

# WHEAT: A strategic crop for Africa

African countries will spend about US\$12 billion to import some 40 million tons of wheat, used mostly to feed the continent's rapidly expanding populace. This constitutes more than a fourth of Africa's total food import expenditures (USD 40 billion)<sup>1</sup>. Yet Africa's farmers produce only 44 percent of the wheat consumed on the continent, with wheat self-sufficiency rates going down.

According to Bekele Shiferaw (CIMMYT), lead author of a study assessing the wheat potential for 12 sub-Saharan countries, "These trends threaten the nutritional and economic security of the region. If Africa does not push for wheat self-sufficiency, it could face more hunger, instability, and even political violence."

## Why is wheat a strategic crop for Africa?

- In 2006, the Abuja Food Security Summit identified strategic food commodities for increasing Intra-African trade; these included rice and maize, not wheat - the second most important food source worldwide - as an essential element of food security. Yet African countries spend more on importing wheat every year – it is a priority crop for Africa.
- More than 700 million people (more than half of the African population) are projected to live in urban areas by 2025, with more women entering the workforce. City dwellers demand more wheat-based food products. The African demand for wheat is increasing faster than for any other crop.
- The food crisis of 2008 was largely due to record high prices for rice and wheat. Least developed countries saw their food import bills triple from USD 9 billion in 2000 to USD 24 billion in 2011, pushing millions into poverty. Increasing national wheat production in Africa would help to insulate the continent against fluctuating markets.

## Why is Africa's wheat research and production important for the rest of the world?

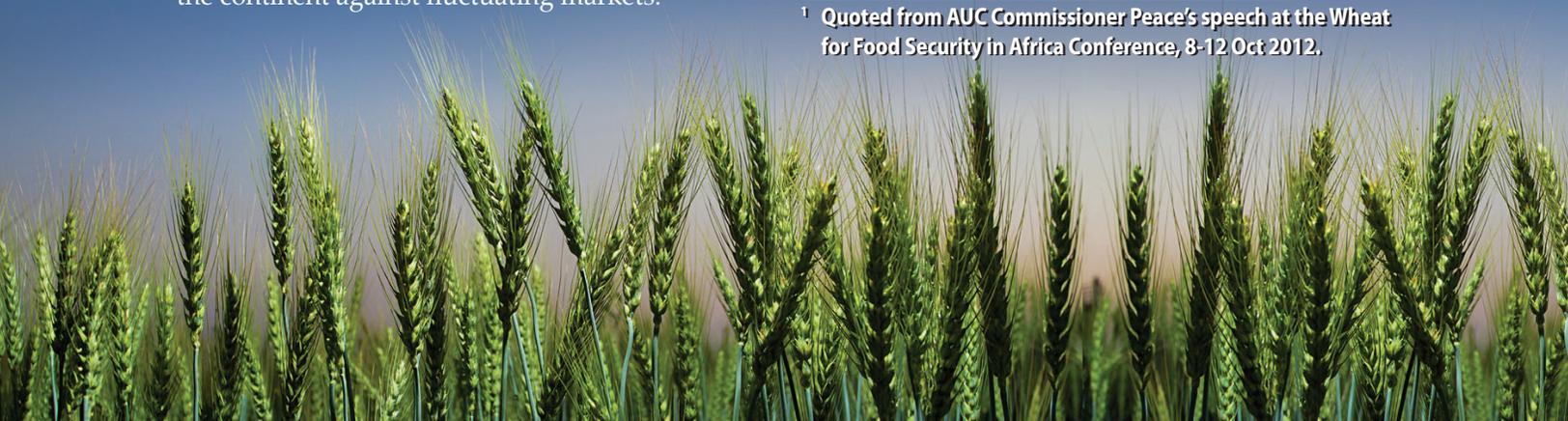
- Current research in Ethiopia and Kenya is helping to stop the global spread of major dangerous wheat diseases, such as Ug99 stem rust. By 2013, Kenya and Ethiopia will have enough rust resistant seed to replace susceptible varieties now sown by farmers.
- Africa will always need to import wheat; by protecting foreign nations from these potentially crop-destroying diseases, Africa is protecting its own import sources.

## What is Africa's wheat potential? Is it worth the investment?

- Sub-Saharan Africa now grows less than 10% of the wheat that it could.
- Wheat straw and other residues can contribute significant economic value as fodder.

