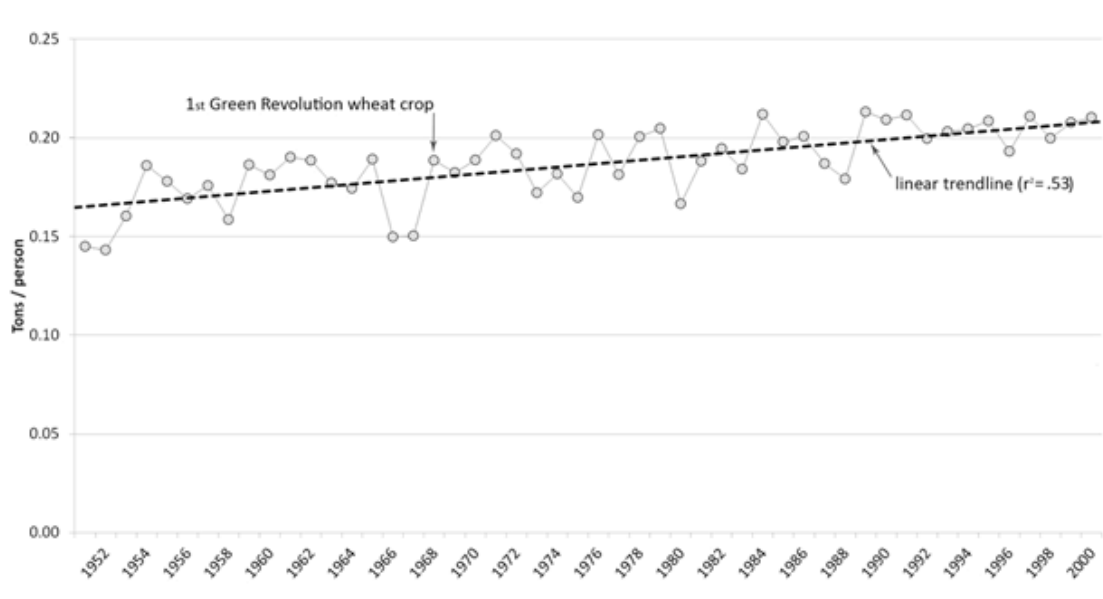


Reexamining the agricultural ‘Green Revolution’: Did Norman Borlaug really save a billion people from starvation?

A memorable episode of [The West Wing](#)...features a President Nimbala of a fictive African republic. Nimbala holds forth at a press conference about “people who make miracles in the world,” like the man “in whose hands India’s wheat crop increased from 11m to 60m tons annually.” Know-it-all US President Jed Bartlett then chimes in with “That’s right. His name is Norman Borlaug, by the way.” Relaxing with his staff later, Bartlett reflected on how India was once thought incapable of ever feeding itself, but...

“Then Norman Borlaug comes along. See the problem was wheat is top-heavy. It was falling over on itself and it took up too much space. The dwarf wheat... guys, it was an agricultural revolution that was credited with saving one billion lives!”

...



Trend in India's total foodgrain production divided by population. Data are from the India Dept. of Agriculture & Co-operation.

[Editor's note: Read [Green Revolution: Impacts, limits, and the path ahead](#) for an alternative analysis.]

The last few years have brought an astonishing burst of research by historians that forces us to completely rethink what happened in India in 1960s....The new histories lead us to revise the number of lives saved from a billion to a lower number.

Like zero.

Read full, original article: [Historians rethink the Green Revolution](#)