



Trends and prospects of change in wheat self-sufficiency in Egypt

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BACKGROUND

- Wheat is historically the most important crop in Egypt. Egyptians derive 33% of their daily caloric intake and 45% of their protein intake from wheat-based food.
- wheat is mainly produced by smallholders along the River Nile and in the Nile delta.
- Despite its own wheat production, Egypt is the world's largest wheat-importing nation. Only less than half of the national consumption can be met by domestic production (see Fig.1).
- In 2021, about 85% of wheat imports in Egypt came from Russia and Ukraine. The Russian invasion of Ukraine made wheat imports more difficult and far more expensive.
- The availability and quality of bread were one of the main reasons for the Egyptian revolution in 2011 and rising prices were the main reason for the Egyptian bread riots in 1977.



Outcomes

The main external pressures and system-immanent drivers impacting wheat self-sufficiency in Egypt are: a) rapid population growth, b) high poverty levels with high demands for inexpensive subsidized bread, c) national agricultural policies, d) high dependence on fluctuating international wheat markets, e) effects of climate change, and f) diseases.

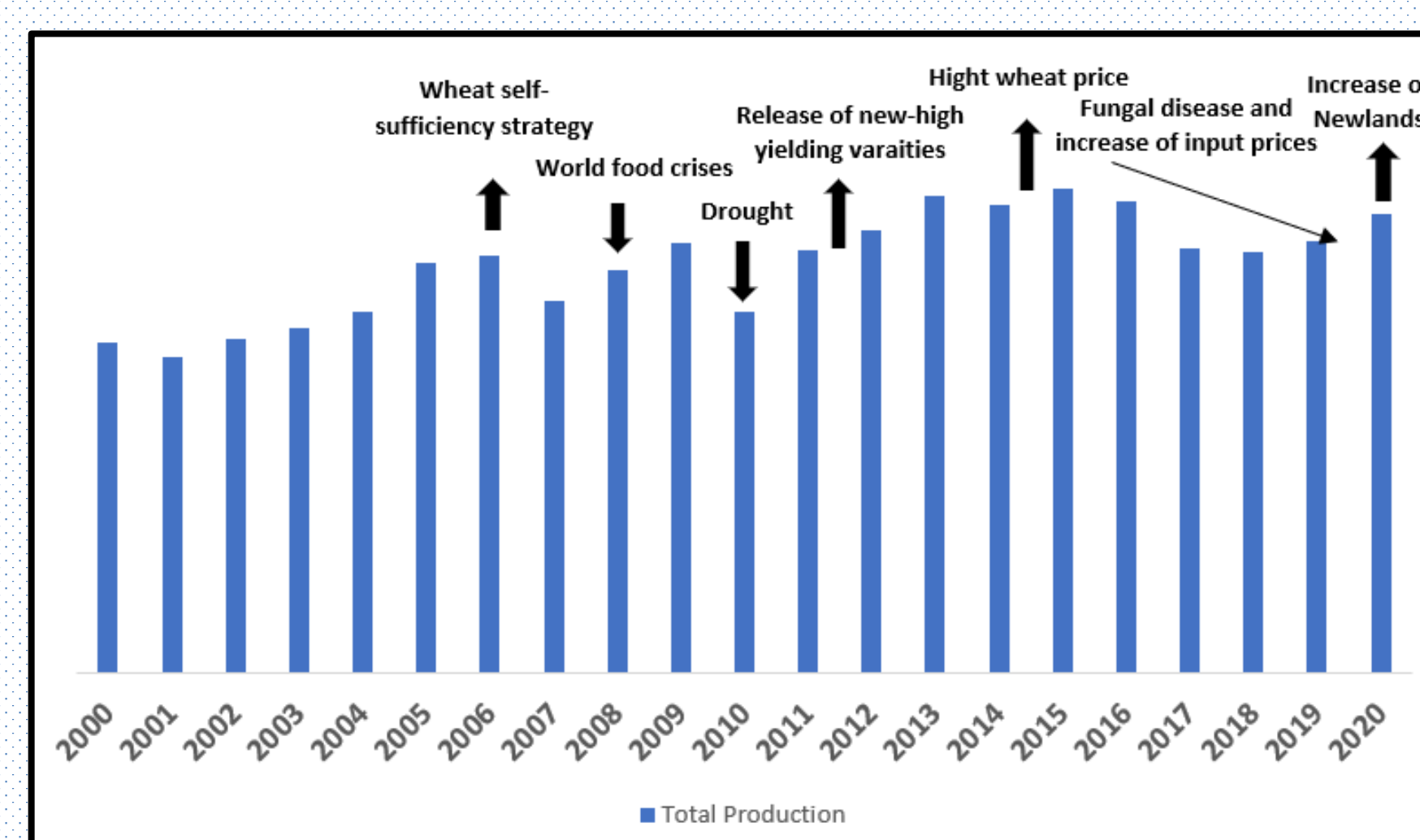


Fig. 2 Trends and chronology of events that affected total wheat production in Egypt. Source: MALR & CAPMAS in Egypt and own elaboration. (2000-2020).

