

MONDAY, APRIL 22, 2013

Green book review for Earth Day - State of the World 2013: Is Sustainability Still Possible?

Happy Earth Day!! Just in time for this special day we have a review of a book that not only provides us an update on the state of the world in 2013, but also tries to tackle some of the most urgent issues brought up on this day, including one that we might not like to ask but definitely have to - is sustainably still possible?

Our book for today is:

State of the World 2013: Is Sustainability Still Possible? by the Worldwatch Institute (publisher: Island Press)

What this book is about?

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.

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.

Our review:

This was a huge collaboration between authors, with 50+ contributors, idea people, and editors involved in getting it put together. Quite the project let me tell you.

So, what is sustainability? In laymen's terms it's simply the capacity to endure. As to ecology it's how biological systems can remain diverse and productive over time. As to us humans, it is the potential for long-term maintenance of well-being, which has several dimensions, to wit: ecological, economic, political and cultural. Pretty simple right? Wrong. Oh it could be a simple matter, but thanks to humans and our very nature, sustainability is very complicated.

In this 2013 edition of Worldwatch Institute's State of the World series, the collaborating authors (scientists, policy experts, and more) explain sustainability and how we can make it work and thrive in this world we live in today. There is a huge amount of information provided. Some good, some a little hinky, but lots of great information to get you thinking.

One simple idea was on how we should be protecting the Sanctity of Native Foods (Chapter 18). Something as easy as getting back to the basics and cooking the real food, not the processed fake food we can easily purchase and quickly prepare. Real food, cooked in its natural way with spice and flare. This chapter was so informative and interesting. The author, Melissa K. Nelson, does a fantastic job of keeping you excited about the concept. She gives not just the heritage information but also the health benefits, the origins, and history of the foods as well.

Another section I enjoyed was in Chapter 5, Sustaining Freshwater and Its Dependents, written by Sandra Postel. The basic lessons of the amount of water on the earth for consumption I found to be very informative. This chapter really hit the mark regarding some of the water issues of the world today. You think of Earth, the planet of water, and it's so easy to forget that only so much of it is actually drinkable and usable. Oceans after all are salty. As the author says: Water is finite. Without it, there is no water to drink, there is no food to grow, which then means there is no society, and how long do we last without food and water and society? Makes all the garbage and toxins and simple CO2 that we put into the water, seem a bit more criminal now. Very good chapter. Very good writing by the author.

Some of the chapters will hit home more depending on the person reading and what matters most to them, but there is definitely something in this book for everyone. Easy to read, and understand, all the authors did a fantastic job in that regard. Plenty of information and sources to back it up, and the best part, an index!

You can purchase the [book on Amazon.com](#) (both e-book and hardcover formats are available).

Happy Earth Day!

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POSTED BY RAZ GODELNIK AT 11:55 AM

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