As seen in Table 18, the Americas is the leading region in the production of sugar cane (54 percent of the world total), maize (50 percent) and soybeans (87 percent), while Asia leads in the production of rice (90 percent), wheat (45 percent) and potatoes (51 percent).

Figure 22 shows that for each main crop commodity, the top three producers combined account for a significant share of the world total: slightly above 40 percent for wheat and potatoes, around 60 to 65 percent for sugar cane, maize and rice, and 80 percent for soybeans in 2018. For each crop, the top producer also has a sizeable share of the global output: in 2018, Brazil accounted for around 40 percent of world sugar cane production, the United States of America grew around 35 percent of the global production for both maize and soybeans, while China (which ranked in the top three producers for five out of the six main crop commodities) produced about 25 percent of the world output of rice and potatoes, and slightly less than 20 percent of the world output of wheat. Such a concentration can have a large impact on prices when harvests are affected – either positively or negatively – in the main producing countries that export part of their production.

Most primary crops can be consumed unprocessed, but two crop groups in particular require processing for the production of commodities used both as food and fuel: oil crops and sugar crops. Therefore, they have an impact on nutrition and health, but also on energy and the environment.

The total world production of vegetable oils more than doubled between 2000 and 2017, to 191 million tonnes in 2017 (see Figure 23). This is 99 million tonnes more than in 2000. Palm oil had the largest increase, both absolute and relative, as its production went up 44 million tonnes, or 197 percent; it overtook soybean oil as the main vegetable oil produced in 2006. The use of palm oil for biodiesel explains most of this spectacular growth.

The other main vegetable oils are rapeseed oil, accounting for 13 percent of global vegetable oil production in 2017, and sunflower oil, which accounted for 9 percent of total vegetable oil production in 2017, down from 11 percent in 2000. As with primary crops, the production of the main vegetable oils is heavily concentrated in a handful of countries (see Figure 24).

Source: FAOSTAT
Note: Percentages on the figure indicate the shares in the total; they may not tally due to rounding.

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