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# Research Trend on Crop Diversification in Enhancing Food Security

**Etty Sri Hertini[1], Abdul Fajar Haras[2], Mitra Musika Lubis[3], Haryono[4]**
[1]Universitas Boyolali
[2]Universitas Negeri Gorontalo
[3]Universitas Medan Area
[4]Universitas Bhayangkara Surabaya

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**ABSTRACT**

This study employs bibliometric analysis to explore the global research landscape of crop diversification, highlighting the significant contributions and collaborations among countries in addressing the challenges of agricultural sustainability and food security. Through the utilization of VOSviewer, the research maps out intricate networks of international collaborations and identifies key regional and global players in the field. The findings illustrate a robust pattern of interconnected research efforts, with the United States, India, and the United Kingdom acting as central hubs. The study reveals the interdisciplinary nature of crop diversification research, incorporating aspects of genetics, soil science, and climate change adaptation. Despite robust collaborations, the study also addresses challenges such as resource disparities between developed and developing nations and cultural and regulatory barriers that could hinder effective knowledge exchange. The conclusion emphasizes the need for equitable research partnerships and the integration of advanced agricultural technologies with traditional practices to enhance food security in a changing climate.



***Corresponding Author:***

Name: Etty Sri Hertini
Institution: Universitas Boyolali
Email: etty.srihertini@gmail.com

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Crop diversification is increasingly recognized as a critical strategy for enhancing food security in a world faced with climatic unpredictability, diminishing land resources, and growing population pressures [1], [2]. Diversification in agriculture involves the cultivation of a variety of crops within a given area to increase production sustainability, mitigate risks, and enhance crop resilience against climatic anomalies [3]. Historically, mono-cropping has dominated agricultural practices, driven by high market demand for certain crops; however, this approach has significant drawbacks, including increased vulnerability to pests, diseases, and market fluctuations [4]–[6].

Moreover, the global scenario of food security is alarming, with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) reporting that nearly 821 million people are chronically undernourished, with the majority residing in regions heavily dependent on agriculture [7]. Diversification not only contributes to increased and stabilized yield over time but also plays a vital role in nutritional enhancement by providing a range of food products to local diets [8], [9]. This strategy is further supported by the sustainable intensification framework, which aims to increase food production from existing farmland while minimizing pressure on the environment and improving rural livelihoods [10].

The environmental benefits of crop diversification are also noteworthy. Diverse cropping systems can lead to improved soil health, more efficient nutrient cycling, and better water retention, all of which are essential for sustainable agricultural practices [11]. Additionally, diversification can enhance biodiversity both above and below the soil surface, contributing to more resilient agricultural ecosystems capable of withstanding both biotic and abiotic stresses [12]. In socio-economic terms, diversification has the potential to enhance farmers' income stability by providing multiple income sources and reducing dependency on a single market [13]. This is particularly important in areas where economic options are limited, providing a buffer against market shocks that can have devastating effects on mono-crop dependent communities.

Despite the known benefits, the adoption of crop diversification remains limited, especially in regions that could benefit the most from such practices. One of the main barriers is the lack of comprehensive policy frameworks that support diversified agricultural initiatives. Additionally, there are significant gaps in knowledge and information among farmers about the techniques and benefits of diversification. The existing research also tends to focus on small-scale studies, with limited data on long-term impacts of diversification at larger scales. This gap in research and practice underscores the need for a systematic exploration of trends and outcomes associated with diversified cropping systems.

This study aims to synthesize existing knowledge on crop diversification strategies and assess their impact on enhancing food security. Specifically, the research will identify trends, challenges, and opportunities within diversified systems, focusing on their contribution to economic stability, environmental sustainability, and dietary diversity. This comprehensive analysis is intended to inform policymakers, guide future agricultural practices, and provide a foundation for enhancing global food security through innovative agricultural strategies.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### *2.1 Overview of Crop Diversification*

Crop diversification is defined as the practice of cultivating a variety of crops within a given agricultural system to maximize benefits across environmental, economic, and social dimensions. This approach is central to the achievement of sustainable agriculture goals, as it reduces the risks associated with mono-cropping practices, which are highly dependent on single crop varieties. [3] emphasize that diversified cropping systems are essential for mitigating the adverse effects of these agricultural practices, which include

heightened vulnerability to environmental changes and economic fluctuations. Furthermore, [4] argue that crop diversification offers increased stability and resilience compared to mono-crop systems. By introducing a variety of crops, farms are less susceptible to pest invasions, disease outbreaks, and the significant market price swings that often affect mono-cropped farms. This enhanced stability is crucial for maintaining continuous productivity and ensuring long-term sustainability in agriculture, making diversification a key strategy in modern farming practices.

