

## EDITORIAL: On environment, innovation beating conservation

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growing tree / love nature

[image](#)

Many scientists and environmentalists say human beings are destroying the planet. They cite global warming as definitive proof. They say things are getting worse and that unless we change our ways, we're all doomed.

This is nothing new. These "experts" and their allies have been making doomsday predictions for decades. They've warned us about overpopulation. They've told us we're rapidly depleting our natural resources. They've told us we're going to face mass starvation and, as a result, economic collapse, war and eventual extinction. And before global warming was the biggest threat to Earth, experts told us that global cooling would be our downfall.

Of course, the problem with these predictions is that none of them have come true. On the contrary, the exact opposite has been true. Human ingenuity has given us access to more natural resources, our economies have grown and we're producing more food than ever before. Technological advances are steadily reducing the human population's impact on the environment.

Bloomberg columnist Justin Fox points out that the past 200 years have seen considerable "trade-offs between

development and the environment," with the environment usually coming out on the losing end. However, Fox cites research by the Breakthrough Institute, a California-based environmental think tank, that indicates that the human race may very well reach "peak impact" — a breaking of the link between economic and population growth and resource use — before the end of this century. The institute says that, over the long run, technological innovation trumps conservation efforts when it comes to reducing environmental impact, and the institute recommends numerous strategies that could accelerate the arrival of peak impact.

Breakthrough argues that organic farming requires an excessive amount of land and resources, and that the continued spread of high-tech, high-yield agriculture — which is essential for shrinking the environmental footprint of food production — should be encouraged instead. They say the production of corn- and sugarcane-based biofuels — once championed by environmentalists — is far more hazardous for the environment than drilling for oil, and the institute advocates for hydroelectric dams, which can reduce dependence on fossil fuels and wood for energy.

And speaking of wood, Fox points out that as coal replaced wood as heating fuel, and as rising agricultural productivity reduced the need for farmland, trees began to repopulate areas where they were cleared. In fact, reforestation has now surpassed deforestation in so many areas across the globe that, like other resources, we may be closing in on peak demand for wood, as well.

Radical environmentalists remain devoted to outmoded — and, in some cases, dangerous — ideas because, in many cases, they had a large hand in creating and promoting them. It is important to keep in mind, however, that when the next doomsday prediction comes from the greens — especially any forecasts of cataclysmic climate change — we should all take it with a ton of salt.

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