Wheat for Food Security in Africa Conference
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
18 October 2012
## Journalist Interest

### Attended Conference and/or Field Trip

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outlet</th>
<th>Journalist</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Associated Press (USA)/UN IRIN</td>
<td>Kirubel Tadesse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Climate Wire (USA)</td>
<td>Tiffany Stecker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deutsche Presse-Agentur (Germany)</td>
<td>Matthew Newsome</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Ethiopian Herald</em></td>
<td>Beletu Bulbula</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethiopian News Agency</td>
<td>Dawit Berhanu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SciDev.net (UK)</td>
<td>Mekonnen Teshome</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UN IRIN</td>
<td>Jaspreet Kindra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voice of America</td>
<td>Marthe van der Wolf</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Requested Interview

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outlet</th>
<th>Journalist</th>
<th>Spokesperson</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agence France-Presse</td>
<td>Anne Chaon</td>
<td>Mike Listman via email</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BBC Focus on Africa</td>
<td>Maura Cullen</td>
<td>Bekele Shiferaw</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BBC Nairobi</td>
<td>David Okwembah</td>
<td>Dr. Efraim Mukisira</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BBC Radio 4</td>
<td>Rich Ward</td>
<td>Bekele Shiferaw</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bloomberg (USA)</td>
<td>Rudy Ruitenber</td>
<td>Hans-Joachim Braun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Daily Telegraph</em> (UK)</td>
<td>Mike Platz</td>
<td>Hans-Joachim Braun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deutsche Welle (Germany)</td>
<td>Anke Rasper</td>
<td>Hans-Joachim Braun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inter Press Service</td>
<td>Busani Bafana</td>
<td>Bekele Shiferaw via email</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>New Scientist</em> (UK)</td>
<td>Andy Coghlan</td>
<td>Hans-Joachim Braun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reuters (UK)</td>
<td>Alister Doyle</td>
<td>Hans-Joachim Braun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voice of America-Africa Service</td>
<td>Joe DeCapua</td>
<td>Hans-Joachim Braun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outlet</td>
<td>Journalist</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Africa Report</td>
<td>Gemma Ware</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Al Jazeera (Qatar)</td>
<td>Evelyn Kahungu</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BBC (UK)</td>
<td>Matt McGrath</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Economist</em> (UK)</td>
<td>John Parker</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France24, GRN (Ethiopia)</td>
<td>Elias Aba Milki</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung</em> (Germany)</td>
<td>Joachim Müller-Jung</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freelance (Ethiopia)</td>
<td>Vincent Defait</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Guardian “Global Development” (UK)</em></td>
<td>Mark Tran</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Jeune Afrique</em> (France)</td>
<td>Nicolas Clemencot</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Le Monde</em> (France)</td>
<td>Gil Van Koke</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nature (UK)</td>
<td>Jeff Tollefson</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA Today</td>
<td>Elizabeth Weise</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Wall Street Journal</em> (USA)</td>
<td>Peter Guest</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xinhua Nairobi/Ethiopia (China)</td>
<td>Liang Shanggang</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Media Coverage Index

Wire

***Agence France-Presse:*** Un nouvel Eldorado pour le blé en Afrique
***Associated Press (USA):*** Should Africa be growing more wheat?
***Bloomberg (USA):*** Africa Wheat Study Indicates Potential to Cut Import Dependency
***Deutsche Presse-Argentur (Germany):*** Report claims Africa could meet its own wheat needs

Ethiopian Press Agency: Turning Eyes to Wheat Production for Food Security

***Inter Press Service (Italy):*** Africa Seeks to Grow More, Buy Less

Inter Press Service (Italy—Spanish): África apuesta al trigo para asegurarse el pan de cada día

***Reuters (UK):*** Africa can easily grow wheat to ease hunger, price shocks-study

**Reuters (UK—French):*** L’Afrique pourrait facilement développer la culture du blé

Print

*Cape Times* (South Africa) – Reuters Pick Up: ‘Africa can grow more wheat to stave off hunger’

*Financial Mail* (South Africa): Economic Indicators

*Nederlands Dagblad*: Grote potentie voor teelt van tarwe in Afrika

*Republikein* (Namibia): Low Wheat Production

Broadcast

BBC Radio 4 (UK): Farming Today 16/10/2012

***Voice of America:*** Boosting Africa’s Wheat Production

Voice of America Learning English: Demand for Wheat Growing in Sub-Saharan Africa