***2.2 Environmental Impacts of Crop Diversification***

Environmental sustainability is a significant advantage associated with crop diversification. Diverse cropping systems contribute to the health of the soil by improving the presence of organic matter and facilitating better nutrient cycling. [11] have noted that these systems not only enhance soil quality but also support greater biodiversity. This increase in biodiversity plays a crucial role in developing more resilient ecosystems that can better adapt to adverse weather conditions and effectively resist pest infestations without heavy dependence on chemical inputs. Additionally, [12] points out that diversified cropping patterns can significantly reduce the ecological footprint of agricultural practices. By integrating a variety of crops that have different water and nutrient requirements, these systems can optimize the use of resources, thereby reducing the overall demand for water, fertilizers, and pesticides. This approach not only lessens the environmental impact but also promotes a more sustainable form of agriculture that can sustain itself and thrive over the long term.

***2.2 Economic Benefits***

The economic advantages of crop diversification are especially significant in regions susceptible to economic fluctuations. [13] have shown that diversification can stabilize income and enhance the livelihood security of smallholder farmers. By cultivating a range of crop varieties, farmers can reduce their dependence on the success of a single crop commodity, thereby minimizing the risk associated with market or climatic volatility. This broadening of market opportunities allows farmers to adapt more readily to changing market demands and environmental conditions. Moreover, diversified farms tend to see an uptick in productivity, which opens up access to new markets and can lead to increased overall profitability. [10] suggest that the introduction of multiple crops can improve the efficiency of resource use and increase yield diversity, which together contribute to the economic resilience of farming operations. This approach not only secures a more stable income for farmers but also contributes to the economic vitality of the wider agricultural sector.

***2.3 Nutritional and Health Outcomes***

[8] report that crop diversification can significantly enhance the nutritional status of communities by providing a greater variety of food products, which contribute to balanced diets and improved health outcomes. This aspect is crucial in areas where diet-related health issues such as malnutrition and micronutrient deficiencies are prevalent. The availability of a wider range of crops can also increase dietary resilience against food supply shocks caused by market or climatic changes. Moreover, the availability of a diverse array of crops enhances dietary resilience, providing a buffer against the impacts of food supply disruptions caused by market volatility or adverse climatic conditions. This resilience is particularly important in regions prone to such fluctuations, where consistent access to a variety of food items can stabilize food security and prevent the escalation of health issues linked to poor nutrition. The ability to rely on a steady and varied food supply is instrumental in maintaining the health of communities, making crop diversification a vital strategy in the fight against global food insecurity.

***2.4 Challenges in Adoption of Crop Diversification***

Despite the clear benefits, numerous challenges hinder the widespread adoption of crop diversification strategies. [10] identify

several key barriers that constrain the implementation of these strategies, primarily highlighting the lack of knowledge among farmers about the benefits and methods of diversification. This knowledge gap, coupled with inadequate access to markets, makes it difficult for farmers to sell their diverse crops profitably. Additionally, insufficient governmental support in terms of subsidies, information dissemination, and technical assistance further limits the potential for diversification. The economic challenges associated with transitioning to diversified farming systems are particularly daunting for small-scale farmers. The initial costs of introducing a variety of crop species, altering planting schedules, and adopting new farming techniques can be substantial. Without external support or incentives from policy frameworks, these upfront investments are often too burdensome for smallholders. This financial barrier is compounded by the risk of changing long-established farming practices, which many farmers perceive as too high relative to the potential immediate benefits. Addressing these issues requires targeted policies that support farmers through this transition and make diversification a more attractive and feasible option.

## 3. METHODS

This study employs bibliometric analysis to systematically review and synthesize existing literature on the topic of crop diversification and its impact on enhancing food security. Bibliometric methods will be utilized to assess the volume, growth, and distribution of research in this field over a defined period. Scopus database will be searched to collect relevant publications using specific keywords related to crop diversification, food security, and agricultural sustainability. Data extracted will include publication year, author affiliations, citation counts, and keywords, which will be analyzed using software tool like VOSviewer. This tool will help in identifying the most influential studies, emerging trends, and gaps in the current research landscape. The analysis will also include a review of the geographical distribution of the studies to understand regional focuses and disparities in research.

