

PRAISE AND CRITICISM OF THE GREEN REVOLUTION

PRAISE

Agricultural production now outpaces population growth, almost certainly avoiding disastrous famines that have plagued the past.

Nitrogen-based fertilizers, now widely used, have greatly increased farm productivity in many countries of the world.

Scientists continue to invent new food sources, including cultivating the oceans, developing higher-protein cereals, and improving palatability of rarely consumed foods.

Higher productivity is primarily responsible for reducing dependency on imports in Asia, including China and India. In both areas populations are balanced fairly well with food resources.

New irrigation processes have greatly increased crop yields.

Agribusiness has increased the productivity of cash crops, yielding profits for farmers and raising large amounts of basic crops to feed the world.

CRITICISMS

Poor countries cannot always afford the machinery, seeds, and fertilizers necessary to raise the new crops, leading to problems in getting the new foods to their citizens.

Farmers in poor countries cannot afford the fertilizers, increasing inequalities between rich and poor countries. Fertilizers also lead to groundwater pollution and the reduction of organic matter in the soil.

Many fishing areas are already over-fished, and populations of many breeds of fish are dwindling. Cultural preferences shape food consumption, and production of rarely eaten foods will not change eating habits.

Many people in Sub-Saharan Africa are not getting enough to eat, with millions of people facing famine. Green Revolution techniques have made too few inroads, and population is increasing faster than food production.

Irrigation has led to serious groundwater depletion, negatively impacting water supplies for urban populations.

Agribusiness often means that land is devoted to raising one type of crop, rather than the variety needed for a balanced diet, especially in poorer countries.

the Sahara Desert continuing to claim more and more land space. Soil erosion has become a problem, with the limited number of trees cut for wood and charcoal for urban cooking and heating. Government policies have traditionally favored urban populations by keeping food prices low, giving farmers little incentive to increase their productivity. In recent years international aid for agriculture has dropped drastically, while aid for health and primary education has surged. However, in its 2007 annual report, the World Bank put agriculture and the productivity of small farmers – particularly in Africa – at the heart of its global agenda to reduce poverty. The African Union and the United Nations have also