Trades/Online

1001 Actus Blog (France): L’Afrique se lance dans la culture de blé

Africa Report (France): Africa looks into higher wheat and maize production

AG Professional (USA): More wheat could be grown in Africa

Agra-net.com (USA): Study reveals Sub-Saharan Africa wheat crop potential

*ClimateWire (USA):*** FOOD SECURITY: Experts see Africa as ripe for surge in wheat production

*** Indicates full text available below
Climate Wire (USA): FOOD SECURITY: Improving Africa’s wheat potential requires more than a few good seeds
Deutsche Welle (Germany—English): Wheat demand growing faster than other staples
Le Monde (France): L’Afrique pourrait cultiver plus de blé pour se nourrir
MoneyDJ (China): 澳洲俄羅斯生產疑慮 CBOT 小麥期貨收高
MoneyDJ (China): 漠南非洲具龐大小麥生產潛能 須增加道路建設
Nature “Seven Days” (UK): Seven days: 5–11 October 2012
New Scientist (UK): Hungry Africa’s breadbasket needs to grow
New Times (Rwanda): Rwanda tipped to increase wheat production
NTR Zacatecas (Mexico): Sugiere estudio cultivar más trigo en África para aliviar el hambre
Poverty News Blog (USA): New report says Africa could grow a lot more wheat
***TIME.com (USA): Must-Reads from Around the World
***UN IRIN (Kenya): FOOD: We want wheat - Africa's growing cereal demand
UN IRIN (French): Nous voulons du blé – Augmentation de la demande de céréales en Afrique
UN Wire: Health and Development: October 9, 2012
What About Africa Blog (USA): Africa Learning to be Self-Sufficient
Зерно ОнЛайн (Zerno Online—Russia): Страны Африки способны значительно увеличить производство пшеницы

Press Release Pick-Up
AllAfrica.com (USA)
Food Ingredients First (Netherlands)
Nazret Blog (Ethiopia)
Phys.org (USA)
ScienceCodex (USA)

*** Indicates full text available below
Un nouvel Eldorado pour le blé en Afrique

ANNE CHAON | Publié le 08 octobre 2012 à 20h03 | Mis à jour à 20h03

La flambée des cours mondiaux et les nouveaux modes de consommation urbains en Afrique rendent la culture du blé, longtemps négligée au profit du maïs, de nouveau rentable pour ce continent où la demande explose.

«La demande de blé croît plus que n'importe quelle autre», assurent les organisateurs d'une conférence internationale réunie jusqu'à vendredi à Addis Abeba sur le thème: «Du blé pour la sécurité alimentaire en Afrique».

En 2012, l'Afrique va dépenser environ 18 milliards de dollars pour répondre à une consommation passée de 25 kilos par personne et par an dans les années 60, à plus de 50 kilos aujourd'hui.
Une étude présentée mardi par le Centre international pour l'amélioration des cultures du blé et du maïs à Nairobi (CIMMYT) portant sur la production de blé dans 12 pays d'Afrique subsaharienne, estime que leur production ne représente que «10 à 25% du potentiel biologique et économique de leurs terres». Outre le CIMMYT, les co-organisateurs de cette conférence sont notamment l'Union africaine et l'Institut International de Recherche sur les Politiques Alimentaires (IFPRI).

Rien qu'avec l'eau de pluie, sans irrigation, mais avec les apports en fertilisants appropriés, «20 à 100% des terres arables» seraient propres à la culture du blé en Angola, Burundi, Éthiopie, Kenya, Madagascar, Mozambique, Rwanda, Tanzanie, République démocratique du Congo, Ouganda, Zambie et Zimbabwe, affirment les auteurs de cette étude.

«Terres disponibles, sols et climat adaptés, main-d'oeuvre bon marché, population urbaine et revenus en hausse»: l'Afrique dispose de nombreux atouts pour faire du blé, résume pour l'AFP Bekele Shiferaw, directeur du programme socio-économique du CIMMYT.

Il ne s'agit pas pour l'Afrique de se lancer sur le marché mondial, mais notre étude montre qu'aux prix actuels, il serait plus compétitif pour de nombreux pays de cultiver plutôt que d'importer», explique-t-il. «La production domestique ne couvre encore que 40% de la demande totale du continent et bien moins encore si on ne regarde que l'Afrique subsaharienne» (30% environ).

