



## **Nourishing the Planet: Evaluating Environmentally Sustainable Solutions to Reduce Global Hunger and Rural Poverty**

*A Worldwatch Institute project supported by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation*



Agricultural development has come to a crossroads. Nearly a half-century after the Green Revolution—the first systematic, large-scale attempt to reduce poverty and hunger throughout the world—a large share of the human family is still chronically hungry. At the same time, investments in agricultural development by governments, international lenders, and foundations are at historic lows.

The timing couldn't be worse, as a complexity of demographic, economic, and natural forces all conspire to make the challenge of reducing hunger that much more difficult. These include soaring petroleum and food prices as well as climate change and persistent unfair trade agreements. Still, the current crisis offers a window of opportunity for refocusing the world's attention on food, agriculture, and rural areas and for reestablishing food security as a global priority. As more decision makers and funders shift resources back toward agricultural development in coming years, they have a gaping need for guidance.

In recent decades, a new generation of innovative approaches to hunger alleviation has emerged from farmers groups, private voluntary organizations, universities, and agribusiness companies. Many of these approaches offer useful models for larger-scale efforts. There is growing evidence that combinations of approaches (such as conventional practices paired with agroecological approaches or input-driven methods that also protect natural resources) are often more effective in terms of productivity, income generation, and resilience.

The Nourishing the Planet project will assess the state of agricultural innovations—from cropping methods to irrigation technology to agricultural policy—with an emphasis on sustainability, diversity, and ecosystem health, as well as productivity. The



project aims to both inform global efforts to eradicate hunger and raise the profile of these efforts. The project will also consider the institutional infrastructure needed by each of the approaches analyzed, suggesting what sort of companion investments are likely to determine success—from local seed banks to processing facilities, from pro-poor value chains to marketing bureaus.

The project will culminate in the release of *State of the World 2011*, a comprehensive report that will focus on agriculture and will be accompanied by derivative briefing documents, summaries, videos, and podcasts. This volume will be a roadmap for foundations and international donors interested in supporting the most effective agricultural development interventions in various agroecological and socioeconomic contexts. The project's findings will be disseminated to a wide range of influential agricultural stakeholders, including government ministries, agricultural policymakers, farmer and community networks, and the increasingly influential non-governmental environmental and development communities.

Emphasizing on the ground research, project co-director, Danielle Nierenberg, is currently traveling throughout sub-Saharan Africa to meet with farmers, farmers groups, local government representatives, funders, and NGO's. You can follow her research and the resulting conversations on the Nourishing the Planet blog:

<http://blogs.worldwatch.org/nourishingtheplanet>