

Earth now a 'poisoned planet'

NEW YORK, USA, February 7, 2017 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Humans emit more than 250 billion tonnes of chemical substances a year, in a toxic avalanche that is harming people and life everywhere on the planet - and is many times larger even than our climate emissions.

"Earth, and all life on it, are being saturated with human-sourced chemicals in an event unlike anything in the planet's entire history," says Julian Cribb, author of '[Surviving the 21st Century](#)' (Springer International 2017).

"Every moment of our lives we are exposed to thousands of these substances. They enter our bodies with each breath, meal or drink we take, the clothes and cosmetics we wear, the things we encounter every day in our homes, workplaces and travel.

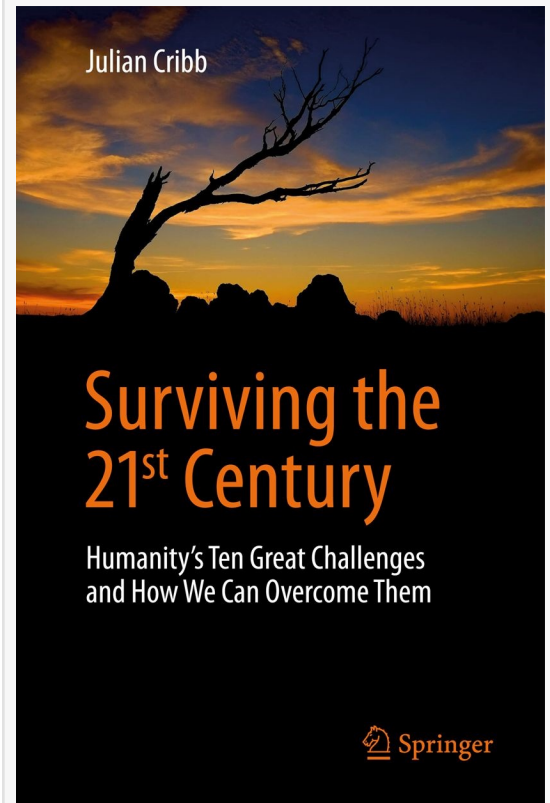
Mr Cribb says that the poisoning of the planet through man-made chemical emissions is probably our largest impact as a species – and the one that is least understood or regulated. It is one of ten major existential risks now confronting humanity which he describes in *Surviving the 21st Century*.

"The European Chemicals agency estimates there are more than 144,000 man-made chemicals in existence. The US Department of Health estimates 2000 new chemicals are being released every year. The UN Environment Program warns most of these have never been screened for human health safety. However by far the largest parts of the chemical flood are the unintended emissions we discharge as waste," he says.

"The [World Health Organisation](#) estimates that 12 million people – one in 4 – die every year from diseases caused by 'air water and soil pollution, chemical exposures, climate change and ultraviolet radiation', all of which result from human activity."

Examples of the toxic avalanche include:

- Manufactured chemicals – 30 million tonnes a year
- Plastic pollution of oceans – 8mt/yr
- Hazardous waste – 400 mt/yr
- Coal, oil, gas etc – 15 gigatonnes (billion tonnes) a year
- Lost soil – 75 Gt/yr
- Metals and materials – 75 Gt/yr
- Mining and mineral wastes - <200 Gt/yr
- Water (mostly contaminated with above wastes) – 9 trillion tonnes a year.



Surviving the 21st century is a powerful new book on solutions for humanity's bioggests threats.

“Industrial toxins are now routinely found in new-born babies, in [mother's milk](#), in the food chain, in domestic drinking water worldwide. They have been detected from the peak of Mt Everest (where the snow is too polluted to drink) to the depths of the oceans, from the hearts of our cities to the remotest islands.

“The mercury found in the fish we eat, and in polar bears in the Arctic, is fallout from the burning of coal, and increases every year.

“There is global concern at the death of honeybees from agricultural pesticides and the potential impact on the world food supply, as well as on all insect life - and on the birds, frogs and fish which in turn depend on insects.”

Mr Cribb says an issue of chemical contamination largely been overlooked by governments and corporations is that chemicals act in combination, occur in mixtures and undergo constant change. “A given chemical may not occur in toxic amounts in one place – but combined with thousands of other chemicals it may contribute a much larger risk to the health and safety of the whole population and the environment.”

Medical science is increasingly linking issues such as obesity, cancers, heart disease and brain disorders such as autism, ADHD and depression to the growing volume of toxic substances to which humans are exposed daily.

“Despite attempts to regulate chemical use, only 21 out of 144,000 chemicals have so far been banned. In countries such as the United States, attempts are apparently under way to roll back chemical regulation, exposing the population to ever-greater health risks.”

Mr Cribb says solutions to the threat of global poisoning exist, but require the co-operation of consumers, government and industry worldwide.

“First, we need a new Human Right – a right not to be poisoned. This is something all our ancestors enjoyed. Without such a Right, there will never again be a day in history when humans are free from man-made poisons.

“Second we need a global alliance of consumers who will reject toxic products or products made with toxic processes – and give industry the economic incentive to switch to ‘green chemistry’ and other safer systems.

“Our communities need to adopt ‘zero waste’, where nothing is discarded but all substances are re-used and toxic ones made safe.”

“People need to understand that these poisons are only released because we as consumers send our dollar demands to industry to make things as cheaply as possible. This takes no account of the damage to human life and health. So we are all, in a sense, getting away with murder.

“If consumers demand safe, healthy, green products and are willing to pay industry a little more to make them safely, we can cleanse our planet within a generation.

“We all end up paying chemical toxicity one way or another. It's a simple choice – pay at the supermarket, or pay at the hospice.”

Surviving the 21st Century describes what humanity as a whole must do, and what individuals can do to turn back the toxic tide and address all ten of the existential threats we face.

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