



Can Earth's and Society's Systems Meet the Needs of 10 Billion People?: Summary of a Workshop

Maureen Mellody, Board on Environmental Change and Society, Committee on Population, Division of Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education, Board on Life Sciences, Division on Earth and Life Studies, National Research Council

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The Earth's population, currently 7.2 billion, is expected to rise at a rapid rate over the next 40 years. Current projections state that the Earth will need to support 9.6 billion people by the year 2050, a figure that climbs to nearly 11 billion by the year 2100. At the same time, most people envision a future Earth with a greater average standard of living than we currently have - and, as a result, greater consumption of our planetary resources. How do we prepare our planet for a future population of 10 billion? How can this population growth be achieved in a manner that is sustainable from an economic, social, and environmental perspective?

Can Earth's and Society's Systems Meet the Needs of 10 Billion People? is the summary of a multi-disciplinary workshop convened by the National Academies in October 2013 to explore how to increase the world's population to 10 billion in a sustainable way while simultaneously increasing the well-being and standard of living for that population. This report examines key issues in the science of sustainability that are related to overall human population size, population growth, aging populations, migration toward cities, differential consumption, and land use change, by different subpopulations, as viewed through the lenses of both social and natural science.

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