

SHOULD WE EAT QUINOA

Quinoa is an ancient grain grown in the Andes of Bolivia and Peru where it has been eaten by the farmers and formed part of their diet for hundreds of years. It was considered a peasant food with no commercial value. In the past decade it has become a popular superfood in Western diets because of its high nutritional value. Farmers in these countries planted more of this crop to capitalize on rising prices from the increased global demand. However, the local population stopped eating quinoa as they were unable to afford it and they replaced it with less nutritious imported alternatives such as rice and pasta. Bolivia is one the most food insecure countries in the world and one of the poorest countries in South America.

Under the rising global demand for quinoa, Bolivian farmers face pressures from different sides: On one hand, farmers hope to benefit from the growing quinoa trade, but on the other hand, they are made vulnerable by this rising trend in different ways having to increasing their production to accommodate for a growing international market while safeguarding traditional knowledge, preserving biodiversity, meeting household needs and making a profit. Lately the price of quinoa has dropped due to oversupply and many farmers have been priced out of the market. Many US farmers are now producing quinoa in the US.

The government of Bolivia has been paying farmers to keep growing quinoa even though the market does not support the amount being produced. This helps commercial farmers but does not help the poorer people who no longer have access to their traditional and nutritious food sources and traditional markets.

Some consumers in wealthy countries think the ethically responsible act is to buy imported quinoa from the Andes to support Peruvian and Bolivian farmers and to protect the biodiversity of the species. Others say that quinoa should be banned and will not buy it. Other consumers are buying regionally sourced quinoa to support local enterprises in the US and Canada and to reduce the environmental impact of the supply chain.

QUESTIONS

A. *Western consumers should only eat locally sourced quinoa*

Agree/I don't know or I don't have enough information/Disagree

B. *Why did you answer as you did or how similar is your thinking to these reasons (Scale 1-5:)*

1. The quinoa belongs to the people in the Andes
2. Protecting biodiversity is critical to the survival of plant species
3. Quinoa will be returned to local farmers by stopping the export of a local food in Bolivia
4. The local farmers need to earn money and we should support them by buying their quinoa
5. Buying from US suppliers does not help the local farmers in Bolivia
6. I need more information as to the labelling of the quinoa
7. I would like more information on what the farmers think about this
8. Eating quinoa only helps the government of Bolivia
9. Food plants belong to everyone on the planet
10. Quinoa is one of the foods I eat

11. The global market should be free to all who want to participate
12. The US should be food secure and not import foods where possible
13. Buying imported food contributes increase the environmental impact of the supply chain
14. We are all responsible for determining how our actions affect others in the world
15. Other factor important to your reasoning – please state

C. Select the three main reasons in order of importance to your decision from the list above