

SE Finance  
HD **Intensify farming to feed the **billions** and avert hunger wars, says banker GLOBAL FOOD FORUM**

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AN international banker has warned the next world catastrophe to be as deeply shocking and widely felt as the Global Financial Crisis will be the looming Global Food Crisis.

Berry Martin, an executive **board** member of Dutch-based Rabobank, predicted that only the ability of the world to respond to steeply escalating food demands practically, democratically and diplomatically will decide if future world wars can be averted or are fought over access to water, land and food.

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He told the annual Outlook conference of the Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences in Canberra, that the only answer to feeding the world's nine **billion** people by 2050 was agricultural intensification.

"We will have to get more crops -- or more meat or **milk** -- from every drop of water and from every hectare of arable land," Mr Martin said.

"That's not what everyone wants to hear and it won't be popular -- because some people worry that is not the way to go and would prefer to be all organic and low intensity (farming) -- but my conscience wouldn't allow that.

"I don't think it is an option to produce less food in the future, not more, and to have hundreds of **millions** of people go hungry, so the only way forward is greater intensification of agriculture and to increase the efficiency and productivity of our farms."

But, contrary to other futurists, Mr Martin believes the key factor in how much more food the world needs to produce by 2050 is not a matter of population growth alone, but more about income and meat-eating preference.

If **China** -- which will have most of the 2 **billion** more people predicted to be living by 2050 -- adopts American and Australian habits of people eating between 100-120 kilograms of meat a year as their affluence and purchasing power increases, Mr Martin warns keeping up with global food demand will be difficult.

The average mainland **Chinese** person consumes about 40kg of meat -- mainly pork and chicken -- annually, although their better-off **Hong Kong** compatriots eat 80kg a year.

"If all mainland **Chinese** decide to double their meat consumption, the world will have a big problem," Mr Martin warned.

"We would have to increase agricultural production worldwide by between 1.7 and 2.5 per cent annually to meet that (doubled) demand by 2050; the big question then is can we do that?"

In the past 50 years, Australia's agricultural productivity increased by 2.5 per cent a year to 2000. But since 2000, it has slowed to a mere 0.8 per cent growth, worrying farmers and politicians alike.

Mr Marttin said a key question was how much arable land remained available to produce such vast amounts of food.

Significantly, for the first time in history, accelerated global urbanisation combined with population growth has resulted in less farmland being available per capita to produce food, rather than the continued expansion of productive agricultural land as has historically been the case.

“This is the game-changer; for the first time we are now losing (farm) land,” Mr Marttin said. “In 2000 there was 1.4 hectares of arable land available for food production for every person (the most in history) but it started to decline from 2003 as urbanisation grew faster.

“If there is just 0.5 hectares for every person available to grow food by 2050 (as trends indicate), the big question remains can we feed all the world sustainably.”

Mr Marttin said that with no more arable land available in Asia, countries like Australia and Canada sat in perfect positions to take advantage of the so-called food boom.

“What an opportunity; Australia has more arable land per head of population of all the countries in the world and you are close to Asia,” Mr Marttin said.

“I think I will **buy** a farm in Australia.”

<b>CO</b>	aubare : Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences
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