

Viewpoint: Why criticism of the Green Revolution is misplaced

The wheat varieties developed by Norman Borlaug and his Mexican team [during the [Green Revolution](#)] swept over Asia in the 1960s, making Pakistan and India self-sufficient in wheat by the end of the decade. He was a hero to farmers in those and other countries, and his accomplishments gained worldwide attention.

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There were unintended consequences, however, and critics eagerly attacked. According to author Charles Mann, (*The Wizard and the Prophet*), "Between 1970 and 1989, more than three hundred academic studies of the Green Revolution appeared. Four out of five were negative."

There were social costs and environmental costs. Mann enumerates them: "The intensive fertilization mandated by the Green Revolution has heavily contributed to nitrogen problems on land and water. Pesticides have wreaked havoc on agricultural ecosystems and sometimes poisoned sources of drinking water. Poorly constructed and managed irrigation systems have drained aquifers. Soils have become waterlogged or, worse, loaded with salts when water evaporated."

These problems are not problems of the Green Revolution, per se. They are soil and water management problems. Farmers need to be educated on how to match fertilizer and water needs with expected yields.

[This is an excerpt. Read the original post here.](#)