

We might yelp when we see them. Might even squish them to be rid of them. But few of us catch and eat them!

With an increased desire to find alternative sustainable food and feed sources, researchers at the [University of Nottingham](#) are exploring the huge nutritional opportunity insects present. Generally, insects have high levels of animal protein and key micronutrients with lower environmental footprints compared to other alternatives. The idea is that insects can even be raised on our leftovers!

Even though, nutritionally, adding insects to our menus makes sense, it is the issue of convincing people to eat them. Cultural, social, and economic norms produce a number of problems that need to be overcome before this plan can be moved forward.

Published in [Nutrition Bulletin](#), Darja Dobermann, a doctoral researcher in entomophagy at the University of Nottingham and Rothamsted Research said, “insects present a nutritional opportunity, but it is unclear how their nutritional quality is influenced by what they are fed.”

She continued saying, “in ideal conditions, insects have a smaller environmental impact than more traditional Western forms of animal protein; less known is how to scale up insect production while maintaining these environmental benefits.”

The paper pointed out how insects have been a source of food for hundreds of years in more than 100 countries with over 2,000 edible species. Up to 50% of dietary protein in central Africa comes from insects, with their market value higher than many alternative sources of animal protein.

“Studies overall show that insects could make valuable economic and nutritional

contributions to the food and feed systems, but there are no clear regulations in place to bring insects into such supply systems without them turning into a more expensive version of poultry for food, or soya for feed,” says Dobermann.

Insects might have a high nutritional aspect, however, economically it only makes sense to catch the ones large enough to be worthwhile to eat and locate and in large quantities. This is currently the criteria for the most popularly eaten insect species. Beetles (Coleoptera) make up 31% of the market, while caterpillars (Lepidoptera) result in 18% of the market. Rounding up the group of edible insects worth eating are bees, wasps, and ants (Hymenoptera, 14%); grasshoppers, locusts, and crickets (Orthoptera, 13%); cicadas, leaf-hoppers, plant-hoppers, scale insects, and true bugs (Hemiptera, 10%); termites (Isoptera, 3%); dragonflies (Odonata, 3%); and flies (Diptera, 2%).

These tasty bugs can be eaten as raw, fried, boiled, roasted, or ground food. Feeling hungry yet?

References

Dobermann et al, Opportunities and hurdles of edible insects for food and feed, *Nutrition Bulletin* (2017). DOI: 10.1111/nbu.12291

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Summary



Article Name

Add Some Crunch to Your Lunch- SCIENCE UNFILTERED

Description

Researchers at University of Nottingham explored the nutritional opportunity insects present as the search for alternative sustainable food and feed sources