Or, poursuit M. Shiferaw, «un investissement indicatif de 250 à 300 dollars par hectare, en comptant le travail, les semences et les fertilisants, assurerait un revenu net de 200 dollars par hectare».

La modélisation des cultures dans les 12 pays considérés laisse envisager un rendement de 1,2 à 3 tonnes/ha pour la majorité des pays d'Afrique centrale et orientale, dépassant même 4 t/ha sur les plateaux tempérés du Rwanda, Burundi et d'Ouganda - même si, reconnaît le chercheur, ces projections sont «probablement supérieures aux réalités du terrain».

(Par comparaison, le rendement mondial moyen tourne autour de 3t/ha selon le Centre international des céréales).

La production de blé en Afrique subsaharienne a plongé dans les années 80 avec l'afflux d'une aide alimentaire massive et des subventions accordées aux importations. «Beaucoup de pays qui financent l'aide au développement de l'agriculture en Afrique sont aussi de grands exportateurs de blé» (Amérique du Nord, Union européenne, Australie), note Bekele Shiferaw.

Mais c'est aujourd'hui l'une des denrées de base pour lesquelles la demande croît le plus vite, poursuit-il, alors que les prix n'ont cessé d'augmenter depuis 2007: dépassant les 400 USD/t en 2007-2008, la tonne de blé est passée de moins de 100 USD en 2000 à près de 300 USD aujourd'hui.

Pour les auteurs, aucun doute que les pays à faible densité démographique ont tout intérêt à en développer la culture, même si ceci requiert «des investissements en route, système d'irrigation, de stockage et de commercialisation», à l'intégrer aux pratiques déjà existantes, ou, pour l'Éthiopie, déjà grand producteur (3,3 Mt en 2012 selon la FAO) à intensifier et moderniser ses pratiques.

Should Africa be growing more wheat?


DEBRE ZEIT, Ethiopia (AP) — Bedlu Mamo stood in middle of his field in Ethiopia and cast a wary eye at the new variety of wheat he planted for the first time.

“The price is good, better than what we get for other crops. But the companies that buy the wheat may not come to buy,” Bedlu said.

But despite the farmer’s misgivings, the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center says demand for wheat is growing faster than for any other food crop in sub-Saharan Africa, where corn has long been considered the most important cereal crop. As the U.N.’s Food and Agricultural Organization marked World Food Day on Tuesday, experts are reexamining what crops are best produced in Africa, for Africans.

Ethiopia last week hosted a conference to look at ways to increase the amount of wheat African farmers grow. Only 44 percent of the wheat consumed in Africa is produced locally.

“The first task is to convince policy makers that there is a potential to produce wheat in Africa,” said Asfaw Negassa, a consultant with the center. “With the right policy, right seed and marketing system, there can be enough wheat production in Africa to substitute the significant portion of imports that costs the continent scarce hard currency.”

The corn and wheat center says African countries in 2012 will spend $12 billion to import 40 million tons of wheat — money that could be used for other pressing needs.

Wheat production in sub-Saharan Africa dropped sharply in the 1980s after an influx of food aid made the crop unprofitable, said the maize and wheat improvement center, which is known by the initials CIMMYT. At the same time, the focus of international development shifted to corn and cassava. A growing demand for wheat has led agricultural experts to rethink the crop in Africa, the group said.

But sometimes the farmer must confront market forces that can be a disincentive to plant.

For Bedlu, the Ethiopian farmer, this season marks the first time he has planted the Mangudo variety of durum wheat. He has high hopes for it, but worries he may not find a buyer. Showing how complicated global agricultural can be, Bedlu and Asnake Fikre, the director of the Debre Zeit Agriculture Research Center, say imported wheat can often be bought for less.

Ethiopia’s government in recent months has struggled to stabilize rampant food inflation — a big burden
for a country that solicits food aid. Some 3.5 million Ethiopians required humanitarian assistance this year alone. The U.S. government contributed $427 million to agricultural development, food security and emergency aid to Ethiopia in fiscal 2011, said Diane Brandt, an embassy spokeswoman.

World Food Day is dedicated to remembering the importance of global food security. The theme for 2012 is "Agricultural cooperatives - key to feeding the world."

Hunger is declining in Asia and Latin America but is rising in Africa, according to the FAO. The World Bank says agricultural productivity must increase in Africa because African farm yields are among the lowest in the world.

