



Grub's up.

What are you eating and what's eating you? Survival of any individual, and of any species on this planet, is a matter of balance. While you are alive, you eat to stay alive and, hopefully, thrive and pass on your set of winning genes to the next generation of critters.

While you are busy digesting and assimilating all that nourishment, you are figuratively on the table for a host of creatures. There are things eating bits of your (dead) skin, both on you and in the carpets and under your bed. There are microbes in your mouth sharing your food and trying to feast on you. Many of your organs are a bug metropolis with your blood vessels and lymph ducts the super highways between them.

Hopefully you have healthy scavenger cells munching up those invaders that would eat you alive, even kill you. Of course, when they eventually put you in the ground, you will be happily digested by whatever can get into your wooden or cardboard box. If you are a nature lover, you may even opt for a canvas bag and feed a new tree.

As a species, we have overbalanced. We have become extremely successful at dominating the planet and we may have done so much damage that there will be no going back. We are devouring the contents of the sea faster than it can cope with; we are destroying forests and other ecosystems that help maintain the balance the biosphere needs for its wellbeing; and we are polluting every part of that biosphere with what we pump and carve out of the ground.

Many people have been pointing out that *Homo sapiens* has become the most dangerous species – John Gray¹ has called us *Homo rapiens*.

It is true that we need to feed the billions of humans, and perhaps their companion animals. We cannot continue to do so in the way we are doing it now. We need to stop wasting and throwing away so much of the food we produce, buy and prepare. Compostable waste should not go into holes in the ground or, if it does, the methane produced should be used to cook, to heat or to produce electricity.

Our individual growth and wellbeing depends on the ingestion of protein (amongst other nutrients). This can come from plants or animals. The protein from animals poses environmental issues – we need to grow plants to feed those animals and this is an inefficient process, requiring inordinate amounts of water and huge tracts of land that could be put to 'better' use, including forestry and wetlands, or growing plants for human consumption.

We trawl the oceans and much of the catch is made into pet food. I won't argue against pets, but we do need to review what we feed them.

One possible solution would be for us to turn more to the consumption of insects.

Before you turn up your nose, or dry retch, at the idea of entomophagy², know that insects form part of the diet of billions of humans – more than 80%, in fact. It is mainly in the ‘developed’ countries that we balk at the concept.

Comparing the environmental impact of producing 100 gram of protein from cattle with 100 gram of protein from crickets, it requires:

- 200 L of water vs 10 mL;
- 1000 g of feed vs 90 g;
- and produces 285 g of CO₂ vs 0.2 g of CO₂.³

Insect farming is a nascent industry in Australia, but culinary insects and meat products are readily available. Similarly in the USA and Europe.⁴

Beef, pork and poultry farmers are unlikely to change what they produce or how they produce it. Those of us who are concerned about the impact on the environment of the protein we eat, can start using our economic power – we can start buying consumable insects and insect protein. We can learn about it, experiment with it and learn to like it. For this to be an even more powerful action, we can talk about it with family and friends, write to print media, go on talk-back radio, write to politicians about it (especially ministers of agriculture), and flood social media with positive posts, humorous pieces and videos.

We can also write to supermarket CEOs and speak with managers of local supermarkets and butchers, letting them know that our purchase of meat will diminish to zero.

Get your children involved. Make it part of their yummy diet. They will tell their friends, who will tell their parents.

Let us make this a citizen-led, consumer-led movement, as one thing we can do to reduce pollution – including greenhouse gasses and chemical run-off – and reclaim land for more planet-valuable uses. Let us bug everyone for a change.

1. [*Straw Dogs*](#)
2. www.fao.org
3. www.ediblebugshop.com.au
4. See for instance <http://www.bugburger.se/>