

The Green Revolution

The revolution began in 1945 when the Rockefeller Foundation and the Mexican government established the Cooperative Wheat Research and Production Program to improve the agricultural output of the country's farms. Norman Borlaug was instrumental in this program. This produced astounding results, so that Mexico went from having to import half its wheat to self-sufficiency by 1956 and, by 1964, to exporting half a million tons of wheat. This program was continued in India and Pakistan where it is credited with saving over one billion people from starvation. Norman Borlaug won the 1970 Nobel Peace Prize for his efforts.

From there, the technologies were exported abroad, finding use in regions all over the world. The success in increasing yields was undisputable. The growth of crop yields was such that agriculture was now able to outstrip population growth — per capita production increased every year following 1950. The use of genetic engineering in agriculture to create genetically modified foods is viewed by some as the natural continuation of the Green Revolution.

Techniques introduced by the Green Revolution

Extensive use of chemical fertilizers, every plant basically relies on several basic compounds in order to grow. Previously proper soil conditions had relied only on techniques such as crop rotation, mixing of crops, or organic fertilizers like horse manure. The major development of the Green Revolution in this field was the use of chemical fertilizers to adjust the soil.

The Green Revolution further developed irrigation methods to allow for more efficient irrigation. It was possible to have more than one harvest per year with reduced dependence on monsoon seasons.

Mechanized harvesters and other machinery were not new to agriculture — the McCormick reaper was developed in the nineteenth century — but the Green Revolution allowed a drastic reduction in the input of human labor to agriculture by extending the use of machinery to automate every possible agricultural process.

Pesticides and herbicides — The development of chemical pesticides and herbicides allowed further improvements in crop yields by allowing for efficient weed control and eradication of insect pests.

1. What was the purpose of the Green revolution?

2. What are some ways the Green Revolution changed the world's agriculture?