One in eight people around the world goes to bed hungry every night, the FAO says. But things are turning in the right direction: The total number of hungry people in the world is 870 million, down from 1 billion 20 years ago.

Some of the efforts have been at the grassroots level. In East Africa, an American aid group called One Acre Fund is working with 130,000 farming households to increase food production through improved seeds and fertilizer. Nick Handler, the group's country director in Kenya, said the households his organization works with are becoming more aware of the benefits that improved seeds and fertilizers can have.

"On average we're seeing a tripling of yields and a doubling of profit once you net out the additional costs for farmers who sign up for the program," he said.

http://hosted2.ap.org/OREUG/86053d8662944f7698388c63189f97c6/Article_2012-10-16-Africa-Food%20Production/id-a7c8246cde7540b8862468323e69f126
Africa Wheat Study Indicates Potential to Cut Import Dependency

By Rudy Ruitenber - Oct 8, 2012 7:01 PM ET

African countries including Rwanda, Burundi and Uganda have soils and conditions suitable to boost wheat output and cut the continent’s import dependency, the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center said.

Eight countries in sub-Saharan Africa each have at least 500,000 hectares (1.24 million acres) of land available for competitive and profitable wheat production without irrigation, according to a study by the center, known by its acronym Cimmyt.

Wheat consumption in Africa is climbing as diets change with growing urbanization, according to El Batan, Mexico-based Cimmyt. African countries are forecast to spend about $12 billion this year to import 40 million metric tons of wheat.

“We would like to alert the world that there is potential for wheat production in Africa,” Hans-Joachim Braun, director of Cimmyt’s global wheat program, said by telephone.

“We would like to advise governments where to produce wheat.”

Report claims Africa could meet its own wheat needs

10 OCT 2012 10:28 - MATTHEW NEWSOME

According to a scientific study, Africa is capable of satisfying its wheat demand, relying less on imports, if it increased production of the crop.

While demand for wheat in the continent has multiplied over the last decades, African farmers produce enough to satisfy less than half of their countries’ demands, making Africa vulnerable to global price shocks.

If all wheat-producing African countries increased their yields by only 10%, the continent would become self-sufficient, says a new report by the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Centre.

"Our analysis shows that it is physically possible and economically profitable to grow wheat if governments ... encourage farmers to diversify their crop production," Dr Bekele Shiferaw, author of the report, told dpa. "Up until now governments did not know the potential that existed for wheat."

He said the import of 35-million tons of wheat costs African countries about $12-billion a year: "The reliance on imported food has made African countries very vulnerable to the volatile food prices."

Shiferaw said that wheat production has been gravely neglected, with the 12 sub-Saharan countries that the report studied using less than 10% of their profitable wheat yield potential.
Africa grows wheat on nine-million hectares while it produces maize on more than four times as much land.

Agricultural experts are meeting this week in Addis Ababa to explore the potential of wheat production as a means to reduce food insecurity and political instability.

The analysis focused on Angola, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Kenya, Madagascar, Mozambique, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe. – Sapa-dpa

http://mg.co.za/article/2012-10-10-report-claims-africa-could-meet-its-own-wheat-needs
Africa Seeks to Grow More, Buy Less

BY BLAIN BISSET, 11 OCTOBER 2012

Addis Ababa — Africa can ensure food security by producing wheat. New research presented in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia this week shows that the continent has the potential to be self-sufficient.

The demand for wheat is growing faster than for any other crop, according to statistics of the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center (CIMMYT). Researchers are looking into the possibility of making Africa a major wheat producer, as the continent is the biggest wheat importer worldwide. It is expected that this year alone, Africa will spend 12 billion dollars on importing 40 million tonnes of wheat.

Researchers at the CIMMYT Wheat for Food Security Conference being held in Addis Ababa from Oct. 8 to 12 say more production on the continent and fewer imports will eventually ensure increased food security for Sub-Saharan Africa.

In particular, farmers in communities which are reliant on rain-fed agriculture have the potential to expand wheat production. This could contribute to ensuring food security, as less money will be spent on importing foodstuffs.

A report released at the conference focused on 12 countries on the African continent where wheat is traditionally produced. The study was done in Angola, Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Kenya, Madagascar, Mozambique, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

These countries have enough natural rainfall for the yields required to become self-sustaining. The study showed that 20 to 100 percent of the farmland in these countries is suitable for profitable wheat farming.

