

Topic: Extensive agriculture and intensive agriculture.

From an economic, environmental and social point of view, several productive alternatives exist in agriculture. Among the many, two have always been opposed as bearers of two antithetical development models: extensive and intensive agriculture.

Argument PRO: "In order to guarantee higher productivity, intensive agriculture is preferable to an extensive one".

Argument AGAINST: "To guarantee greater productivity, intensive agriculture is not preferable to an extensive one".

Current situation, scenario, and context.

Extensive agriculture, in its modern meaning, is the set of agronomic techniques aimed at obtaining the maximum production per unit of person employed. For this reason, the yields per unit can be low, but the profit is assured by the vastness of the land put to cultivation. In traditional extensive agriculture, little use is made of machinery and the work of the labor force is privileged.

Such a type of agriculture differs from intensive agriculture, precisely because of the quantity of inputs introduced per unit of surface area. Soils must necessarily be very extensive, and often a part of them is left idle (fallow) or used for pasturing.

On the other hand, intensive cultivation is based on the fertility of some soils, which coupled with favorable climates, makes it possible to obtain high production. Such a system makes it possible to make the most of the productive capacity of the soil. It implies a significant capital investment: it seeks to raise the level of productivity by employing machinery, pesticides, chemical fertilizers and sometimes genetically modified varieties (GMOs).

Given the ever-growing global food demands, the need to keep food prices low, the reduction of farmland and acreage, the sector is nowadays faced with great dilemmas, concerning the method and tools to be used.

Nevertheless, the agroecology model, which considers the entire agricultural ecosystem, constitutes a further alternative. As a matter of fact, by using the natural fertility of the soil and enhancing it with limited interventions, the biodiversity of the environment is promoted by restricting or excluding the use of synthetic products and genetically modified organisms (GMOs).

Arguments pro:

- Over the last fifty years, intensive agriculture has secured the highest levels of production in order to meet the needs of a rapidly growing world population.
- Intensive agriculture has produced plants capable of directing more nutrients to the productive organs (seeds and fruits), thus increasing production.

Arguments against:

- Intensive agriculture has reduced the biodiversity of agricultural products and land, caused soil degradation, water pollution and consumption of non-renewable resources.
- Intensive agriculture is highly dependent on the use of fertilizers, pesticides and seeds purchased on the market, while extensive agriculture is more environmentally friendly.

FURTHER INSIGHTS:

- Intensive and extensive agriculture: [definitions](#)
- [How to use the global land bank to both produce food and conserve nature: examining extensive vs intensive agriculture](#)
- FAO: [Agroecology & Family Farming](#)