Methods

- Quantitative and qualitative data from published and unpublished sources.
- Analysis of national and international surveys and reports, regulatory documents, grey literature, and journal articles published over the past two decades.
- The data were analysed using descriptive statistics. Frequency counts, percentages, and means were used to describe trends and prospects of wheat self-sufficiency, production, and yield in Egypt

Conclusions

The social and political stability of Egypt depends on the availability of wheat and subsidized bread. As Egypt's population rapidly grows and the cultivable areas and available water are predicted to decrease, the country's reliance on wheat imports is likely to increase. One alternative would be to enhance the ability of wheat growing smallholders in the "old lands" to enhance their productivity.

To increase the domestic wheat production, there is a significant need to implement an effective and long-term sustainable agriculture policy that makes wheat production (more) attractive and feasible for smallholders within the significant increases of fertilizers prices. Including; a) technical support and knowledge through agriculture extension, b) Subsidized inputs, and c) adequate price.

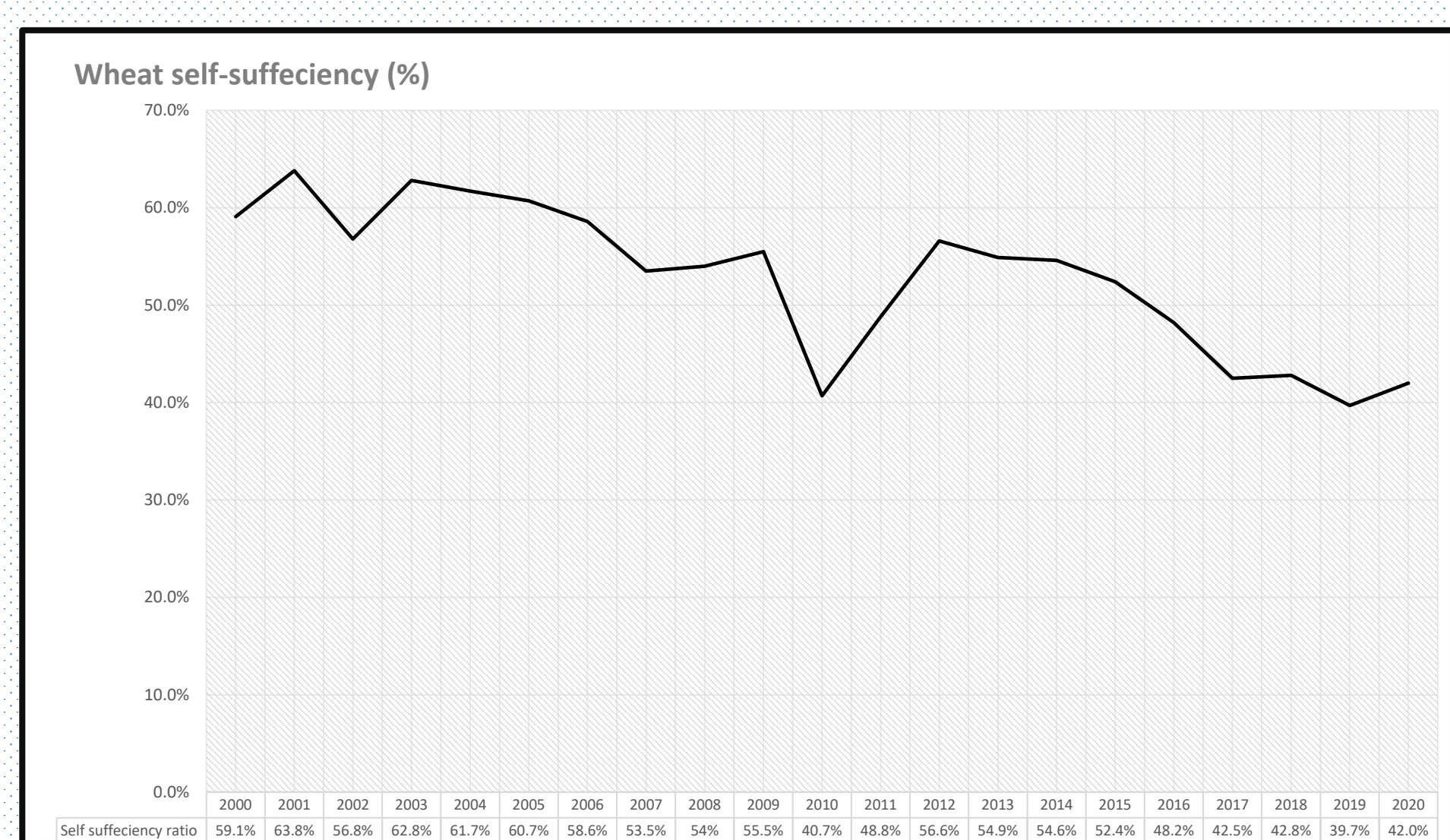


Fig. 1 Trends of wheat self-sufficiency in Egypt. Source: MALR & CAPMAS in Egypt and own elaboration. Annual average percentage growth rate (2000-2020).

This study provides an overview of wheat self-sufficiency trends in Egypt between 2000-2020, followed by an analysis of the external pressures and system-immanent drivers of change.

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