Nicole Mason, assistant professor of International Development in the Department of Agricultural, Food and Resource Economics at Michigan State University, and a keynote speaker at the conference, told IPS that there are several factors driving up demand for wheat.

Wheat, primarily in the form of bread, pasta and cereals, is the number two staple crop in the developing world. It is also a primary source for protein in most third world countries. While maize currently holds the top position, the demand for wheat is rapidly growing in Sub-Saharan Africa.

"We mainly find improved affordability of wheat products, population growth and rising incomes are key drivers. Urban consumers tend to spend more on wheat than rural ones, so rapid urbanisation in Africa might be another key factor."
The changing lifestyle of African women also has had a significant impact on the demand for wheat, said Mason. “As women are working more outside of their home, they have less time to prepare food and they seek convenience foods that are quicker to prepare. Bread and pasta are key convenience foods.”

As urbanisation is one of the key factors behind the increasing demand, alternatives need to be investigated in order to cope with expected urban population growth of 300 percent in Africa in the coming 40 years.

If farmers in the region increased their production by 10 to 25 percent, it would be economically profitable according to researchers from the CIMMYT.

Hans-Joachim Braun, the director of the Global Wheat Program at the CIMMYT, told IPS that Africa is the biggest importer of wheat in the world and that it has the potential to produce what it consumes.

“Africa is very favourable for a lot of crop production, but what is missing are water and fertiliser,” he said.

Investments in seed and technology are needed to turn African into a self-sustaining wheat producer. He explained that if water, including dams for irrigation, and fertilisers were provided, Africa could become a food basket to the world for a number of crops, in addition to wheat.

But more changes are needed if Africa ever wants to reach that goal. Tariffs on imports create difficulties in the agricultural sector. Many of the issues the sector faces in becoming a major wheat producer have to do with the policies of the sector itself, said Braun. “These issues need to be changed and they have a lot to do with policy. Because the yields are extremely low in Africa, also for other crops.”

Many African countries used to produce wheat on a larger scale until the 1980s. Because of the tonnes of food aid that was donated during this period of time, international prices declined sharply.

Smallholder farmers in most Sub-Saharan African countries do the majority of agricultural production. Braun pointed out that these farmers often need better varieties and access to seeds to make wheat production truly viable. But he added that this is just the technical part, while the infrastructural component is equally important: “It also needs to be ensured that the wheat can be processed and reach the end users as well.”

Poverty reduction can be a positive side effect in the long run for smallholder farmers producing wheat, said Mason. She told IPS that “if the product of the small scale farmers is demanded by urban people, they will earn more money and that will help to reduce poverty.”

Braun believes African farmers have to be shown that there is a significant market for their products, without pushing wheat into Africa or on to the farmers: “What counts is what is in their pockets, to provide them with an alternative with a higher income.”

http://allafrica.com/stories/201210110534.html
Africa can easily grow wheat to ease hunger, price shocks-study

Tue Oct 9, 2012 12:01am GMT | By Alister Doyle

OSLO Oct 9 (Reuters) - Wheat production in sub-Saharan Africa is at only 10 to 25 percent of its potential and nations can easily grow more to limit hunger, price shocks and political instability, a study showed on Tuesday.

The report, examining environmental conditions of 12 nations from Ethiopia to Zimbabwe, said that farmers south of the Sahara grew only 44 percent of the wheat consumed locally, meaning dependence on international markets prone to price spikes.

"Sub-Saharan Africa has extensive areas of land that are suitable for profitably producing wheat under rain-fed conditions," according to the study by the non-profit International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center.

It said countries in the region were producing only between 10 and 25 percent of the amounts that the Center's research suggested was "biologically possible and economically profitable" with a net return of $200 per hectare (2.5 acres).

The 89-page study, issued at a wheat conference in Ethiopia, said it aimed to identify ways to raise wheat production as "a hedge against food insecurity, political instability and price shocks."

"Wheat is not an African crop, it is not a tropical crop (but) many governments want to produce wheat locally instead of paying for imports," Hans-Joachim Braun, director of the Center's global wheat program, told Reuters by telephone.

The report estimated that African nations would spend about $12 billion to import 40 million tonnes of wheat in 2012, particularly for fast-growing cities. More wheat should not be grown at the expense of other more viable crops, Braun said.

HIGHLANDS

Braun said wheat was already an established crop in Ethiopia, Kenya and South Africa but could easily expand to highland areas in other sub-Saharan nations. "Wheat cannot be produced in tropical lowlands," he added.

