

Signposts to Overshoot

World grain production per person peaked in 1985 at 343 kilograms per person. Average world grain production during the first five years of the new millennium was 306 kilograms per person, a decrease of over 10%.

World per capita oil production peaked in 1979. Since 1979 world population has increased more rapidly than oil production and per capita consumption of oil has decreased by an average of more than 1% annually.

In 2004 the world produced 30.5 billion barrels of oil but discovered only 7.5 billion barrels of new oil.

The concentration of CO₂ in the atmosphere in January 2006 was 381 parts per million, not only far above any level over the past 740,000 years but nearing a level not seen for 55 million years. At that time the earth was a tropical planet with no polar ice, and sea level was 80 meters above today's level.

Globally, species are now becoming extinct at 1,000 times the rate at which new species evolve. We are now in the early stage of the sixth great extinction.

During very recent years the life expectancy among the 750 million people living in sub-Saharan Africa has dropped from 61 to 48 years. Life expectancy among countries is now wider than at any time in history, ranging from a low of 33 for Swaziland to a high of 82 for Japan and Iceland.

The social and economic gap between the world's richest one billion people and its poorest one billion has no historical precedent.