## 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### *4.1 Yearly Publication*

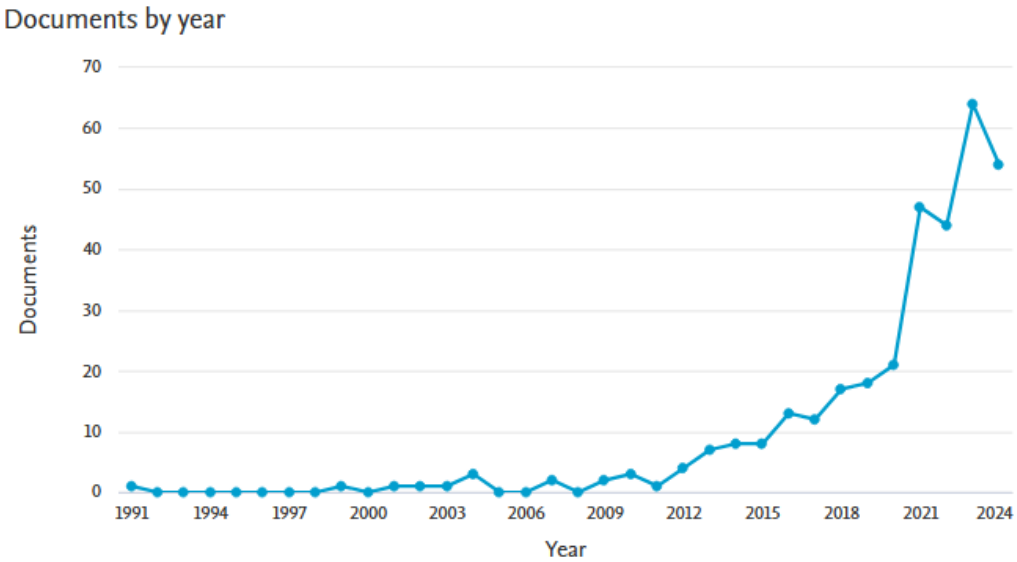


Figure 1. Yearly Publication
Source: Scopus Database, 2024

The graph illustrates the trend in the number of documents published annually on the topic of crop diversification from 1991 to 2024. It shows a relatively stable and low publication rate from 1991 until around 2009, with generally fewer than 10 documents per

year. From 2009 onwards, there is a noticeable increase in the number of documents, indicating a growing interest in this research area. The rate of publications climbs more steeply after 2015, suggesting a significant surge in research and publications related to crop diversification. This trend reaches its peak in 2023 with nearly 70 documents, showing the highest interest and research activity in the field. However, there is a slight drop in 2024, which could suggest a variety of factors such as data incompleteness for the year or a temporary decline in research output.

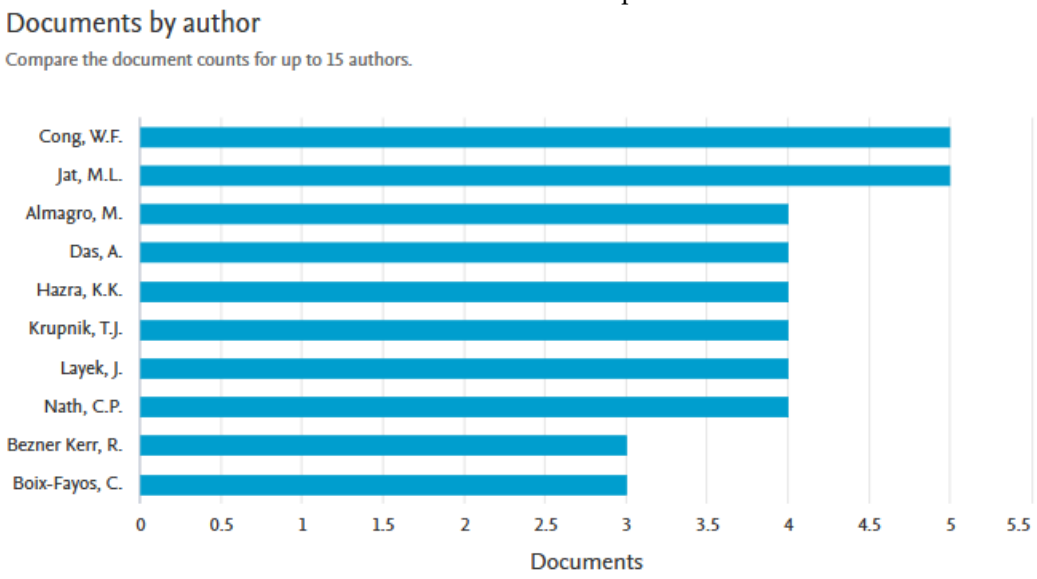


Figure 2. Literature by Author
Source: Scopus Database, 2024

The graph displays the publication output of the top 15 authors in the field of crop diversification, ranked by the number of documents they have authored. W.F. Cong leads the chart with approximately 5.5 documents, followed closely by M.L. Jat with about 5 documents. M. Almagro, A. Das, and K.K. Hazra are in the middle range, each contributing around 3 to 4 documents. The rest of the authors, including T.J. Krupnik, J. Layek, C.P. Nath, R. Bezner Kerr, and C. Boix-Fayos, have produced fewer publications, ranging from 1 to just under 3 documents each. This distribution highlights the varying degrees of contribution and influence these researchers have in the domain of crop diversification, with a clear concentration of publications among the top two authors, suggesting they are key contributors or possibly leading experts in this research area.

