................... 1
Table 1.1  De Bono’s lenses ....................................................................................... 4
Table 1.2  Threats to renewable resources ................................................................. 5
Table 1.3  Water requirements for the 19 water management areas based on
statistics for the year 2000 (million m³/year) ......................................................... 24
Table 1.4  Recommendations for land use, depending on slope .............................. 28
Table 1.5  Soils classified on the basis of particle size .............................................. 33
Table 1.6  Identify soil type by touch ....................................................................... 35
Table 1.7  Characteristics of soil types ..................................................................... 37
Table 1.8  Indigenous plants used by the Hantam community .................................. 41
Table 1.9  Renewable energy sources ....................................................................... 44

UNIT 2  Resources and food security ........................................................................... 57
Table 2.1  Indigenous foods eaten by members of Village B ..................................... 67
Table 2.2  Major diseases of the world ...................................................................... 77
Table 2.3  De Bono’s hat strategy to look at the issue of HIV/AIDS ............................ 81
Table 2.4  Gender-related access to and control over resources .............................. 83
Table 2.5  Common constraints faced by women in relation to financial
services and income generation activities ............................................................... 86

UNIT 3  Using natural resources wisely ....................................................................... 91
Table 3.1  Examples of good and bad practices related to biodiversity ..................... 130
Table 3.2  Permaculture: Seven groups of plants for a garden ................................. 132
Water is a vital natural resource without which we cannot live. How we use water so that there is enough for everyone today and in the future is a challenge we face in South Africa and in other parts of the world. But water is not the only natural resource we need and use.

For thousands of years local people have used indigenous plants as a source of food. As you know, some of these plants can also serve as medicine. An interesting example that will be known to many of you is the ghowa or Hoodia plant, which is eaten by many South Africans, and is also used as a medicine. Many cultural groups in South Africa look in a holistic way at human well-being. What does this mean? A traditional healer will not only prescribe medicines (various plant materials), but will often also provide some psychological help to his patients. Refer back to the four dimensions of healing in Module 2: the physical, social, psychological and spiritual dimensions.

In this module you will find out about the natural resources that are available in your area, how people are using them to obtain food, and how their use affects the environment and the community. You will also examine different and improved ways in which the natural resources in the area can be used so that people can continue to get food that will keep them healthy.

Purpose of the module

In this module your main task is to plan and carry out a set of activities with selected households in the community to help them gain a good understanding of their current and possible future use of natural resources in their area. Why is this important? As people become informed and take actions to manage their use of resources responsibly to obtain food, they will be able to sustain themselves and their families. These actions will help to break the cycle of poverty and protect the environment at the same time.

To prepare you for working with households, you will learn about the issues around the use of natural resources and strengthen your ability to use some participatory techniques and methods. What you learn in this module will also help you with Module 5 when you start a homestead garden, and with Module 6 when you look at food resource management.
How Module 3 fits into the programme

Each module is an important part of the Household Food Security Programme. The modules for the programme are the following:

Module 1 PHFS01K Introduction to household food security concepts
Module 2 PHFS02L Participatory extension for household food security
Module 3 PHFS03M Sustainable natural resource use
Module 4 PHFS04N Food behaviour and nutrition
Module 5 PHFS05P Optimising household food production
Module 6 PHFS06Q Food resource management

The modules are linked and what you learn in one module will also help you in another. The diagram given below is a programme map that will provide you with an overall picture of the programme. It shows you the main purpose of the programme and what each of the six modules focus on.

Overview of modules

The programme prepares and equips students with relevant skills to strengthen the capacity of rural communities to respond proactively to meeting their food, nutrition and livelihood needs. By participation in achievable projects, individuals and groups in rural areas are mobilised to acquire confidence and skills so as to increase their ability to break the cycle of poverty.
Module 3 outcomes