Twelve nations in sub-Saharan Africa produced almost six million tonnes of wheat a year in the period 2006-08, the study showed.

And wheat consumption was rising fast. A rise in incomes and a shift to cities from the countryside also meant a shift in diets towards wheat and rice, away from crops including maize, sorghum, sweet potato, cassava or yams.

The study suggested that, with investments including in fertilisers, wheat yields would be highest in the highlands of countries including Rwanda, Burundi, Ethiopia, Kenya, Madagascar, Tanzania and Uganda.

Mozambique, Angola and Zimbabwe were least suited to wheat in rain-fed areas, it said. Zimbabwe, however, is one of the most productive of the wheat-growing nations in Africa but depends heavily on
irrigation.

"If Africa does not push for wheat self-sufficiency, it could face more hunger, instability and even political violence, as bread riots in North Africa showed in recent years," Bekele Shiferaw, a lead author of the study, said in a statement.

In 2008, Zambia and Rwanda escaped sharp rises in wheat prices on global markets thanks to domestic production, the study said.

Braun said it was hard to say when African nations might reach self-sufficiency in wheat if they tried.

"The biological potential is there. But you also need access to markets. The big issue is the road infrastructure. It doesn't help very much if the farm is far from the cities," he said. (Reporting By Alister Doyle; editing by Keiron Henderson)

http://af.reuters.com/article/burundiNews/idAFL6E8L8CIP20121009?pageNumber=2&virtualBrandChannel=0&sp=true
Agricultural experts are meeting in Addis Ababa (10/8-12) to discuss ways of making sub-Saharan Africa a major wheat producer. The region traditionally has played a small role in wheat production, but that could change in the coming years.

Maize is currently king among cereal crops in sub-Saharan Africa, while wheat is the most important crop in North Africa. Wheat production fell sharply in the sub-Saharan region during the 1980s as food aid rose and international prices fell.

Hans Joachim Braun is one of the experts attending the Wheat for Food Security Conference in Ethiopia.

“Wheat was always a commodity crop in North Africa. North Africa was the grain basket for the Roman Empire. And wheat production and domestication started in North Africa, Turkey, Iraq. So for traditional reasons wheat was always there,” he said.

Braun is director of the Global Wheat Program of the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center, known by its Spanish acronym CIMMYT. He said that maize became very popular in sub-Saharan Africa.

“Maize was only introduced a few hundred years ago into Africa. But maize, of course, does very well in Africa and so it developed into the most important staple there.”

Some attempts were made in the 1960s to grow wheat in sub-Saharan Africa, including South Africa and Zimbabwe. However, the dumping of cheap wheat on the market by the U.S. and Europe made it economically unsustainable. What’s more, Africa’s wheat farms were often far from populations centers. A lack of transportation infrastructure added to the obstacles. Also, the tropical lowlands were not suitable for wheat production.

So why make a major effort now to create a major wheat industry?

Braun said, “In the last four years we have seen three major price hikes where the wheat price and other staple prices exploded. And that puts a big, big bill on countries, which are depending on wheat imports, and Africa is the biggest wheat importer.”
He added that the demand for wheat in sub-Saharan Africa is growing faster than any other commodity, adding there are two main reasons for that.

“With higher income people would like to have more diversified food. But that is possibly not the most important one. The most important one is that there is a tremendous migration of in particular male labor to the cities. And wheat products are convenient food because you can easily buy it. It’s easy to process and you also can store it for a few days, which is different from some of the maize and rice products,” he said.

There are three potential problems for growing more wheat on the continent: climate change, disease and pests. However, Braun says climate change, with its increased carbon dioxide, should not have a major effect on wheat. In fact, he said, it could help wheat grow in rain-fed regions. As for disease and pests, experts recommend growing more resistant varieties to deal with such things as stem rust.

“There is a much better strategy to grow resistant varieties in East Africa than to argue that an expansion of wheat would be problematic. Because these farmers grow wheat anyway and at present they grow mostly susceptible cultivars. So if we could establish breeding programs, which provide the farmers with wheat varieties, which have durable rust resistance, that would be a much better strategy for farmers in Africa -- but possibly maybe even more important considering the global status of wheat for the world,” he said.

Rail and road transportation would have to be improved so wheat could be moved in volume to large city markets.

Braun said Nigeria is one country eager to grow wheat.

