

✖ [This is the sort of thing that gives environmentalism a bad name:](#)

The UN has new weapons to fight hunger, boost nutrition and reduce pollution, and they might be crawling or flying near you right now: edible insects.

The Food and Agriculture Organization on Monday hailed the likes of grasshoppers, ants and other members of the insect world as an underutilized food for people, livestock and pets.

A 200-page report, released at a news conference at the UN agency's Rome headquarters, says 2 billion people worldwide already supplement their diets with insects, which are high in protein and minerals, and have environmental benefits. Insects are "extremely efficient" in converting feed into edible meat, the agency said. On average, they can convert 2kg of feed into 1kg of insect mass. In comparison, cattle require 8 kg of feed to produce a kilo of meat.

Most insects are likely to produce fewer environmentally harmful greenhouse gases, and also feed on human and food waste, compost and animal slurry, with the products being used for agricultural feed, the agency said.

Of course, the FAO recommendation does have a real logic to it environmentally. And from a humanitarian standpoint, it is outrageous to have people starve surrounded by food.

It does raise all kinds of cultural questions: why do we find some putative food disgusting and others not? The French eat snails; the Chinese eat (*inter alia*) jellied duck's blood; the English eat, well, English food. India's former Prime Minister [Morarji Desai famously drank his own urine](#), and lived to the ripe old age of 99 ([maybe he was right!](#)). (Mrs. Gandhi changed all the dishes in the Prime Minister's residence when she succeeded Desai). William Ian Miller's classic [The Anatomy of Disgust](#) spends far more time on sex than on food, which probably says something about Bill (and if you've ever met him he would probably agree!), but the point is that perhaps we overdo these things. It will not do to say that our disgust with some food derives from health benefits, in a sort of evolutionary explanation: many insects are extremely nutritious and healthful. (Of course, it's easy for me to say: no insect is kosher, so I wouldn't have to deal with it.)

Maybe that's the way we get climate deniers on board: move to clean energy, or get ready for *grasshopper a l'orange*.

