Use of excreta in agriculture is a century-old practice. Its role as an important component of urban waste management has now been recognized. Also, human waste use contributes to securing food supplies for expanding cities. Infection risks have been identified and are controllable.

Fact File

**Rationale and practice of excreta use**

Urban excreta supplies organic material for soil humification (not provided by chemical fertilizers) and nutrients for plant growth. Therefore there is a potentially strong economic and nutrient risk between excreta producers and farmers.

**A health risk**

No,
If one or more of the following transmission barriers are used:
- Waste treatment
- Restricting certain crops (e.g., raw-eaten vegetable)
- Food and personal hygiene

Yes, if excreta is used untreated. Risks are then highest for farmers and their families, lower for consumers. Worm infections are of major concern.

**Nutrient Potential of human excreta**

Food energy equivalent to 220 kg cereals per year is necessary to cover human requirement. With our excreta we can grow nearly enough to feed ourselves.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nutrient</th>
<th>In urine</th>
<th>In faeces</th>
<th>Total in excreta</th>
<th>Required for 220 kg cereals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N (nitrogen)</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P (phosphorus)</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K (potassium)</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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