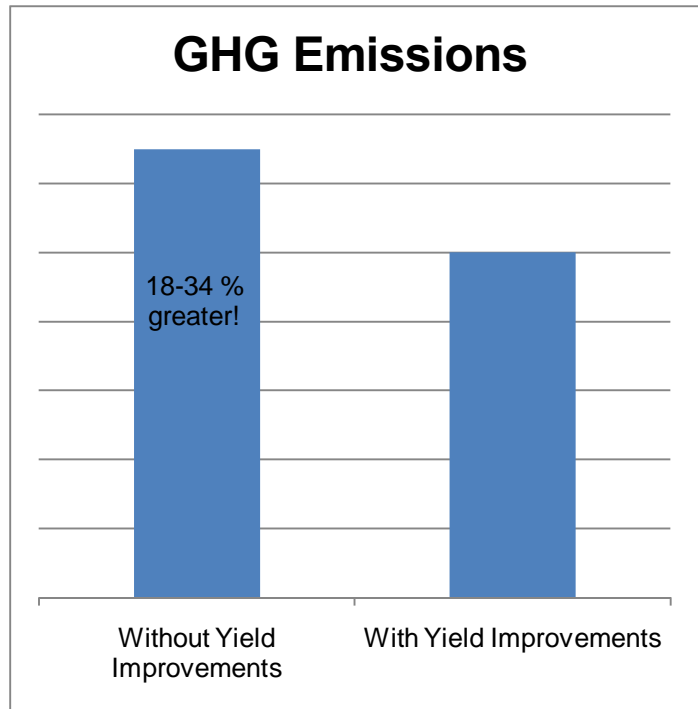




New research from Stanford University shows that high-yield agriculture has prevented the equivalent of 590 billion metric tons of carbon dioxide from entering the atmosphere.

The study also reports that yield improvements reduced the need to convert forests to farmland, a process that typically involved burning of trees and other plants, which generates carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases (GHG).

Without advances in high-yield agriculture, several billion additional acres of cropland would have been needed.



These results dispel the notion that modern intensive agriculture is inherently worse for the environment than a more old-fashioned way of doing things.

Incentives prove valuable in reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. To date, for every one dollar spent on research to increase yields, GHG emissions were reduced by 500 pounds. According to the study, this sort of research ranks among the cheapest ways to prevent GHG emissions.

The researchers concluded that intensifying crop yields should be a large part of the entire global GHG emission reduction plan.

If climate policy intentionally rewarded these kinds of efforts, that could make an even bigger difference. The question going forward is how climate policy might be designed to achieve that.