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted from AUC Commissioner Peace's speech at the Wheat for Food Security in Africa Conference, 8-12 Oct 2012.



- Rising temperatures are likely to reduce wheat production in developing countries by 20-30%; drought and heat tolerant varieties under development will allow farmers to meet the challenges of climate change.
- Investing in wheat will spur inter-African trade.
- Wheat can be intercropped, adding income for African farmers.

### Why isn't Africa already growing more wheat?

- African Governments are subsidizing wheat imports, not stimulating domestic production.
- There are currently many infrastructure bottlenecks in the wheat value chain which prevent farmers from accessing inputs, markets, and consumers, and grain marketing costs are high.
- Wheat production potential varies within and across countries, depending on agro-ecological and socioeconomic conditions. There is no "one size fits all" solution.

### What are the next steps towards developing wheat markets in Africa?

- The cost of grain marketing must be lowered for wheat to be profitable.
- More and more efficient fertilizer use.
- Political will to realize Africa's wheat potential.
- Strengthening the wheat value chain from seed companies to milling and processing.
- More money for better research and development of a new generation of African wheat scientists.

### What does wheat production have to do with trade issues?

- Wheat is traded globally; Africa needs to become less dependent on volatile international markets.
- Protecting domestic production will help to remove heavy import subsidies. It will also support policy harmonization of national standards on seed/varieties produced in and for African countries.

Country/ Environment	All	Arid	Humid	Semi- Arid	Sub- humid	Tropical highland humid	Tropical highland semi-arid	Tropical highland sub-humid
Angola	Not profitable	Not profitable	Data not available	Not profitable	Not profitable	Not profitable	Profitable with high fertilizer rates	Not profitable
Burundi	Profitable with low fertilizer rates	Data not available	Data not available	Data not available	Data not available	Profitable with low fertilizer rates	Data not available	Profitable with low fertilizer rates
Ethiopia	Profitable with low fertilizer rates	Data not available	Profitable with low fertilizer rates	Not profitable	Not profitable	Profitable with low fertilizer rates	Profitable with low fertilizer rates	Profitable with low fertilizer rates
Kenya	Profitable with low fertilizer rates	Data not available	Data not available	Profitable with low fertilizer rates	Profitable with low fertilizer rates	Profitable with low fertilizer rates	Profitable with low fertilizer rates	Profitable with low fertilizer rates
Madagascar	Profitable with low fertilizer rates	Data not available	Profitable with low fertilizer rates	Not profitable	Profitable with low fertilizer rates	Profitable with low fertilizer rates	Profitable with low fertilizer rates	Data not available
Mozambique	Not profitable	Data not available	Data not available	Not profitable	Not profitable	Data not available	Profitable with high fertilizer rates	Not profitable
Rwanda	Profitable with low fertilizer rates	Data not available	Data not available	Data not available	Data not available	Profitable with low fertilizer rates	Data not available	Profitable with low fertilizer rates
Tanzania	Profitable with low fertilizer rates	Data not available	Profitable with low fertilizer rates	Profitable with low fertilizer rates	Not profitable	Profitable with low fertilizer rates	Profitable with low fertilizer rates	Profitable with low fertilizer rates
DRC	Profitable with low fertilizer rates	Data not available	Data not available	Profitable with medium fertilizer rates	Profitable with low fertilizer rates	Profitable with low fertilizer rates	Profitable with medium fertilizer rates	Profitable with medium fertilizer rates
Uganda	Profitable with low fertilizer rates	Data not available	Profitable with low fertilizer rates	Data not available	Data not available	Profitable with low fertilizer rates	Data not available	Profitable with low fertilizer rates
Zambia	Profitable with low fertilizer rates	Data not available	Data not available	Profitable with low fertilizer rates	Profitable with medium fertilizer rates	Data not available	Profitable with low fertilizer rates	Profitable with low fertilizer rates
Zimbabwe	Profitable with medium fertilizer rates	Profitable with medium fertilizer rates	Data not available	Profitable with medium fertilizer rates	Profitable with low fertilizer rates	Data not available	Profitable with medium fertilizer rates	Profitable with low fertilizer rates

**Potential profitability of wheat in 12 African countries**

