

# **Cereal domestication, species diversity and culture history. (C08-dewet124340-Oral)**

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## **Abstract:**

Plant and animal husbandry are recent innovations. Some 15,000 years ago people learned to manipulate their immediate environment in order to increase stability and availability of local food supplies. This set the stage for rapid cultural evolution and released evolutionary forces that continue to reshape biodiversity in almost all habitats on earth. Human nutrition improved, years of fertility in women increased and infant mortality declined. The human population started to increase rapidly, and has now rereached a rate that can no longer be tolerated. Natural habitats are being destroyed on a global scale. Numerous species face extinction and millions of people face cultural deprivation. Population growth must be brought into balance with regionally available resources. The green revolution based on wheat, rice and maize is alleviating the threat of global famine. They unfortunately cannot be grown sucessfully in the semi-arid tropics where sorghum, pearl millet, finger millet and several minor cereals are staple foods. These cereals need to be improved and cropping systems developed to maximize their yield in less than optimum agricultural environments. The alternative is certain famine in much of sub-Saharan Africa and parts of Asia.

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## **Presentation Information:**

Presentation Date: Wednesday, November 13, 2002  
Presentation Time: 11:15 am

## **Keywords:**

Cultural evolution, Semi-arid tropical agriculture, Famine, hunger and crop improvement, Habitat destruction and species loss

