

## Widely-held belief that food production must double by 2050 to feed growing population 'not supported by data'

"Food production must double by 2050 to feed the world's growing population." This truism has been repeated so often in recent years that it has become widely accepted among academics, policymakers and farmers, but now researchers are challenging this assertion and suggesting a new vision for the future of agriculture.

Research published in *Bioscience* suggests that production likely will need to increase between 25 percent and 70 percent to meet 2050 food demand. The assertion that we need to double global crop and animal production by 2050 is not supported by the data, argues Mitch Hunter, doctoral student in agronomy, in Penn State's College of Agricultural Sciences. He says the analysis shows that production needs to keep increasing, but not as fast as many have claimed.

This analysis builds on the two most commonly cited food-demand projections, one from the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization and one led by David Tilman, a prominent ecologist at the University of Minnesota. Hunter and his colleagues did not dispute these underlying projections; they simply updated them to help reframe the narrative.

"Both of these projections are credible and important, but the baseline years they used are over a decade past now, and global production has ramped up considerably in that time," Hunter explained.

So, while Tilman's study showed that the world will demand 100 percent more calories in 2050 than in 2005, that is the equivalent of only a 68 percent increase over production levels in 2014, the most recent year with available data. To meet the FAO projection, which used different assumptions and projected lower demand, production would have to increase only 26 percent from 2014 levels.

"Given how much production has increased recently, it is pretty misleading to continue to argue that we need to double our crop output by 2050," Hunter said.

[Read full study [here](#).]

**The GLP aggregated and excerpted this blog/article to reflect the diversity of news, opinion, and analysis. Read full, original post: [Widely accepted vision for agriculture may be inaccurate, misleading](#)**