

Pulses: Nature's Nutritious Seeds!

Nutritious, Environmentally Friendly, Cheap! These are a few of the words used by people all over the world to describe **pulses**. So, what is a pulse and why has the United Nations designated a special day – February 10th – to recognize their importance and promote their use?



A selection of Andean dry beans, Phaseolus vulgaris, from the Andean bean diversity panel. Photo: Stephen Ausmus

Pulses are edible seeds such as dried beans, lentils and peas and are staples in many traditional dishes in countries all over the world. They are packed with nutrients and have a high protein content, making them ideal in communities where meat and dairy are not available or economically accessible. Rich in iron, protein and energy, the nutritional attributes of pulses help combat diabetes, heart conditions and obesity, making them recommended by health organizations all over the world! If you are a vegan, a penny pincher, or just someone who wants to eat a variety of nutritious foods, dry beans are perfect for everyone!

The high nutritional value of pulses is only half of the story. Pulses are environmentally friendly and can be a powerful tool to combat climate change. Dry beans, lentils and peas generally use one half to one tenth of the water needed to support other sources of protein such as beef, chicken or even peanuts. Their ability to grow well in dry environments make pulses optimal crops for areas that are prone to drought. Their roots help control soil erosion AND support the process of putting nutrients back into the soil. Aren't pulses AMAZING! If that wasn't enough, pulses use soil bacteria to draw nitrogen from the air, replacing the need to use nitrogen-based fertilizers.

USAID invests over \$44 million dollars to improve agriculture in Mozambique, with a focus on climate-smart agriculture and increasing food security. Pulses are a big part of USAID's strategy. In Sofala, Zambézia and Nampula, USAID's work through the RAMA, SEMEAR, and Partnering for Innovation Programs helps farmers and seed companies effectively grow pulses as a cost effective, low risk crop in drought prone areas. By growing two or more crops in the same field, farmers use water more efficiently and keep soil healthy and fertile. Healthy soil results in pest and disease-resistant crops!

By supporting the growth of pulses such as cowpeas and pigeon peas using climate smart agricultural methods, USAID is helping increase farmer yields, improve household nutrition and overall food security in Mozambique.

Cheers to Pulses!

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Food security and Nutrition in Mozambique are paramount. USAID supports intercropping with **pulses** so that this **SuperFood** can reach the dinner table of more Mozambican families.

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and Business Office