



PRESS RELEASE

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Western economic model “will not work for China”, Earth Policy Institute tells CIES Summit

Lester Brown, founder and president of environmental lobby Earth Policy Institute, today told more than 800 retail leaders that China’s economic growth would lead to a collapse of economic and environmental support systems.

Addressing the 51st World Food Business Summit in Shanghai, China, Mr. Brown told the CEOs and senior management of the world’s largest retailers and their suppliers that the “American Dream” was already out of reach for China and India.

“Our global civilization today is on an economic path that is environmentally unsustainable, a path that is leading to economic decline and eventual collapse. If China’s economy continues to expand at 8% a year, its income per person will reach US levels in 2031. If at that point China’s per capita resource consumption were the same as in the United States today, then it’s projected 1.45 billion people would consume two thirds of the world grain harvest. Its paper consumption would double the world’s current production. There go the world’s forests,” Brown told the Summit.

Oil consumption would also exceed current world production levels, he added. “The western economic model – the fossil-fuel-based, auto-centered, throwaway economy - is not going to work for China. If it does not work for China, it will not work for India, which by 2031 is projected to have a population even larger than China’s. Nor will it work for the three billion other people in developing countries who are also dreaming the American Dream.”

Mr. Brown said that a new economy founded on sustainable energy was imperative, in order to reverse economic decline and restore the Earth’s natural systems. “One way or another, the decision will be made by our generation. Of that there is little doubt. But it will affect life on Earth for all generations to come.”

NOTES FOR EDITORS: Mr. Brown's remarks follow six months of high-profile environmental initiatives by international grocery retailers. Since December 2006, Wal-Mart, Tesco, Marks & Spencer, among others, have announced multi-million-dollar investments in sustainable technologies, including energy and waste reduction.

ABOUT CIES: The Food Business Forum is the only independent global food business network. It serves the CEOs and senior management of nearly 400 members, in over 150 countries, with retailers being the largest single group. Providing a platform for knowledge-exchange, thought-leadership and networking, CIES has been growing with the food business for over 50 years. Its strength lies in the active commitment of its member companies and its privileged access to key industry players which allows the organisation to facilitate the development of common positions and tools on key strategic and practical issues affecting the food business.

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