

Fertilizers helped food keep pace with population growth but with Faustian bargain?

Most people don't think about fertilizer, but few innovations are as central to modern life. In the 20th century, manmade fertilizer helped avert human catastrophe on a massive scale. With population growth outstripping the food supply, experts predicted millions of people would starve. Fertilizer helped farmers grow more food on less land and feed a growing population, proving the experts wrong. [soil](#) File not found or type unknown

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Some claim fertilizer is a dangerous “fixation” that wrecks the environment. And yet, global population [is expected to near 10 billion people by 2050](#)—that's 2 billion more mouths to feed—so humans will likely need a lot more. Can mankind innovate its way out of a potential disaster?

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Haber and Bosch used natural gas to produce manmade fertilizer. [Norman] Borlaug figured out how to combine manmade fertilizer with genetically modified crops to massively increase agricultural productivity. Today, scientists are developing “[precision agriculture](#)” techniques to further increase crop yields while using fertilizer more efficiently.

Pessimists like Malthus and Ehrlich consider people a self-destructive drain on nature, but as [Jayson] Lusk, the Oklahoma State University agricultural economist sees it, “they underestimated the ability of humans to adapt and innovate and make productive use of the resources we have available.”

The GLP aggregated and excerpted this blog/article to reflect the diversity of news, opinion and analysis. Read full, original post: [Will Humans Run Out of Fertilizer?](#)