



中国与世界，环境危机大家谈 WHERE CHINA AND THE WORLD DISCUSS THE ENVIRONMENT

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## “State of the World 2011”

Twenty-seven years on from its first *State of the World* report, the Worldwatch Institute is still measuring global progress toward a sustainable society in an annual volume of policy-oriented interdisciplinary research. Appropriately, the 2011 edition focuses on sub-Saharan Africa, where small farmers are drawing on ancient cultural wisdom and new technologies to produce abundant food without devastating local soils or the global ecosystem.

Worldwatch’s “Nourishing the Planet” team studied – and have spread the word about -- African farmers’ successes in areas such as drip irrigation, rooftop gardening, agroforestry and soil protection. Innovation, writes [Worldwatch](#) president Christopher Flavin, is taking place in some of the world’s poorest communities – and “may have a greater impact on people and the planet than most high-tech innovation does”.

Rapid and productive change is possible, Flavin argues, by empowering small farmers – particularly women – with simple but transformative innovations. The progress they make can bring the world nearer to the UN millennium development [goal of halving world hunger](#) by 2015.

Hunger is not the only problem, of course. In many areas, the earth is approaching the limits of arable land and water, so rising agricultural productivity – “more crop per drop” -- is increasingly important. Agriculture today, being heavily dependent on fossil fuels, both contributes to global warming and also is at severe risk from it. Without cheap oil to replace degraded renewable resources, Flavin notes, “innovations such as using green cover crops as natural fertiliser or locally produced biofuels as a substitute for diesel fuel are so exciting”.

Many of the agricultural innovations explored in [State of the World 2011](#), says Worldwatch, can help reverse damage done to water and soils through food production, as well as to the ecosystem services that everyone depends on. Amid the challenges that lie ahead, wise implementation of appropriate technology, knowledge and skills can produce myriad benefits for Africa. These include protecting freshwater supplies, safeguarding local food biodiversity, restoring fisheries, adapting to climate change and improving human health.

“Nourishing people and nourishing the planet are now as inextricably linked as they are essential to our future,” Flavin writes. With more systematic and radical thinking about the future of the world’s food network, “agriculture may once again become the centre of human innovation – and the goals of ending hunger and creating a sustainable world will be a little closer than they are today.” And certainly closer than they were when that first *State of the World* report was published in 1984.

***State of the World 2011 – Innovations That Nourish the Planet***  
**Worldwatch Institute**  
**Earthscan, 2011**

-- By Maryann Bird, *associate editor of chinadialogue*.