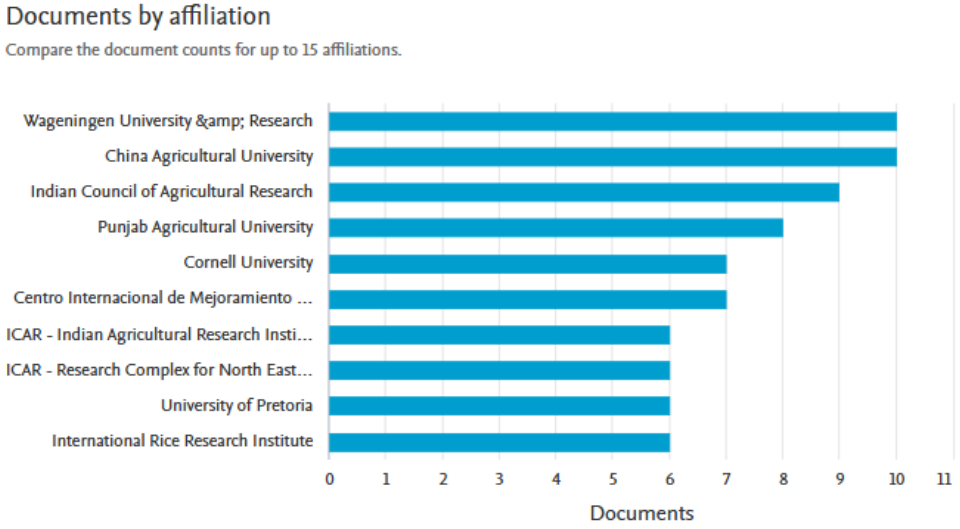

Figure 3. Literature by Affiliation
Source: Scopus Database, 2024

The graph provides a comparative overview of the number of documents produced by the top 15 research institutions and universities in the field of crop diversification. Leading the chart, Wageningen University & Research has the highest output, contributing nearly 11 documents. This is closely followed by China Agricultural University, Indian Council of Agricultural Research, and Punjab Agricultural University, each showcasing substantial contributions of about 7 to 9 documents. Cornell University and the International Rice Research Institute, along with a few other institutions such as the University of Pretoria and various branches of the Indian Agricultural Research Institute (ICAR), also demonstrate significant academic output, though slightly less, ranging from about 4 to 6 documents.

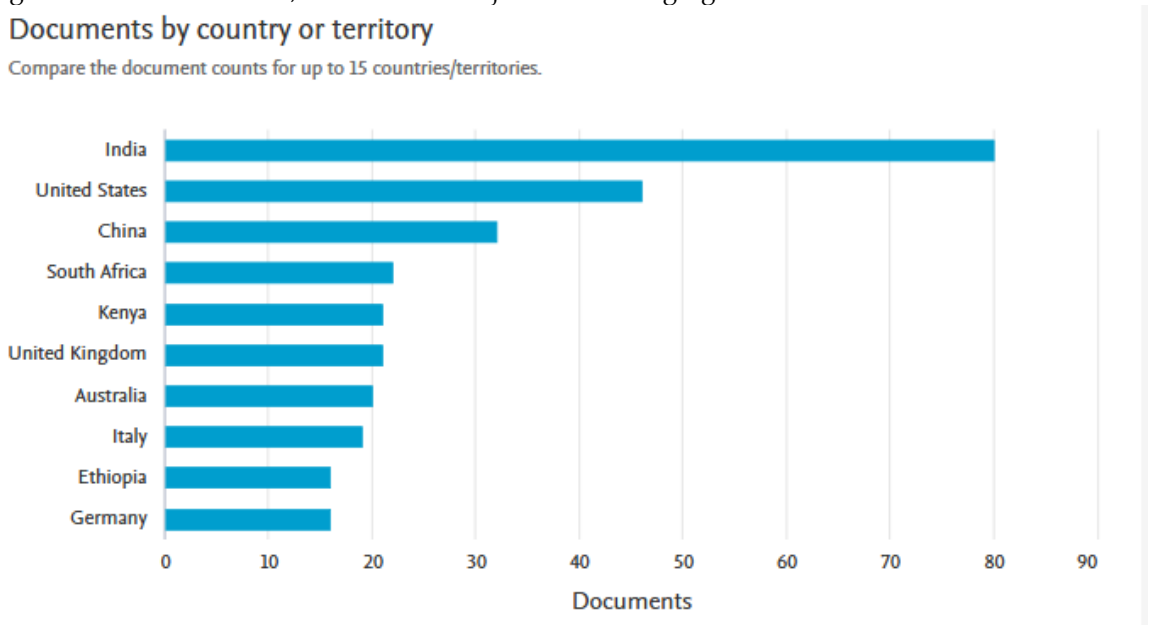


Figure 4. Literature by Country
Source: Scopus Database 2024

This graph displays the number of documents related to crop diversification published by researchers in various countries. India leads significantly with close to 90 documents, indicating a robust focus and possibly high levels of agricultural research and development in this area, likely due to the country's agricultural-based economy and diversity of crops. The United States follows with around 50 documents, reflecting substantial research activity in this field as well. China and South Africa show a moderate level of contributions, each with approximately 30 to 40 documents, which suggests growing interest and research in crop diversification within these regions. Other countries like Kenya, the United Kingdom, Australia, Italy, Ethiopia, and Germany display lesser activity, ranging from about 10 to 25 documents each.

