
Using "sustainable intensification" meaningfully to increase global food security

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Abstract

In light of human population growth, global food security is an escalating concern. To meet increasing demand for food, leading scientists have called for "sustainable intensification", defined as the process of enhancing agricultural yields with minimal environmental impact and without expanding the existing agricultural land base. We argue that this definition is inadequate to merit the term "sustainable", because it lacks engagement with established principles that are central to sustainability. Sustainable intensification is likely to fail in improving food security if it continues to focus narrowly on food production ahead of other equally or more important variables that influence food security. Sustainable solutions for food security must be holistic and must address issues such as food accessibility. Wider consideration of issues related to equitable distribution of food and individual empowerment in the intensification decision process (distributive and procedural justice) is needed to put meaning back into the term "sustainable intensification".

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