



What Do Food Systems Designed for the Challenges of 21st Century Look Like?

John Williams

Commissioner, Natural Resources Commission, NSW

And Member the Wentworth Group of Concerned Scientists

As world population continues to expand, projected demand for food will require agricultural and fisheries production to double over the next fifty years. This means harvesting food each year for an additional 70 million people, which is equivalent to the total food production of Australia.

Whilst it is a huge call for food production to be increased substantially, the more demanding challenge is to make these huge increases while decreasing detrimental impacts on natural resources and the environment.

This is a time of rising costs for energy and diminishing supplies of essential nutrients such as phosphorus within a spectre of climate change.

To avoid a global food crisis without further damage to the environment, we need:

- Substantial reform to the operation of agricultural and natural resources sciences;
- Major injection of both national and international investment into agriculture and fisheries food production distribution and marketing;
- Reform of markets and regulations to ensure cost of food includes the costs to natural resources and environment;
- Orientate to a more market-based system of production, distribution and consumption of food;

This urgent need to give priority attention to food production, whilst maintaining the quality of the resource base from which it is produced, is perhaps one of the greatest scientific challenges ahead and certainly one that has apparently slipped from our gaze.