***4.2 Keyword Co-Occurrence***

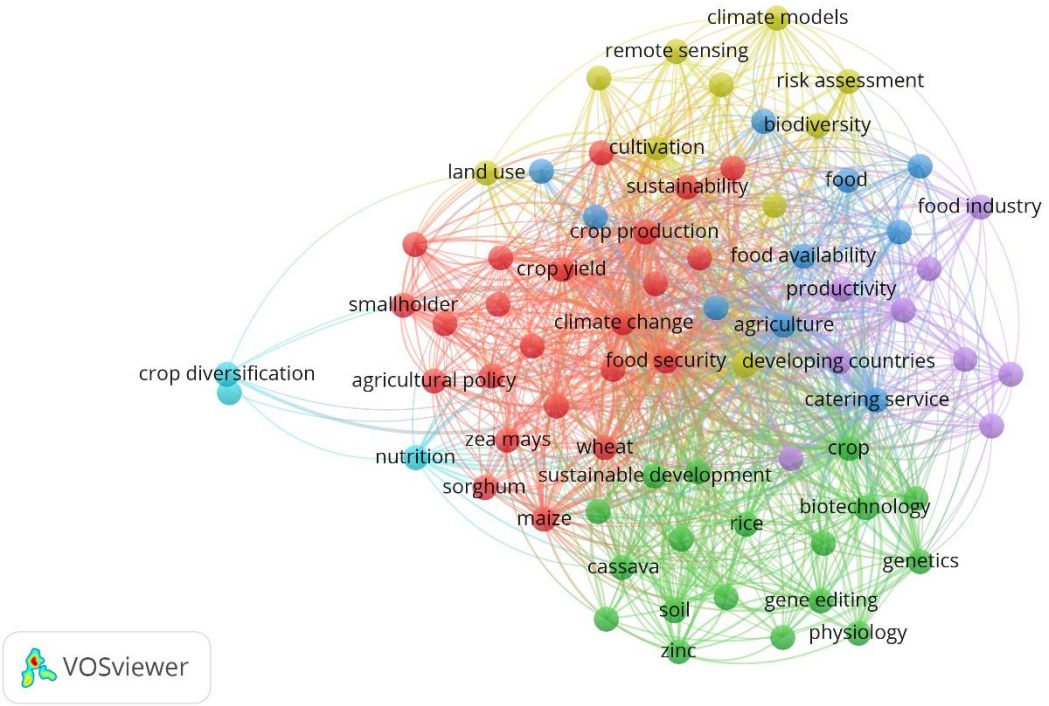


Figure 5. Network Visualization
Source: Data Analysis, 2024

Table 1. Cluster Composition

| Cluster | Items | Description |
|---|---|---|
| Red Cluster | Climate change, crop yield, crop production, sustainability, smallholder, agricultural policy, zea mays, wheat, sorghum, maize, food security | This cluster focuses on the impacts of climate change on agricultural practices, specifically examining how it affects crop yields and production. It addresses the sustainability challenges faced by smallholder farmers and the implications for agricultural policy. Crops such as maize (zea mays), wheat, sorghum, and maize are central to studies in this cluster, emphasizing their roles in maintaining food security under changing climatic conditions. |
| Green Cluster | Crop, biotechnology, genetics, gene editing, physiology, soil, zinc, cassava, rice, sustainable development | The green cluster deals with the role of biotechnology and genetics in agriculture, highlighting advanced techniques such as gene editing. It explores how these technologies affect crop physiology and contribute to sustainable agricultural practices. Essential nutrients like zinc and crops including cassava and rice are discussed in terms of genetic enhancement and sustainability, pointing to broader goals of sustainable development. |
| Yellow Cluster | Climate change, risk assessment, biodiversity, | This cluster examines the broader environmental impacts of agriculture, integrating climate change, biodiversity, |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | cultivation, land use, remote sensing | and land use issues. It includes studies on risk assessment related to these factors and employs remote sensing technology to monitor and manage agricultural land use and its environmental impacts. This cluster often looks at how cultivation practices can be adapted to mitigate adverse effects on the environment. |
| Blue Cluster | Food, food availability, agriculture, catering service, nutrition, crop diversification | Focused on the intersection of food systems and agriculture, this cluster addresses food availability and nutrition in the context of crop diversification. It discusses how diversified crops can enhance food security and contribute to more resilient agricultural systems. This cluster may also explore the socioeconomic aspects of food production, including catering services within agricultural frameworks. |
| Purple Cluster | Productivity, developing countries, food industry | The purple cluster centers on improving productivity within the food industry, particularly in developing countries. It looks at how innovations in agricultural practices can lead to better outputs and enhanced food production efficiency. The focus is often on strategies that can be implemented in developing regions to boost productivity and, consequently, food availability and economic growth. |

