

Growing global population: Research into food production lacks a holistic perspective

January 24 2020, by Johan Cederqvist



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Meeting one of the great challenges of our time—providing a growing global population with food—requires research with a holistic perspective on food production, people's eating habits, and the

population increase. However, during the last few decades, the world's researchers have primarily focused on the first of these factors, and more or less ignored the other two. This has recently been established by a research team tied to Swedish universities.

Forecasts indicate that it can become difficult to uphold the current [food](#) production in the wake of climate changes, impoverishment of land, and shortage of water. At the same time, the ongoing population growth and people's current [eating habits](#) put pressure to increase the production. Researchers looking for answers for how to provide food for a growing [global population](#) should, in this situation, come up with solutions that integrate questions concerning food production, population increase, and people's eating habits.

In light of this, an interdisciplinary [research](#) team has studied solutions presented by the world's researchers over the last 50 years. The research team can confirm that, since the early 90s, researchers have mainly focused on how new technology can be introduced to increase food production, while questions concerning our eating habits and the population increase have been neglected.

"Over the last 50 years, researchers have shifted their focus from the population increase to how food production can be increased to meet a [growing demand](#). Throughout this period, there has been very limited interest in how we can decrease the demand by changing our eating habits. The fact that the [population increase](#) and our eating habits have not received much attention during the last few decades is in line with trends we can see in politics, which have most likely spilled over into research," says Giangiacomo Bravo (Linnaeus University), who is behind the study together with Lucia Tamburino (Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences), Yann Clough and Kimberly A. Nicholas (both Lund University).

Through their research, the research team wants to highlight that an increased focus on solutions that aim for a holistic perspective, rather than dealing with questions separately, could help point out the direction for a more sustainable food production. Such solutions could also contribute to strengthening the global sustainability work as a whole.

"For instance, political instruments to support women's right to contraceptives around the world could potentially both slow down the population growth and strengthen women's rights. In the same way, a shift towards a diet based on less meat could contribute to a more sustainable food production while also improving our health," Bravo concludes.

Provided by Swedish Research Council

Citation: Growing global population: Research into food production lacks a holistic perspective (2020, January 24) retrieved 17 July 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2020-01-global-population-food-production-lacks.html>

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