Turning Africa Green: The First Wave Of The Green Revolution

The impacts of the first wave of the green revolution are still being felt in the modern-day. Global yields of grains have been on a steady increase. Agriculturalists are producing more on the same amount of land. This has allowed many millions of acres of land to be spared, or kept out of production. Norman Borlaug was the figurehead of this revolution, who catapulted humankind forward through science and painstaking research. Dr. Borlaug looked at the problems brought forth by the starving people of Mexico and was insistent on solving them by any means necessary. Mexico as a whole was only producing half the wheat needed to feed its people. (Film) Dr. Borlaug took to solving this issue and after 15 years of hard work was able to breed wheat hybrids that had better yields, disease resistance, and short stems to reduce the risk of lodging. It has been stated that Dr. Borlaug's work has saved a billion people from starvation. This same passion and determination need to be addressed again but this time there is a need to set sights on the continent of Africa.

The first wave of the green revolution started in the country of Mexico but those same practices were later moved throughout the world. The new wheat variety's bred by Norman Borlaug were quickly moved to new countries such as India, China, and others. The new genetic crops were adopted quickly by producers and this skyrocketed yields and more people were able to eat. The issue is that Africa was one of the last areas to be addressed during the first green revolution. For instance, the maize program focused on Africa only began in the late 1980s (Prabhu). Also, farmers in the countries of Africa were slower to adopt new seed varieties, for instance, adoption rates in Asian countries were 82% by 1998, in Africa 27% were planted to new hybrids (Walker T, Ryan J (1991)). The first wave of the green revolution is considered to have passed by 1985. This shows that even many years post GR 1, there were little improvements to agriculture in Africa. The numbers of new varieties have seen an increase in subsequent years though, by 2005 adoption rates were 70% for wheat, 45% for maize Binswanger H, McCalla A (2010). Despite this significant growth Africa has a long way to go to achieve the same success seen in other developing parts of the world. The responsibility to push the second wave of the green revolution is placed on the hands of philanthropic donors and organizations as well as the governments of developed nations.

A major breakthrough in the second wave of the green revolution was started in 2006 with the formation of Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa.