

Wetlands and Agriculture

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ABSTRACT

Wetlands are a critical part of the global agricultural system, providing food and other livelihood opportunities for humans since prehistorical times. In Africa and Asia, in particular, the expansion and intensification of wetland agriculture is occurring to meet a growing food demand driven by population growth, economic development, and climate change. Meanwhile, wetland agriculture is regarded by many as the main driver of wetland degradation and loss worldwide, as a result of drainage and infilling, land conversion, and harmful farming practices that include intensive use of fertilizers and pesticides. Although there is an absence of comprehensive data on the extent of wetland loss attributed to agriculture, the impact of agriculture on wetlands varies between wetland type and agricultural system. With growing pressure on wetlands there is arguably a need for wetland agricultural practices and systems to adapt in order to ensure a balance between wetland ecological integrity and the production of adequate food for the increasing global population.