

The Green Revolution

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The introduction of high-yielding varieties of seeds after 1965 and the increased use of fertilizers and irrigation are known collectively as the Green Revolution, which provided the increase in production needed to make India self-sufficient in food grains. The program was started with the help of the United States-based Rockefeller Foundation and was based on high-yielding varieties of wheat, rice, and other grains that had been developed in Mexico and in the Philippines. Of the high-yielding seeds, wheat produced the best results. Production of coarse grains--the staple diet of the poor--and pulses--the main source of protein--lagged behind, resulting in reduced per capita availability.

The total area under the high-yielding-varieties program was a negligible 1.9 million hectares in FY 1960. Since then growth has been spectacular, increasing to nearly 15.4 million hectares by FY 1970, 43.1 million hectares by FY 1980, and 63.9 million hectares by FY 1990. The rate of growth decreased significantly in the late 1980s, however, as additional suitable land was not available (see table 32, Appendix).

The major benefits of the Green Revolution were experienced mainly in northern and northwestern India between 1965 and the early 1980s; the program resulted in a substantial increase in the production of food grains, mainly wheat and rice. Food-grain yields continued to increase throughout the 1980s, but the dramatic changes in the years between 1965 and 1980 were not duplicated. By FY 1980, almost 75 percent of the total cropped area under wheat was sown with high-yielding varieties. For rice the comparable figure was 45 percent. In the 1980s, the area under high-yielding varieties continued to increase, but the rate of growth overall was slower. The eighth plan aimed at making high-yielding varieties available to the whole country and developing more productive strains of other crops.

The Green Revolution created wide regional and interstate disparities. The plan was implemented only in areas with assured supplies of water and the means to control it, large inputs of fertilizers, and adequate farm credit. These inputs were easily available in at least parts of the states of Punjab, Haryana, and western Uttar Pradesh; thus, yields increased most in these states. In other states, such as Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu, in areas where these inputs were not assured, the results were limited or negligible, leading to considerable variation in crop yields within these states. The Green Revolution also increased income disparities: higher income growth and reduced incidence of poverty were found in the states where yields increased the most and lower income growth and little change in the incidence of poverty in other states.

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Source: *U.S. Library of Congress*