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Review

The coming famine

Shortages in land, water, energy, knowledge and technology, combined with population growth and demand for higher-protein diets, will make mid-century food security the biggest challenge humanity has ever faced. In *The Coming Famine*, science writer Julian Cribb has made abundantly clear what has to be done to change our current headlong course into a planetary food crisis.

The comprehensive, well-researched backgrounds to each topic – including the relationship between food security and war, the waste of nutrients vital to agriculture, the problems that climate change and water, oil and land shortages will cause, and the dearth of agricultural research funding – give the reader a good grounding into what is going wrong, and why. The potential technological and governmental solutions to these problems, of which there are many, are also clearly explained.



The Coming Famine
Julian Cribb

CSIRO Publishing
 2010, Paperback
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 Available from www.publish.csiro.au

simple acts such as eating less meat and dairy, reducing waste and educating our children about the value of food are things that everyone can and should do – whether they live in a rural area or a high-rise city apartment – but, they will help to solve our future food crises only if we all take action.

'In the years from 2001 to 2008 the world steadily consumed more grain than it produced, triggering rising prices, growing shortages, and even rationing and famine in poorer countries. The global stockpile of grain shrank from more than a hundred days' supply of food to less than fifty days.' – JULIAN CRIBB, *THE COMING FAMINE*

For this reviewer, the most powerful aspect of the book is the plea straight to the reader to shoulder some of the responsibility and make a difference – rather than hoping naively that governments and scientists will sort it all out for us. The achievable solutions that Cribb provides at the end of each chapter were inspiring in their simplicity, and spell hope for humanity. Basic,

Can we put aside national pride and greed, accept that we are global citizens of planet Earth, and ensure our future food security? Let's hope that we can – in time to avert the worst imaginable food crisis known to humanity. The messages in Cribb's book are essential reading for every politician, food producer and consumer on the planet.

● Kath Kovac