Source: Own Interpretation, 2024

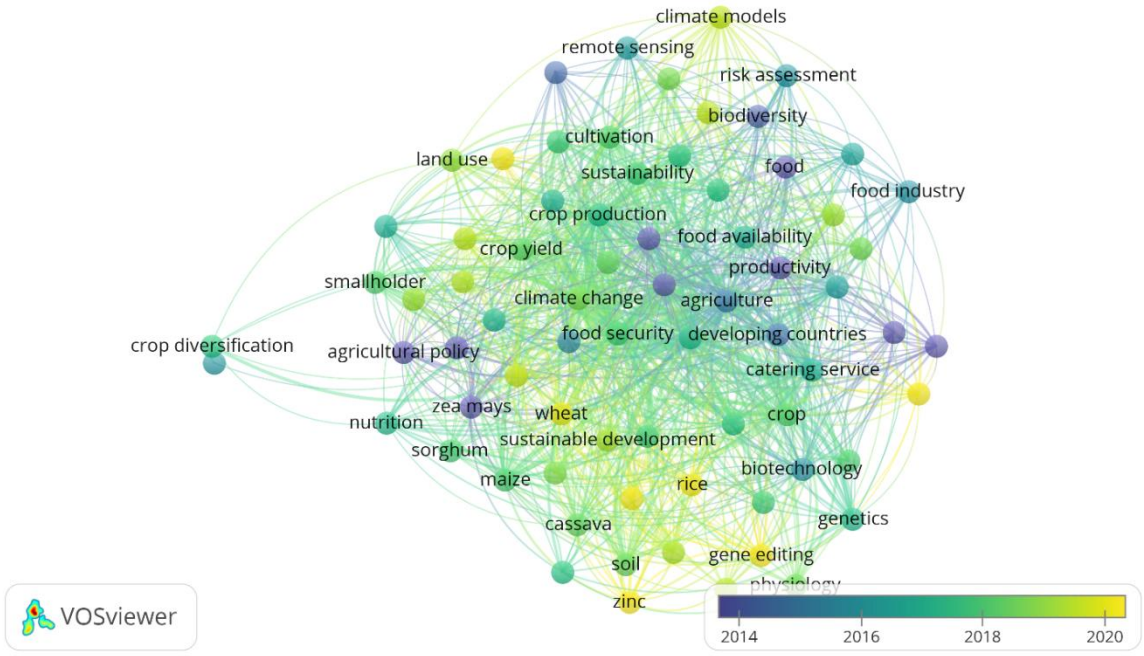


Figure 6. Overlay Visualization

Source: Data Analysis, 2024

This VOSviewer visualization represents a bibliometric overlay mapping of research topics related to crop diversification and related agricultural issues from 2014 to 2020. The various colors of the nodes (ranging from green to yellow) indicate the temporal progression of research focus within these years. Nodes colored closer to green like agricultural policy, zea mays, productivity, food, biodivesity, remote sensing, sustainability, biotechnology, genetics, and nutrition represent earlier research focus around 2014, while those transitioning to yellow like rice, zinc, gene editing, wheat, and climate models depict more recent focus areas around 2020. This temporal color gradient helps in tracking the evolution of research interests and the shifting priorities in agricultural studies over time. The nodes for 'climate change' and 'sustainable development' serve as pivotal points, linking diverse clusters and indicating their central importance in the discourse around crop diversification.

