

Get your affairs in order now - there's not long left

Scientists say we are running out of food, DICK LUMSDEN believes we should start planning now

I always used to be comfortable believing that the end of the world would never happen in my lifetime - or even in my son's lifetime. Somehow, knowing that if it happened at all, I wouldn't have to worry about what to do in the final minutes was a big weight off my mind.

But now it seems that it could be closer than we thought - and I might even live to see it.

Scientists are now warning that the human race is about to eat itself into extinction, and some have even put a date on it of somewhere round about 2050 - when I could still be catching the 5.25am out of Manningtree as a 94 year old commuter - still waiting for my ever moving state pension.

Warnings that the world is running out of food are nothing new of course. The global warming brigade has been warning of increased famine and pestilence for years.

But this is a whole new ball game - and part of the blame would appear to lie at the feet of the advertising industry.

It seems that global advertising campaigns for well known hamburger brands among others, have changed the appetites of whole nations.

All over the world, people are now demanding meat; confectionary, carbonated drinks, alcohol and processed food in quantities never seen before, all because of the seductive power of advertising.

As billions of people in underdeveloped countries are changing their habits to eat like Westerners, not only are they getting fatter, but the demand they are creating is outstripping supply.

The amount of available farmland in the world is just not



Photos: ABBIE TRAYLER-SMITH/
MICHAEL HALL/
SIMON PARKER



GROW YOUR OWN: The end of the world is nigh. After we've eaten all the animals, grain and pulses on the planet, what will be left for lunch?

takes 20lbs of grain to grow 1lb of edible meat and the maths just don't add up.

Collectively, Americans are still the biggest gluttons by a mile, and their average body mass is rising steadily each year.

A new study has shown that there are now 12 Americans to the ton - compared with, for instance, 19 North Koreans to the ton. But there are a few other nations which are catching the Americans up.

Fat Kuwaitis only squeeze in 13 to the ton and not far behind are Qatar, Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates where you can't move for American branded restaurant chains and coffee shops.

Scientists say that if other countries had the average body mass of the Americans, it would be the equivalent of almost half a

surely, we are eating ourselves into extinction.

But how will we know when it is drawing near? Presumably once we've eaten all the cows and sheep and pigs, the hamburger joints and the fancy restaurants will start closing their doors first, then the supermarkets and local shops will empty their shelves, then we'll be left with eating what's been in the freezer for a year. Then it's down to the pet food... and then the pets...

When all that's gone we'll have to resort to eating grass, or trees. Apparently, according to one Californian study, staving off the inevitable might come down to tree roots.

Assuming we have the strength left to dig, those last few survivors might get a few more months out of the traditional English oaks... but I guess that won't include me at 94, as I doubt I'll have the strength to stick a spade in the ground.

I think word must be getting round about the tree roots though. In the UK, the Forestry Commission has had a bit of a count-up. In their recently published *National Inventory of*

That's roughly 60 trees each if we divided them up equally when everything else runs out. I've got eight trees in my garden now, so I'm starting a planned programme of planting over the next 20 years to make sure I've got my share and there's enough to keep me going just in case.

I need to know what to plant though... I don't want to eat plain tree roots, I want something with a bit of flavour.

Maybe Jamie Oliver and that woman gardener from the *One Show* who always wears sensible shoes should collaborate on a new Christmas book - "Rooting for Food - tasty tubers in under 60 minutes, including digging time".

Look on the bright side though. Once we've eaten everything on the planet, and we've successfully wiped out our own species, at least we'll have solved the pension crisis.

■ Dick Lumsden is Managing Director of Owl Marketing Solutions, a specialist in marketing and advertising to older consumers. If you have any views on this article, or are over 50 and would like to take part occasionally in some gentle