

25th Anniversary Edition

2008

STATE OF THE WORLD

Innovations for a Sustainable Economy

THE WORLDWATCH INSTITUTE

On its 25th anniversary, State of the World 2008 suggests that something big, perhaps even revolutionary, is struggling to emerge as policymakers, business leaders, investors, and the public build the framework for sustainable economies. State of the World 2008 is the first global publication to present a wide range of diverse innovations and demonstrate the near-term potential to guide entire societies toward sustainability. This edition includes chapters on renewable energy, clean production innovations, common resources, trade policy, finance for sustainability, new economic indicators, and other topics. All these innovations share a common thread: a rethinking of key economic assumptions and business practices to create economies that meet people's needs while protecting the planet.

Excerpt from the Prologue

The State of the World 2008 report demonstrates that the planet and all its inhabitants face considerable environmental challenges. The path to a sustainable economy is fraught with difficulties, from the accumulation of greenhouse gas emissions in the atmosphere to water scarcity and a whole host of pollution and natural resource management issues. But there are hopeful signs... Most notably, there has been a radical shift in business attitudes toward the environment in recent years.

As society confronts a wide range of pollution control and natural resource management problems, committing significant resources to solve them, major market opportunities will emerge for those who can provide solutions. The State of the World 2008 report highlights the importance of innovation, outlining the next steps that the business world, the political community, and each of us must take to pave the way toward a world of sustainable economies.

Daniel C. Esty, Professor of Environmental Law and Policy, Yale University
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“The most comprehensive, up-to-date, and accessible summaries... on the global environment.”

E. O. Wilson, Pulitzer Prize winner

“A premier annual publication on sustainable development.”

GlobeScan Survey of Sustainability Experts

In Colombia, the community of Las Gaviotas exemplifies participation in a much more ambitious restoration project. Built on degraded savanna, its inhabitants set out to restore the forest across an 8,000-hectare area. In addition to providing the community with food and marketable products, the land currently absorbs 144,000 tons of carbon annually and will continue to do so as the forest grows. The effort made by the community has been impressive, but their plan for the coming decades is even more ambitious: they hope to reforest three million more hectares with the help of other communities, which would be enough to absorb a quarter of Colombia's annual carbon emissions.