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## **SUSTAINABILITY EXPERT: COPENHAGEN LOST IN TRIVIA**

**Lester Brown, founder of both the prestigious Earth Policy Institute and the ground-breaking WorldWatch Institute, launched his latest book ‘Plan B 4.0’ at a lecture hosted by Compassion in World Farming in London yesterday, Thursday 29 October 2009. Brown urged governments at the Copenhagen summit to focus on food security to save civilisation from decline.**

Launching his book *‘Plan B 4.0: Mobilizing to Save Civilization’*, Brown said: “It is interesting to see the discussions leading up to Copenhagen. The discussions have become lost in trivia, not recognising that what we should be doing there is talking about how to cut carbon emissions fast and save the mountain glaciers. Instead, we are concerned over who will concede what and who will pay for what. We have lost sight of the main issues. The COP15 conference should be a food security conference”.

“Growing world food insecurity is ushering in a new geopolitics of food scarcity, one where the competition for land and water resources is crossing national boundaries.”

“Since it takes years to negotiate and ratify these agreements, we may simply run out of time. This is not to say that we should not participate in the negotiations and work hard to get the best possible result. But we should not rely on these agreements to save civilization.”

At Compassion in World Farming’s Peter Roberts Memorial Lecture, Lester Brown called on individuals to reduce their meat and dairy consumption to fight climate change:

“Although we seldom consider the climate effect of various dietary options, they are substantial, to say the least. The Toyota Prius, for instance, uses roughly one fourth as much fuel as a Chevrolet Suburban SUV. Similarly with diets, a plantbased diet requires roughly one fourth as much energy as a diet rich in red meat. Shifting from the latter to a plant-based diet cuts greenhouse gas emissions almost as much as shifting from a

Suburban to a Prius would. This is where Compassion in World Farming plays a role. Because if in the affluent countries, we can move down the food chain, we can save energy, land and water”

Falling water tables, over-pumping for irrigation and a surge in water demand for food production are also a concern for Brown: “We cannot escape the water intensity of food production. Worldwide, we drink on average close to 4 litres of water per day, either directly or in coffee, juice, soda, wine, and other beverages. But it takes 2,000 litres of water to produce the food we consume each day—500 times as much as we drink. In effect, we “eat” 2,000 liters of water each day.”

Compassion in World Farming’s Ambassador, Joyce D’Silva, commented: “Intensive animal production is a very wasteful way of using land, energy and water. If you think that eating a steak is the equivalent of taking 51 showers, it’s easy to see why we should all consider reducing our meat consumption. The amount of water needed to produce 1 Kilogram of beef is more that what a person needs in a whole year. Factory farming is inefficient, unsustainable and inhumane.”

According to Brown, we are in a race between political tipping points and natural tipping points. “Can we cut carbon emissions fast enough to save the Greenland ice sheet and avoid the resulting rise in sea level? Can we close coal-fired power plants fast enough to save at least the larger glaciers in the Himalayas and on the Tibetan Plateau? Can we stabilize population by lowering fertility before nature takes over and halts population growth by raising mortality? Yes,” affirmed Brown. “But it will take something close to a wartime mobilization, one similar to that of the United States in 1942 as it restructured its industrial economy in a matter of months. We used to talk about saving the planet, but it is civilization itself that is now at risk.

“Saving civilization is not a spectator sport. Each of us must push for rapid change. And we must be armed with a plan outlining the changes needed.

“It is decision time,” said Brown. “Like earlier civilizations that got into environmental trouble, we have to make a choice. We can stay with business as usual and watch our economy decline and our civilization unravel, or we can adopt Plan B and be the generation that mobilizes to save civilization. Our generation will make the decision, but it will affect life on earth for all generations to come.”

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## Notes to the editor

### Event details

#### Peter Roberts Memorial Lecture

## HOW CAN WE FEED THE WORLD AND PROTECT THE ENVIRONMENT?

### Thursday 29 October 2009 at 19.30, Savoy Place, London, WC2R 0BL

Lester Brown's talk was followed by an expert panel discussion. Panellists included **Dr Jimmy Smith, Team Leader – Livestock at the World Bank**, Andrea Gavinelli, Head of the Animal Welfare unit established by the **European Commission's** DG Sanco, **Peter Melchett**, Policy Director of the Soil Association and **Joyce D'Silva**, expert in farm animal welfare issues and **Ambassador for Compassion in World Farming**.

The Lecture is named in honour of the charity's founder, a dairy farmer. Since 1967 Compassion in World Farming has campaigned for an end to factory farming for the benefit of animals, people and planet. Previous Peter Roberts Memorial Lectures were given in 2008 and 2007. The 2008 lecture was given by Dr Rajendra Pachauri, Chair of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, joint winner of the 2007 Nobel Peace Prize. The 2007 lecture was given by John Mackey, CEO of Whole Foods Market.

#### Lester Brown

- Lester Brown presented his latest book **Plan B 4.0: Mobilizing to Save Civilization** on the **29<sup>th</sup> October** in London at the Peter Roberts Memorial Lecture
- Plan B 4.0 is the latest update of Lester Brown's blueprint for avoiding catastrophic climate change and can be downloaded at [http://www.earth-policy.org/images/uploads/book\\_files/pb4book.pdf](http://www.earth-policy.org/images/uploads/book_files/pb4book.pdf)

#### Water usage in beef production

- 15500 litres of water are needed to produce 1kg of beef, so a 300g steak would use 4650 L of water.  
A low flow output shower head (DEFRA recommendation) uses 9 l/min, a ten minute shower would use 90 litres of water.  $4650/90 = 51.67$   
So for an economical shower head, you could have 51 showers in place of a 300g portion of beef.
- Basic water requirement **per person per year** is **18,250 litres** (Liu J. and Savenije H. 2008). Water requirement to produce **1kg meat** can be **up to 20,000 litres** (Lunqvist J. et al. 2008 (SIWI)).
- For further information on the climate impact of factory farming see Compassion in World Farming's latest report "Beyond Factory Farming - Sustainable Solutions for Animals, People and the Planet" available on [www.ciwf.org/beyondfactoryfarming](http://www.ciwf.org/beyondfactoryfarming)
- Listen to the podcast of Lester's lecture: [www.ciwf.org/fm](http://www.ciwf.org/fm)

**For further information or to arrange interviews contact Valentina Moressa on 01483 521952 or 07771 926005 (out of office hours) or email [valentina@ciwf.org](mailto:valentina@ciwf.org)**