



State of the World 2013: Is Sustainability Still Possible?

By The Worldwatch Institute, Erik Assadourian

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Every day, we are presented with a range of “sustainable” products and activities—from “green” cleaning supplies to carbon offsets—but with so much labeled as “sustainable,” the term has become essentially *sustainababble*, at best indicating a practice or product slightly less damaging than the conventional alternative. Is it time to abandon the concept altogether, or can we find an accurate way to measure sustainability? If so, how can we achieve it? And if not, how can we best prepare for the coming ecological decline?

In the latest edition of Worldwatch Institute’s *State of the World* series, scientists, policy experts, and thought leaders tackle these questions, attempting to restore meaning to sustainability as more than just a marketing tool. In *State of the World 2013: Is Sustainability Still Possible?*, experts define clear sustainability metrics and examine various policies and perspectives, including geoengineering, corporate transformation, and changes in agricultural policy, that could put us on the path to prosperity without diminishing the well-being of future generations. If these approaches fall short, the final chapters explore ways to prepare for drastic environmental change and resource depletion, such as strengthening democracy and societal resilience, protecting cultural heritage, and dealing with increased conflict and migration flows.

State of the World 2013 cuts through the rhetoric surrounding sustainability, offering a broad and realistic look at how close we are to fulfilling it today and which practices and policies will steer us in the right direction. This book will be especially useful for policymakers, environmental nonprofits, and students of environmental studies, sustainability, or economics.

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Editorial Review

Review

"*State of the World 2013* is a powerful collection of articles, and the vision behind it is impressive. Here is a book that gets beyond 'sustainababble' and asks the tough, essential questions. It should make readers more determined than ever to do their part in avoiding planet-wide disaster—and better informed about how to do that."

(Peter Singer *Professor of Bioethics, Princeton University, and author of Animal Liberation*)

"This edition forges a new path for the [*State of the World*] series, and for environmental thinking in general.... A pivotal book that marks a defining moment for our species."

(Richard Heinberg, Senior Fellow Post Carbon Institute; author of "The End of Growth" and "The Party's Over")

"*State of the World 2013* cuts through the rhetoric surrounding sustainability, providing a broad and realistic look at how close we are to achieving it and outlining practices and policies that can steer us in the right direction.... A must read for those seeking authentic sustainability."

(Hunter Lovins *President of Natural Capital Solutions and author of Climate Capitalism*)

"This is a book of hope for a world in profound crisis. It gives honest assessments of the enormous challenges we face, and points us toward institutional and cultural changes that are proportional to our dire situation. *State of the World 2013* reaffirms that we are not helpless, but that we have real choices, and that transformation is both possible and desirable."

(Reverend Peter S. Sawtell *Executive Director, Eco-Justice Ministries*)

"*State of the World 2013* cuts through 'sustainababble' with crisp coverage that puts the news of the year in context and provides an expert survey of today's and tomorrow's big issues. It's a perennial resource for everyone concerned about our common future."

(Karen Christensen *publisher of Berkshire Encyclopedia of Sustainability*)

"Every elected official in the world needs to read this book. Mass denial is no longer an option. An 'all hands on deck' approach to transforming our culture and economy is the only path to a safe, resilient future. This book is the blueprint for that safe path forward."

(Betsy Taylor *President, Breakthrough Strategies & Solutions and Founder, Center for a New American Dream*)

"...there is definitely something in this book for everyone. Easy to read, and understand..."

(*Eco-Libris*)

"The last section's suggestions for preparing for global environmental disaster will drive home the importance of adopting sustainability measures immediately. The book features a wealth of b&w photos and summary tables throughout, including a photo-illustrated one-year timeline."

(*Reference & Research Book News*)

"This important book is masterfully written by 52 collaborators with exhaustive expert knowledge of a wide

sweep of disciplines. The contributions are knit together with fine editorial control... This book should be required reading for every incoming class of college students and a selection for community reading groups everywhere."

(*CHOICE*)

"I am a big fan of the *State of the World* series and this is my favourite volume so far....it covers topics of crucial importance today...a comprehensive reference for teachers, researchers, consultants and policy and planning specialists whose work touches on environmental sustainability—and a great text for students whose studies cover that area."

(*Australasian Journal of Environmental Management*)

"On the strength of its comprehensive reach and insights, *State of the World 2013* should be of considerable interest to both newer and older audiences."

(*Anthem EnviroExperts Review*)

"Its global focus is a strength in drawing out the trends and interrelationships among worldwide environmental events and their impact on all the systems that human populations depend on."

(*Against the Current*)

"*State of the World 2013* assembles the wisdom and clarity of some of the Earth's finest thinkers, visionaries, and activists into a dazzling array of topics that merge to offer a compellingly lucid and accessible vision of where we are—and what is the wisest and healthiest course for the future."

(Nina Simons *co-founder, Bioneers*)

About the Author

Founded in 1974 by farmer and economist Lester Brown, Worldwatch was the first independent research institute devoted to the analysis of global environmental concerns. Worldwatch quickly became recognized by opinion leaders around the world for its accessible, fact-based analysis of critical global issues. Now under the leadership of population expert and author Robert Engelman, Worldwatch develops innovative solutions to intractable problems, emphasizing a blend of government leadership, private sector enterprise, and citizen action that can make a sustainable future a reality.

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