



#### Food Crops in Africa

Maximizing the production of food crops in Africa is important for many reasons. Many of Africa's farmers are subsistence farmers, meaning that they eat what they produce. People who live in cities depend on farmers to produce food. Failure to produce enough food threatens the well-being of villagers and urbanites alike. Furthermore, the more African farmers can satisfy the food needs of the people, the more money that will be available for importing manufactured items, paying off loans from international lending agencies, and investing in economic development, education, and health care. Root crops refer to vegetables such as beets, carrots, parsnips, and cassava. The figures in the graph probably include yams, though technically not a root crop, because yams are a major staple in the African diet. Oils refer to peanut and palm oil, also important to the African diet, as well as other vegetable oils used in cooking. Cereals include wheat, corn, millet, and sorghum. The relative importance of meat, milk, and fish depends on ethnicity and region. Though the production of all food crops increased from 1965 to 1988, the population increased at a faster rate. As a result, Africans produced less food per person in 1988 than they did in 1965. Food production and distribution was disrupted by civil wars, military takeovers, and ethnic conflict. Also, agricultural production suffered in some regions from prolonged dry spells.

**GRAPH: Question 1**

*How many metric tons of cereals were produced in Africa in 1985?*

**Question 2**

*Why were Africans worse off in food production in 1988 than they were in 1965?*

**Question 3**

*How have Western nations and international lending agencies tried to help African nations improve their food production?*