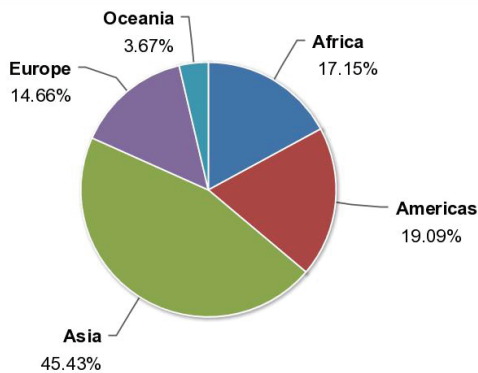


Pulses and Rural Development

Pulses are economically important crops for farmers, in both developing and developed countries.

Pulses are traditionally mostly grown in developing countries, which contribute 70% of pulse production globally (except for dry peas). For instance, India produces about a quarter of the world's pulses, which in 2011 amounted to 17 millions tonnes.



Regional distribution of global pulse production, 2010 (FAOSTAT)

In developing countries, smallholder farmers play an important role in growing pulses, often mostly for their own consumption but also to sell locally. Low productivity can represent an important impediment in making pulses a valuable source of additional income, but with the introduction of improved varieties and better management techniques, important increases yields can be achieved, making pulses a valuable source of income.

A study in West Africa showed that pulses often have higher markets prices than cereal crops. For instance soybeans sold for 46 naira/kg, whereas maize sold for 17 naira/kg in Nigeria. Similarly, in Ethiopia, chickpeas yield about ETB 720, whereas barley yielded only 180.

Addressing productivity issues could help small farmers improve their livelihoods considerably. IFPRI's study in Ethiopia estimated that productivity gains from improvements in planting techniques could double overall pulse production to two million tons over a period of five years. This gain in productivity would increase smallholder income by 40 to 70 percent per hectare. This could contribute to incomes and improved food security by meeting demand for pulses locally.

Hailu Balcha is a small farmer in the Ada woreda of the Oromiya region in Ethiopia. Like his forefathers, he grew cereals, mainly teff, for the food security of his family. Hailu also had a few livestock and grew vegetables, generating some cash income. He had never thought of growing pulses as an income source until an extension agent approached him in 2007. The agent encouraged Hailu to allocate one hectare of land to a high yielding chickpea variety. Following the instructions from the extension agent, he used 60 gms of bio- fertilizer, which he mixed with 130 kilograms of high yielding seed just before sowing. The other costs of cultivating his one hectare plot included 48 days of labor, two kilograms of insecticides, and the use of his donkeys. When all costs are added, Hailu spent ETB 6,955 and harvested 5.27 tons of chickpeas. Despite these costs, Hailu ended up making a net profit of ETB 12,744.26 (USD 1,449) from selling at a market price of ETB 3,738 per ton. Given that teff prices were ETB 4,450 per ton in 2007 and average yield is only one ton per hectare, Hailu's income from chickpea cultivation is 286 percent higher than what Hailu would have earned had he cultivating teff in his plot.

(source: IFPRI (2010) Pulses Value Chain in Ethiopia)



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Many countries do not produce sufficiently to meet domestic demand and so there is a market for producing pulses for export as well. For example, India consumed over 21 million tonnes of pulses in 2011, and it has imported pulses since the 1980's in order to meet its domestic demand, including from Myanmar, China and Tanzania.

Developed countries, such as Canada and the USA, are also significant growers and pulses represent an important crop for farmers in those countries as well. For example, in 2010, Canada accounted for 32% of world pea production and 38.5% of world lentil production. In developed countries, where pulses have represented a less important part of traditional diets, a fair share of the production is destined for export. Canada accounts for approximately 35% of global pulse trade each year, reaching a value of nearly \$2.7 billion in 2011.

Recognising the role that pulses can play in providing incomes for farmers is important. Investment is needed to ensure productivity and quality are improved, so that pulses can be marketed, at local, regional and international level, creating a valuable addition to farmer's livelihoods.

Resources

IFPRI (2010) Pulses Value Chain in Ethiopia. Working Paper http://www.ifpri.org/sites/default/files/publications/ethiopianagsectorwp_pulses.pdf

Odendo, M., Bationo, A., & Kimani, S. (2011). Socio-Economic Contribution of Legumes to Livelihoods in Sub-Saharan Africa. http://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-94-007-1536-3_2?null

Grow More Pulse: <http://www.growmorepulses.com>

FAO (2005) Pulses: Past Trends and Future Prospects <http://www.fao.org/economic/est/est-commodities/pulses/en/>