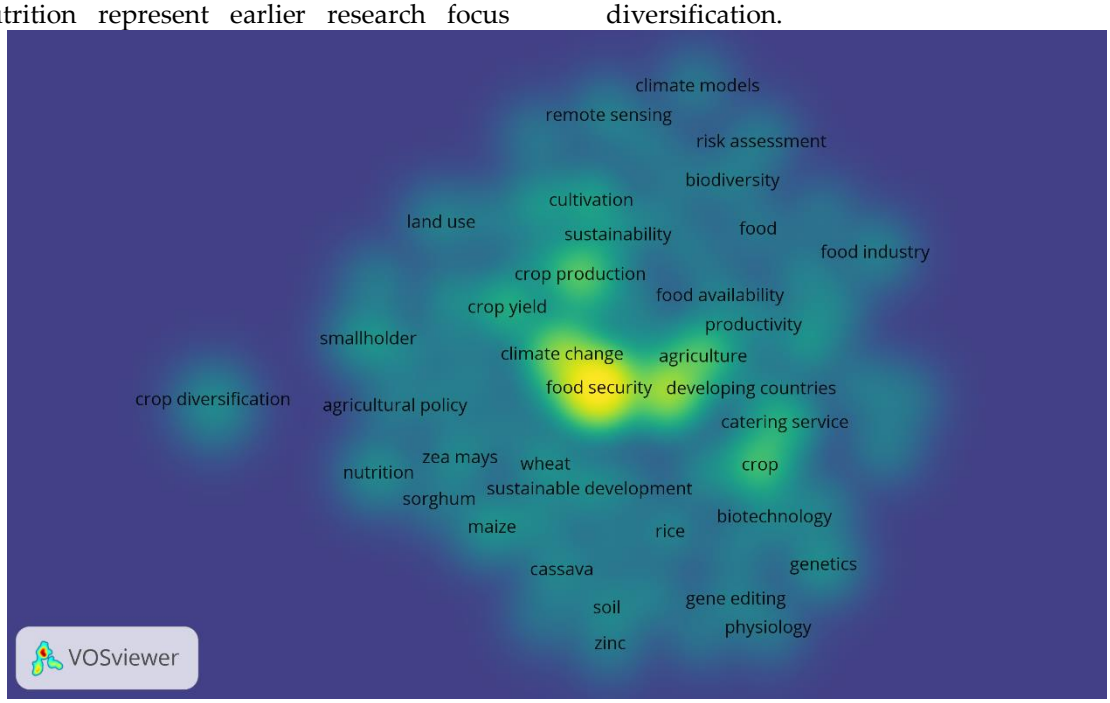


Figure 7. Density Visualization

Source: Data Analysis, 2024

This heatmap visualization presents a landscape of the key terms associated with crop diversification research, with varying colors indicating the density of research topics and their interconnections within the agricultural domain. The color gradient from blue to green to yellow visually represents areas of lesser to greater focus and interaction among the terms. Central and densely colored regions, such as those around "climate change," "food security," and "sustainable development," suggest these areas are hotspots of research activity. This indicates a strong concentration of academic and practical interest, likely due to the pressing global challenges of ensuring food security in the face of climate variability and the need for sustainable agricultural practices. Peripheral areas of the map, displaying cooler colors, include terms like "gene editing," "zinc," and "physiology," which, while important, are currently less integrated with the core research themes in the visualization. These terms may represent more specialized niches or emerging fields within crop diversification research that have not yet developed robust interdisciplinary links with more central themes.

### *4.3 Citation Analysis*

Table 2. Top Cited Literature

| Citation | Authors | Title |
|---|---|---|

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 547 | [14] | Geographic distribution of major crops across the world |
| 341 | [15] | Productivity and sustainability of the rice-wheat cropping system in the indo-gangetic plains of the indian subcontinent: Problems, opportunities, and strategies |
| 308 | [16] | Multi-country evidence that crop diversification promotes ecological intensification of agriculture |
| 290 | [11] | Biodiversity can support a greener revolution in Africa |
| 272 | [17] | Does intercropping enhance yield stability in arable crop production? A meta-analysis |

