

Green Revolution Encyclopedia Article

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Green Revolution

Green revolution refers to the breeding and widespread use of new varieties of cereal grains, especially wheat and rice. These semidwarf varieties boost yields when grown with high inputs of fertilizer and water. Green revolution agriculture became widespread in less-industrialized countries in the 1960s when international aid agencies sponsored scientific and educational projects promoting the green revolution. These programs—including the adoption of new wheat varieties in India and Pakistan and new rice varieties in the Philippines and Indonesia—supported foreign policy objectives of the United States and were intended to alleviate hunger.

Supporters noted that the green revolution increased crop yields. India, for example, produced more wheat and rice, which helped avoid famines and save foreign exchange currency. Critics, however, charged that the green revolution increased inequalities: rich farmers became richer and poor farmers became poorer. Critics also complained that the green revolution encouraged increased environmental problems through the use of fertilizers, pesticides, and irrigation.

There were problems with both perspectives on the green revolution policies. Critics avoided providing realistic alternatives for solving national food deficits, and supporters avoided noting that poor individuals continued to be hungry, despite the increased supplies.

The green revolution was a change in agricultural practices with secondary social and political effects. Both industrialized and less-industrialized countries adopted the practices. Almost all wheat and rice grown today originated in the green revolution.

See Also

Borlaug, Norman; Economic Importance of Plants; Fertilizer; Grains; Rice; Wheat.

Bibliography

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