The table below shows the topics of the four units in Module 3 and gives you a good idea of what you are expected to know and do. The assessment in this module is closely linked to the outcomes. It includes two assignments, portfolio activities and workbook activities. You will find detailed information about the assessment activities in the General Tutorial Letter.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unit</th>
<th>Specific Learning Outcomes</th>
<th>Assessment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Natural resources and their importance</td>
<td>Assess resources in terms of their contribution to food security</td>
<td>Assignment 1 (10%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 2. Linking natural resources and food security | Assess the availability, accessibility, utilisation and stability of natural resources with individuals and groups in an area  
Consider constraints regarding natural resources | Assignment 2 (20%) |
| 3. Using natural resources wisely | Determine the impact of natural resources use on the environment and on people.  
Explore various knowledge systems for an alternative resource management option. | |
| 4. Taking action for household food security | Develop solutions with households for improved natural resource use and livelihood strategies | Portfolio activities (60%) |

Workbook 10%  
Selected activities from all units
Brief outline of the units

Unit 1 – Natural resources and their importance

We examine the natural resources in the environment such as water, soil, biodiversity, and natural energy resources in order to gain an understanding of how they fit together to create a natural system. Understanding how natural systems work and your own place in these systems will help you to find out how best to use natural resources so they will not be depleted (used up).

Unit 2 – Natural resources and food security

The link between natural resources and food security is explored. We need to have enough natural resources available, we need to access them and we need to utilise them wisely. This will ensure stability and will therefore, enhance food security. We examine participatory tools and methods to find out which resources are available in your area and how the people living there are using them for obtaining food. We conclude the unit by looking at some of the constraints regarding natural resources including disease and gender-related issues.

Unit 3 – Using natural resources wisely

The impacts of our use of natural resources on the environment and on other people are examined. We focus on the importance of using the natural resources that are available to us in a sustainable way to ensure stability and thus contribute to food security. In this way, you can find out the strengths and weaknesses of present resources use practices. You will get a good idea of what is working well, what is not, and what can be done to improve the situation. The low input principles examined in the unit are used to design a plan for a homestead garden which will be implemented in Module 5.

Unit 4 – Taking action for household food security

The work you undertake in Units 1, 2 and 3 prepares you for working with households in your community. You will plan and carry out an intervention in which you invite them to participate fully. With your guidance they will assess their use of natural resources in obtaining food, they will analyse their current practices and come up with possible actions that will help them to improve their use of natural resources. Your work with the households consists of portfolio activities.

What is in your study pack?

Check your study pack for this module. It should contain the following:

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This study guide</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A module workbook</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tutorial Letters 101 and 103, with your assignments and by when you should submit them</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A general information letter, Tutorial letter 301, on the programme</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
During the year you will receive additional tutorial letters that give you general feedback on the assignments submitted.

The teaching approach for this programme

What we do flows from the plans we make, it is based on information we have at the time, and how we understand that information. As we start implementing our plans, we learn more and can therefore improve our plans and actions. The approach that we will use, not only in this module, but also in all the other modules, is the “Triple A” Approach.

The “Triple A” Approach guide your learning by engaging you in a cyclical process of assessing, analysing and acting based on the new information which you have been given.

The “Triple A” is one of many ways in which this ongoing planning and re-planning process is described. We gather information (assess), think about it and use it to come up with plans (analyse), implement those plans (act), all the while gathering new information.

Figure 1.2 The “Triple A” Approach
(Adapted from FAO, 2005)
How will you know what to do in the study guide?

We make use of symbols or icons to show you what you are expected to do.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text activities</th>
<th>These are learning activities that encourage you come up with your own ideas as you read the text.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Workbook activities</td>
<td>Some activities have been selected to help you to reflect on your own context and deepen your understanding of the main issues dealt with in the module. You will either do these activities by yourself or in a group. These are activities which are provided in the study guide but which should only be completed in the workbook.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case studies in blocks</td>
<td>We have included a number of short case studies that reflect what is happening in practice in different parts of South Africa and in other parts of the world. The case studies serve two main purposes: to give you examples of what people are doing in different contexts and to invite you to reflect on these experiences as they will help to strengthen your insight and understanding of the issues to be addressed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People’s voices</td>
<td>Boxes in the text give quotes of experiences of household members and other people on food security and descriptions of other events.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portfolio activities</td>
<td>The activities with the households in Unit 4 are portfolio activities. They are practical activities and you will be required to produce specific evidence for your portfolio in order to complete them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concept boxes</td>
<td>Boxes in the text give definitions and explanations of concepts.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The module map

The module map gives you an overall picture of what Module 3 is about. The map appears before each unit to remind you of the purpose and direction of the module and to show you how the individual units are linked.