

5 foods that have shaped landscape, culture and politics throughout history

As the World Economic Forum features its [Bold Actions for Food as a Force for Good](#) virtual event from 23-24 November 2020, let's take a look at the foods that shaped our history.

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2. Cereals – the dawn of agriculture

The earliest humans ate seeds from wild grasses and [the cultivation of cereals](#) is believed to have begun independently in different parts of the world [about 12,000 years ago](#). Wheat is thought to have been [the first cultivated cereal](#).

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3. Spices – the globalization of flavor

No one is quite sure when the spice trade started, but it was already [established 4,000 years ago](#) with cinnamon from Sri Lanka and cassia from China being sold by merchants in the Middle East.

Trade during the Roman Empire has been described by one expert as [the birth of globalization](#), with the establishment of what became known as the Spice Routes. People and ideas flowed along these routes up to the Middle Ages, helping to shape our modern world.

4. Potatoes – the first global food?

Although believed to have [evolved from the poisonous tuber of an ancestor of the nightshade plant family](#), the potato was first cultivated in the Peruvian Andes 10,000 years ago. After being brought to Europe in the 1500s, it spread rapidly across the world to become a global food.

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