

# One Degree change the planet's future PART 9 health matters REPORT CARD

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## **How you can change**

Buy food produced locally or at least within Australia. Prevent the spread of disease into Australia by declaring products when travelling back into the country. Only take antibiotics when necessary and complete the full course, otherwise bacteria can develop resistance to the drug. Increase the use of hands-free mobile phone kits and use of text messaging to reduce exposure to radiation.

## **Here and now**

The human population has tripled in the past 100 years, the most rapid increase occurring in developing countries. Pollution is contaminating our food from land and sea. Other toxic chemicals are deliberately being used in farming and fishing to help with growth of plants and animals and in harvesting. Organic food is becoming increasingly popular because it spurns the chemicals used in production and minimal impact on the environment. Genetically modified food is being investigated as a potential solution to food shortages and increasingly harsh growing conditions. Diseases, such as avian influenza and foot-and-mouth, are spreading across the world.

## **What we're not doing**

Governments should reconsider targets for population growth and recognize that there are already more people than the planet can sustain. Communities are relying on imported food to meet demand and should aim to become more self-sufficient. Malnutrition and starvation in developing countries continues to be a problem despite the fact the world has enough food to feed everyone. People are not acclimatised to their local environment and have not learned to cope with temperature extremes. Health services struggle to cope with demand at present and are unlikely to be able to handle a major pandemic. The environmental and health implications of discharging effluent and treated wastewater are yet to be understood. There is still much to learn about the effects of radiation from mobile phones and other wireless communications. What we're doing Quarantine and other disease prevention measures have been established at many national borders to prevent infections from spreading between countries.

Farmers are improving their practices to use less water, get higher yields and use less toxic chemicals. State and Federal governments are closely monitoring advances in food technology, such as genetically modified food and food additives, to determine their safety and viability. The Australian Centre for Radiofrequency Bioeffects Research at Swinburne University of Technology is studying the effects of exposure to electro-magnetic radiation. Interphone, a major international study, will compare patterns of mobile phone use to the incidence of brain tumours.

## **Crystal ball**

Science will play a bigger role in food development than nature to improve such aspects as nutritional value and tolerance to weather changes. Climate change will increase the incidence of infectious diseases by allowing mosquitoes to spread beyond their existing range and encouraging water-borne organisms to multiply more rapidly. The world's population will continue to rise with most of the growth in nine countries: India, Pakistan, Nigeria, the Democratic

Republic of Congo, Bangladesh, Uganda, the United States, Ethiopia and China. Up to 15,000 people are expected to die from heatwaves in Australia alone by 2100.

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