“The minister of agriculture has declared that Nigeria would like to be self-sufficient for wheat production within the next six to eight years. And Nigeria is the biggest wheat importer in sub-Saharan Africa. And historically, Nigeria was producing wheat in the 60s and 70s, but then this industry was basically killed when the very cheap and subsidized wheat was made available and exported to Africa,” he said.

The International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center estimates sub-Saharan Africa will spend $18 billion this year to import 40 million tons of wheat. The center’s new report outlines the viability of wheat production in 12 countries: Angola, Burundi, Ethiopia, Kenya, Madagascar and Mozambique, as well as Rwanda, Tanzania, the DRC, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

http://www.voanews.com/content/africa-wheat-9oct12/1522972.html
Experts see Africa as ripe for surge in wheat production

Tuesday, October 9, 2012 | Tiffany Stecker, E&E reporter

ADDIS ABABA, Ethiopia -- In the Amharic language, Addis Ababa, named when the Ethiopian capital moved to the highland city at the end of the 19th century, means “new flower.”

It is a fitting name for the host city of a conference whose aim is to encourage the new blossoming of another plant. The first Wheat for Food Security in Africa conference has gathered here to address a growing issue in the continent: Too many Africans are eating products made from wheat, and not enough are growing it.

Sudan, for example, produces roughly 1 ton of wheat at home for every 4 tons of wheat it imports from abroad.

"This is about 1.7 million tons covered by importing," said Abdelraheem Hussein, national coordinator for the wheat research program of Sudan's Agricultural Research Corp., to cover the country's bread, pasta and flour needs.

The environmental constraints are predictable, said Hussein: water scarcity, high heat, poor soil fertility and diseases like the Ug99 strain of stem rust that was first discovered in neighboring Uganda. The government must also provide a clear strategy and policy to wean itself, at least partially, off imports.

Tackling both social and biological problems together could generate life-changing results for the Sudanese.

"If they are put together, we can realize self-sustainability and actually have a surplus," Hussein said.

Overall, North Africa imports about half of the global wheat trade, according to Abdelkader Benbelkcem, a researcher with the National Institute for Agricultural Research (INRA) in Tunisia. As populations both grow and move in droves to the cities, the popular diets of Africans have shifted increasingly to wheat products. This year, African countries will spend $12 billion on wheat imports, according to a study released on the opening day of the conference yesterday by the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Research Center (CIMMYT).

Living at the mercy of world markets

As a result, every time there is a price spike in the global commodities marketplace, Africans suffer disproportionately compared to citizens on other continents. When Russia -- which produces about 15 percent of the global supply of wheat -- created a worldwide shortage two years ago by banning exports as a result of a heat wave and fires, wheat prices shot up between 60 and 80 percent.

But independence, or at least near-independence, from exports is possible, says the CIMMYT study. Across the continent, farmers are growing between 10 and 25 percent of what is possible and profitable. In an analysis of climatic, soil and economic data from 12 sub-Saharan African countries, the researchers found potential yields to be highest in Rwanda, Burundi, Ethiopia, Kenya, Madagascar, Tanzania and Uganda. The best soils are in Rwanda, Burundi and Uganda. In southern Africa -- Mozambique, Angola and Zimbabwe, specifically -- irrigation would be required for a profitable crop to grow in the winter.
Currently, Zimbabwe generates very productive wheat yields, but relies on irrigation.

In addition, another world region's climate loss could be Africa's gain. South Asia, one of the top wheat-producing areas in the world, could lose its advantage as climate change makes conditions more difficult, said Thomas Lumpkin, director-general of CIMMYT.

Nigeria is one nation that has addressed the issue head-on. Authorities announced this year it would seek to become fully self-sufficient in growing its 3.7-billion-ton annual consumption -- essentially banning imports from bread baskets around the world -- by 2016.

But there is a lot to overcome before then, said Augustine Langyintuo, senior policy officer at the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa. The lack of advanced breeding and biotechnology tools; no accessible existing high-yielding, heat-resistant varieties; poor practices in water and fertilizer use; and scant lending venues leave consumers at the mercy of markets.

This is what more than 250 scientists, farmers, policymakers and economists have come to discuss in Addis Ababa, to seriously consider for the first time what was once, in a time when wheat prices were low, merely a wish.

Hans-Joachim Braun, director of CIMMYT's Global Wheat program, said he had a hard time promoting the development of wheat fields in Africa when wheat prices were low. But times have changed. International donors would say, recalled Braun, "wheat is not for Africa. You should grow tea, or rubber, or flowers."

