

8,000 year old mitochondrial DNA provides insight about first human farmers

The mitochondrial DNA of the first Near Eastern farmers has been sequenced for the first time. In the research, published in the journal PLOS Genetics, experts analysed samples from three sites located in the birthplace of Neolithic agricultural practices: the Middle Euphrates basin and the oasis of Damascus, located in today's Syria and date at about 8,000 BC. Agricultural and husbandry practices originated around 12,000 years ago in a region of the Near East known as the Fertile Crescent. This phenomenon, known as "Neolithic," meant a profound social, cultural and economic transformation of human populations (agricultural production, sedentary farming lifestyle, origin of the first cities and modern societies, etc.). Eva Fernández, first author of the article, explains that "the Neolithic Revolution rapidly expanded from these territories into Europe, where the hunter-gatherer subsistence economy — prevailing till then — was replaced by an agropastoral producing system." To know the nature of the diffusion of the Neolithic — in other words, to know if it was a population migration process or a cultural adoption — has been widely debated for the last fifty years. Different research fields, for instance archaeology, physical anthropology, linguistics and, more recently, human paleogenetics, have made contributions to the discussion. **Read the full, original story: [Mitochondrial DNA of first Near Eastern farmers is sequenced for the first time](#)**