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**Fight World Hunger by Eating Bugs, Urges U.N.**

Care for a serving of grasshopper goulash?

By [Matt Peckham](http://newsfeed.time.com/author/mcpeckham/) [@mattpeckham](http://www.twitter.com/mattpeckham)May 15, 2013[2 Comments](http://newsfeed.time.com/2013/05/15/fight-world-hunger-by-eating-bugs-urges-u-n/#comments)



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A starter dish of 'Petit pois carre et son ecume de Carottes, vers de farine' - peas, carrots and worms - prepared by French chef David Faure in his restaurant 'Aphrodite' in Nice, France on May 2, 2013.

**Related**

It’s time to rethink our aversion to bugs-as-food, advises the [United Nations](http://topics.time.com/united-nations/) in a new report. And no, not in the *Man vs. Wild* sense, grimacing as you dangle tiny wriggling arthropods over your chops, then mumbling the words “To my health” before chowing down. Instead, the international organization is advocating the [protein-rich diet](http://people.howstuffworks.com/entomophagy3.htm) to deal with an exploding global population and growing environmental concerns.

(**MORE:** [Sixteen Ways to Eat a Cicada: The Fine Art of Insect Cuisine](http://www.time.com/time/nation/article/0%2C8599%2C2078830%2C00.html))

“It is widely accepted that by 2050 the world will host 9 billion people,” write the authors of a U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization report titled [“Edible Insects”](http://www.fao.org/docrep/018/i3253e/i3253e00.htm) in its introduction.

To accomodate this number, current food production will need to almost double. Land is scarce and expanding the area devoted to farming is rarely a viable or sustainable option. Oceans are overfished and climate change and related water shortages could have profound implications for food production. To meet the food and nutrition challenges of today – there are nearly 1 billion chronically hungry people worldwide – and tomorrow, what we eat and how we produce it needs to be re-evaluated. Inefficiencies need to be rectified and food waste reduced. We need to find new ways of growing food.

That is, new ways of *thinking* about food, namely the sort of potential nourishment Westerners routinely spend piles of money and time obliterating via exterminators, repellants, pesticides and our shoes. The report points out that insects have always been part of our diet, noting that today more than two billion people already consume insects as food and implying that the reason Westerners don’t comes down to irrational cultural distaste.

**(MORE:** [Eating Bugs](http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0%2C9171%2C1810336%2C00.html))

Maybe you’ve traveled abroad and managed to sample an insect dish or two, but what sort nutritional value do bugs offer? According to a separate U.N. report titled [“Edible Forest Insects: Humans Bite Back!!”](http://www.fao.org/docrep/012/i1380e/i1380e00.pdf) the calories obtainable from insects can exceed those from soybeans, maize and beef. Take crickets: According to this report, 100 grams of [cricket](http://topics.time.com/cricket/) yield 121 calories, 12.9 grams of protein, 5.5 grams of fat, 5.1 grams of carbohydrates, 75.8 milligrams of calcium and all sorts of other nutritional delights. Other insects scoring high in nutritional content include silkworm pupae reaches, bamboo caterpillars, wasps (yes, wasps), Bombay locusts and scarab beetles. Yum.

Even if you’re shaking your head at the prospect of caterpillar casserole or scarab beetle soufflé, the U.N.’s asking us to consider how underutilized insects are as potential food for livestock, or the ways insect consumption could benefit the environment. The original report notes that insects’ feed conversion rate is fairly high (we’d get more for less, in other words), they could be raised on “organic side-streams” like human/animal waste, they emit fewer greenhouse gases and ammonia than [animals](http://topics.time.com/animals/) like cattle and pigs, and they need much less water than the latter.

Still not convinced? Don’t worry, it’s hard to imagine grasshopper goulash showing up in the deli aisle anytime soon, but it sounds like other countries are getting serious by investing in “mass-rearing” systems for insects. The report also argues that “[insects] offer a significant opportunity to merge traditional knowledge and modern science in both developed and developing countries.” It may simply be a matter of time.

Read more: [Fight World Hunger by Eating Bugs, Urges U.N. | TIME.com](http://newsfeed.time.com/2013/05/15/fight-world-hunger-by-eating-bugs-urges-u-n/#ixzz2pvKULAxl) <http://newsfeed.time.com/2013/05/15/fight-world-hunger-by-eating-bugs-urges-u-n/#ixzz2pvKULAxl>