

Sustainable Intensification

Sustainable intensification agriculture practices are aimed at enhancing the productivity of labor, land and capital. They offer the potential to simultaneously address a number of pressing development objectives, including unlocking the agricultural potential to adapt production systems to climate change, sustainably manage land, soil, nutrient and water resources, improved food and nutrition security, and ultimately reduce rural poverty.

Improved productivity can increase food availability and income, benefiting the livelihoods of smallholder farmers, natural resource integrity, social equity, nutrition, health and resilience against biophysical or socio-economic shocks.

Smallholder farming systems are diverse and complex. In practice, sustainable intensification involves such conservation agriculture practices as minimal soil disturbance, permanent soil cover and the use of crop rotation to simultaneously maintain and boost yields, increase profits and protect the environment. It contributes to improves soil function and quality, which can improve resilience to climate variability.

Through the lens of sustainable intensification, technical innovations are assessed not only for their potential to increase the productivity of a single commodity, but also for their impact on overall farm productivity, profitability, stability, production and market risks, resilience, as well as the interests and capacity of individual farmers to adopt those innovations.