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Gene food inevitable

AUSTRALIANS have been told they will need to embrace genetically modified foods as the world faces an uphill struggle to feed its growing population.

On World Food Day, the Federal Government said the world would have to produce 70 per cent more food by the year 2050, with the population expected to rise to 9.1 billion.

The days of people rejecting biotechnology and genetically modified food production were numbered, Agriculture Minister Tony Burke said.

"On the face of it, it's an impossible equation," he said.

"The only way we can meet what the world will demand is by following every possible path of scientific research."

"I don't see how anyone can mount a moral argument against genetically modified food when we're facing these sorts of projections on global hunger."

The warning came as the country's big food companies said they were meeting the challenges of climate change and impending food shortages.

The Australian Food and Grocery Council has just released a report outlining the conservation steps major

producers such as Coca-Cola and Kraft have been taking.

Many have implemented big environmental targets such as reducing water or energy consumption, and beginning to measure the size of their own carbon footprint.

The shift was basically important should the industry remain viable into the future, the council's chief executive Kate Carnell said.

"I'd like to see the Australian food industry being at the absolute forefront of being clean, green, affordable, sustainable, because that's our market niche," she said.

"We want to be the most sustainable, the best quality, with the best labelling.

"We want Chinese parents to know that if they give their kids Australian-made food, that they know exactly what's in it, and it's sustainable and good.

The Towards Sustainability report showed Australia's food industry used about 1 per cent of the country's water and produced about 2 per cent of its greenhouse gas emissions.

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