### *4.4 Co-Authorship Analysis*

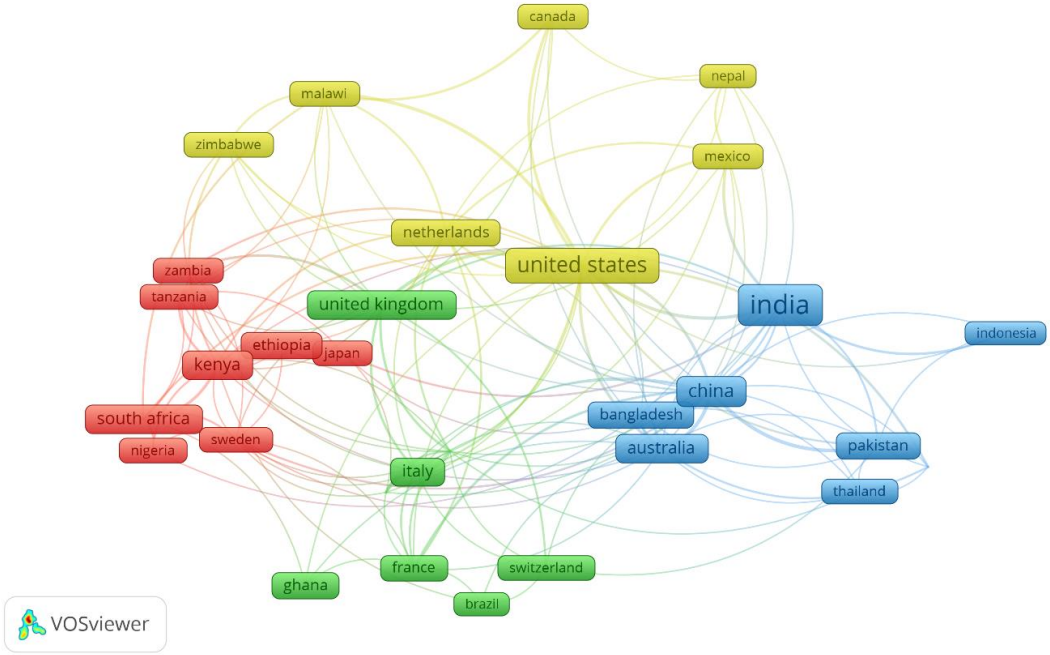


Figure 8. Country Visualization
Source: Data Analysis, 2024

This VOSviewer visualization represents international collaborations among countries based on shared research interests or projects, particularly in an academic or scientific context. The nodes represent different countries, and the lines indicate collaborations between them, with the varying colors likely denoting different regions or clusters of closely interacting countries. For instance, the United States, depicted centrally in yellow, shows strong collaborative ties with other North American countries like Canada and Mexico, as well as with various European and Asian countries, indicating its central role in global research networks. The blue cluster, prominently featuring India along with nearby countries like China, Pakistan, and Bangladesh, suggests a strong regional collaboration within Asia. Similarly, the red cluster involves African countries like South Africa, Nigeria, and Kenya, highlighting intra-continental collaborations within Africa.

## DISCUSSION

### *Global Collaboration and Knowledge Exchange*

The VOSviewer visualizations analyzed in this research underline the expansive and interconnected nature of global collaborations in crop diversification research. As the data suggests, countries like the United States, India, and the United Kingdom serve as pivotal nodes in the international research network, facilitating a substantial flow of

knowledge across continents. These nations are not only rich in research resources but also demonstrate a broad scope of influence that spans across various regions, including Asia, Africa, and Europe. The strong ties between the United States and countries like Canada and Mexico, alongside collaborations with European and Asian countries, reflect a strategic alliance that leverages geographical proximity and shared academic interests. In contrast, India's connections with neighboring countries such as China, Pakistan, and Bangladesh highlight a regional collaboration hub that emphasizes shared environmental and agricultural challenges unique to Asia. This regional focus is crucial for addressing local issues such as monsoon dependency and rice cultivation, which are of particular importance in South Asia. The data also showcases robust intra-continental collaborations within Africa, where countries like South Africa, Nigeria, and Kenya work together to advance agricultural practices that are suited to their climatic and socio-economic conditions.

***Interdisciplinary and Intercontinental Research Dynamics***

The visualization also reveals the interdisciplinary nature of crop diversification research, incorporating elements from genetics, soil science, and climate change studies. The integration of diverse scientific fields suggests a comprehensive approach to tackling food security and sustainability, key issues that are central to crop diversification. For example, the links between crop genetics research in countries like the Netherlands and sustainable agricultural practices in African nations underscore the importance of tailored crop development to enhance yield and resilience against environmental stresses. Furthermore, the clusters identified in the bibliometric analysis indicate that while some countries focus on technological advancements in agriculture (such as biotechnology and gene editing), others are more engaged with the ecological and socio-economic ramifications of crop diversification. This dichotomy not only reflects differing national priorities but also highlights the potential for enriched collaboration through the sharing of diverse expertise and technologies.

***Challenges in Global Agricultural Research Collaboration***

Despite the evident advantages of such widespread and varied collaboration, there are notable challenges that must be addressed to maximize the effectiveness of international research partnerships. One major challenge is the disparity in research capabilities and resources between developed and developing countries. This imbalance can lead to unequal partnerships where the flow of knowledge and benefits is not mutual. Additionally, cultural and linguistic barriers, as well as differing regulatory environments, can complicate the sharing of data and best practices across borders. To overcome these barriers, it is essential to foster equitable partnerships that prioritize mutual benefits and capacity building in less developed regions. International funding bodies and research institutions can play a pivotal role by supporting initiatives that aim to balance collaboration dynamics and by facilitating platforms for intercultural dialogue and learning.

***Future Directions in Crop Diversification Research***

Looking forward, the increasing impact of climate change on agriculture necessitates a continued focus on developing robust crop diversification strategies. The current trends highlighted by the bibliometric analysis suggest that future research will need to integrate more deeply with climate science to predict and mitigate the impacts of extreme weather conditions on crop yields. Additionally, as the global population continues to grow, there is a pressing need to enhance the scalability of successful diversification strategies to larger farming operations and across different geographic regions.

## 5. CONCLUSION

This study has provided a comprehensive overview of global research

collaborations and trends in crop diversification using bibliometric visualization tools. We observed a robust network of international collaborations with countries like the United States, India, and the United Kingdom playing central roles in facilitating global knowledge exchange in agriculture. The analysis underscored the importance of regional collaborations, particularly in addressing localized agricultural challenges in Asia and Africa. It also highlighted the interdisciplinary nature of crop diversification research, integrating genetics, climate science, and sustainable agricultural practices. However, challenges such as resource disparities and cultural barriers persist, necessitating more equitable research partnerships. Moving forward, it is crucial to strengthen these international collaborations and ensure they are inclusive and balanced. Enhancing the scalability of diversification strategies and further integrating them with climate science will be key to addressing the pressing issues of food security and environmental sustainability. This study not only sheds light on the current landscape but also sets the stage for future initiatives aimed at optimizing global agricultural productivity and resilience.

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