

Correspondence

Africa's forgotten crops could offset food insecurity

The world's exports and reserves of agricultural commodities are concentrated geographically, making populations vulnerable to price shocks, supply-chain disturbances and climate change. The war in Ukraine is revealing the danger this concentration poses (see *Nature* **604**, 217–218; 2022), particularly for African countries already experiencing significant food and nutrition insecurity. Rather than simply doubling down on the production of a few globally traded crops (A. Bentley *Nature* **603**, 551; 2022), it would be better to diversify food systems.

The United Nations International Fund for Agricultural Development warns that the conflict will cause an escalation in global hunger and poverty, because Russia and Ukraine together export about one-third of the world's wheat and more than half of the world's sunflower oil and seeds (see go.nature.com/3jtaged). African countries should focus instead on their diverse Indigenous and traditional cereals, roots, tubers, oil crops, vegetables and fruit.

Investment in historically grown, nutritious African cereals such as sorghum, fonio and teff, barley and legumes would be transformative. African countries, development agencies and other donors could make such investments in connection with the African Continental Free Trade Area. These crops have high nutritional and cultural value, are adapted to local tastes and agroecosystems, and can be 'climate smart'.

Michel Edmond Ghanem*

Mohammed VI Polytechnic University, Benguerir, Morocco.
michel.ghanem@um6p.ma

*On behalf of 21 signatories. See go.nature.com/3vlvwbq.

How to ensure the Human Cell Atlas benefits humanity

The Human Cell Atlas (HCA) is a global consortium of scientists who are compiling an exhaustive guidebook on the types and properties of all human cells (see <https://osf.io/sk697>). This includes best-practice recommendations for making HCA research results beneficial for everyone. The consortium strongly opposes exploitation of differences in those results for any form of discrimination or racial profiling.

The HCA uses single-cell genomics technologies to provide precise information on human health and disease and to improve diagnostics, prognostics and therapeutics. As leaders of its ethics and equity working groups and members of the HCA Organizing Committee, we aim to ensure that data are generated from and by individuals who represent diversity in gender, age, geography, ethnicity and socio-economic status (see also P. P. Majumder *et al. Nature Med.* **26**, 1509–1511; 2020).

To comprehensively benefit humanity, the consortium must enforce open participation; joint planning of sample collection and analysis with local scientists; culturally informed procedures for consent, sample collection and storage; data sharing; total confidentiality in handling samples; and tracking utility and engagement.

Partha Majumder* National Institute of Biomedical Genomics, Kalyani, India.
ppm1@nibmg.ac.in

*On behalf of 6 correspondents. See go.nature.com/3vzfzfgq.

Twitter: a blue badge for scientists?

Twitter's account-verification service lacks a specific category for scientists (see go.nature.com/3mnue4). In my view, this oversight should be promptly rectified, given researchers' importance for disseminating accurate knowledge with relevant caveats. The platform would then benefit from offering the public reliable scientific points of reference.

Accounts associated with governments, companies, brands, organizations, news outlets, entertainment and sports categories are currently assessed for notability and authenticity. Twitter's blue verification badge for accounts of public interest can be awarded to politicians and journalists, for example, without any requirement for a minimum number of followers or prior engagement. Scientists, however, must satisfy these requirements to qualify as content creators, activists or influencers.

Most scientists, even those who make major discoveries, rarely qualify because they are not known to the general public and their social-media engagement does not compare with that of celebrities and influencers.

I contend that it would be fairer to recognize scientists as a separate category through verification of an institutional account or by scientific publications.

Cássio Cardoso Pereira Federal University of Minas Gerais, Belo Horizonte, Brazil.
cassiocardosopereira@gmail.com

Inclusion of LGBT+ researchers is key

It is promising that many institutions are focusing on increasing gender and sexual diversity, but more attention needs to be paid to inclusion practices. Marginalization and isolation of LGBT+ researchers must be explicitly tackled.

Workplace harassment and exclusionary behaviour against LGBT+ researchers are pervasive in academia (see *Nature* <https://doi.org/gjqj>; 2021). These scientists are too often unjustifiably treated as though they are less skilled than their colleagues. Many describe themselves as 'invisible' at their institutions (see *Nature* **586**, 813–816; 2020). They can experience career obstacles – for instance, at conferences held in locations where laws and social norms regarding LGBT+ people are restrictive or even dangerous (see *Nature* **584**, 335; 2020).

Researchers must listen to their LGBT+ colleagues' needs and show sensitivity by using correct gender pronouns. Institutions should publicize the achievements of LGBT+ researchers more widely to raise their profile in the academic community. And they must do away with exclusionary practices and micro-aggressions against LGBT+ researchers altogether.

Deni Mazrekaj Utrecht University, Utrecht, the Netherlands.
d.mazrekaj@uu.nl