"Five years ago, it was another story," he said.

http://eenews.net/public/climatewire/2012/10/09/2
Must-Reads from Around the World

On deck for Tuesday: Experts say sub-Saharan Africa could produce a lot more wheat to improve food security, German Chancellor Angela Merkel visits Greece and North Korea claims to have missiles capable of reaching the American mainland.

By TIME.COM | October 9, 2012

[...]

Wheat Production — A new study shows that wheat production in sub-Saharan Africa is at 10 to 25% of its potential and the region could easily grow more to improve food security, notes Reuters. The report, conducted by the non-profit group International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center, shows that farmers in sub-Saharan Africa produce 44% of the wheat consumed locally and import the rest from international markets. “If Africa does not push for wheat self-sufficiency, it could face more hunger, instability, and even political violence, as bread riots in North Africa showed in recent years,” said Bekele Shiferaw, a lead author of the study.

[...]

http://world.time.com/2012/10/09/must-reads-from-around-the-world-44/
FOOD: We want wheat - Africa's growing cereal demand

ADDIS ABABA, 10 October 2012 (IRIN) - Bread, pies, pasta and pastries - changing African diets, the result of urbanization, are driving a demand for wheat that is pushing up import bills and complicating food security.

New research suggests the potential for African farmers to help meet that demand has been underestimated: local producers in east and southern Africa may be growing only 10 to 25 percent of the wheat that is both biologically possible and economically profitable, overlooking a potential money-spinner and hedge against global food price shocks.

The research, by the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center (known as CIMMYT) and the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), found that with the "proper use of fertilizer and other investments", 20 to 100 percent of farmlands in the 12 countries studied are ecologically suitable for profitable rain-fed wheat farming, at least according to advanced computer modelling.

The study, released at a five-day conference on wheat in Addis Ababa, demonstrates that three countries - Rwanda, Burundi and Uganda - have the best wheat potential, based on projections that take into account soil, production conditions and links to markets.

CIMMYT, the Ethiopian Institute for Agricultural Research, the International Centre for Agricultural Research in Dry Areas, the African Union and other partners are expected to announce an initiative to boost wheat production at the conference.

Demand growing

One spur to domestic production is the size of the import bill: In 2012, African countries will spend roughly US$12 billion buying some 40 million tons of wheat from abroad, said CIMMYT.

"We are not advocating for growing wheat where good growing (climatic and soil) conditions do not exist, but rather focusing on improving conditions such as extension services, new improved varieties and application of fertilizers," said Hans-Joachim Braun, the head of CIMMYT’s Global Wheat Programme.

By 2025, about 700 million people - more than half the current African population - will live in urban areas, and the time to plan for that demographic change is now, warned Bekele Shiferaw, the lead author of the CIMMYT-IFPRI study.

Demand for wheat has been growing rapidly - by around 45 percent between 2000-2009 - said Nicole Mason from Michigan State University (MSU) and the lead author of a new joint study by MSU and CIMMYT examining wheat consumption in sub-Saharan Africa.

“The demand for wheat is growing at a faster pace than rice, and it has been filling the cereal deficit in Africa for some years," said Mason.
Wheat is still overshadowed by maize in most countries, particularly among the poor in Southern Africa. However, the demand for wheat is growing in urban centres, where people are developing an appetite for mass-produced, convenient foods containing processed wheat flour. Consumers, on average, spend more on wheat than on other cereals in the cities of Lusaka and Kitwe in Zambia, Maputo in Mozambique and Nairobi in Kenya, Mason’s study shows.

**Bolstering food security**

Countries like Zambia have already boosted wheat production and become self-sufficient, driven by demand and profit, said Davies Lungu, a plant breeder with the University of Zambia. “A metric ton of wheat sells at $350, while maize is around $150 per metric ton in Zambia.”

Becoming self-sufficient in wheat does not automatically imply greater food security, which is about everyone being able to access quality food, noted Mason.

But easing high import bills would improve the ability of countries and consumers to ride out price shocks, said CIMMYT’s Hodson.

Wheat, first cultivated in Mesopotamia (southern Turkey, Iraq and Syria) before spreading to North Africa and Ethiopia, is also much more resilient to extreme temperatures than other staples, Braun pointed out. “It is a good investment to make against climate change.”