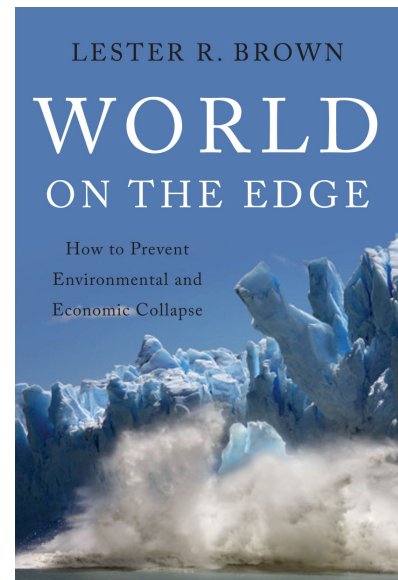


WORLD ON THE EDGE: Quick Facts

We are facing issues of near-overwhelming complexity and unprecedented urgency. Can we think systemically and fashion policies accordingly? Can we change direction before we go over the edge? Here are a few of the many facts from the book to consider:

- There will be [219,000 people at the dinner table tonight who were not there last night](#)—many of them with empty plates.
- If the 2010 heat wave centered in Moscow had instead been centered in Chicago, it could easily have reduced the [U.S. grain harvest of 400 million tons by 40 percent](#) and food prices would have soared.
- Winter temperatures in the Arctic, including Alaska, western Canada, and eastern Russia, have [climbed by 4–7 degrees Fahrenheit over the last half-century](#). This record rise in temperature in the Arctic region could lead to changes in climate patterns that will affect the entire planet.
- Half the world’s people live in countries where water tables are falling as aquifers are being depleted. Since [70 percent of world water use is for irrigation](#), water shortages translate into food shortages.
- In Sana’a, the capital of Yemen—home to 2 million people—[water tables are falling fast](#). Tap water is available only once every 4 days; in Taiz, a smaller city to the south, it is once every 20 days.
- [Virtually all of the top 20 countries considered to be “failing states”](#) are depleting their natural assets—forests, grasslands, soils, and aquifers—to sustain their rapidly growing populations.
- The indirect costs of gasoline, including climate change, treatment of respiratory illnesses, and military protection, [add up to \\$12 per gallon](#). Adding this to the U.S. average of \$3 per gallon brings the true market price closer to \$15 per gallon.
- Between 2007 and 2010, U.S. coal use dropped 8 percent. During the same period, [300 new wind farms came online](#), adding 21,000 megawatts of U.S. wind-generating capacity.
- Algeria has enough harnessable solar energy in its vast desert to [power the entire world economy](#).
- One of the quickest ways to cut carbon emissions is to change light bulbs. Switching to more-efficient lighting around the globe could [save enough energy to close more than 700 of the world’s 2,800 coal-fired power plants](#).



"We can get rid of hunger, illiteracy, disease, and poverty, and we can restore the earth's soils, forests, and fisheries. We can build a global community where the basic needs of all people are satisfied—a world that will allow us to think of ourselves as civilized." –Lester R. Brown

World on the Edge: How to Prevent Environmental and Economic Collapse is available online for free downloading at www.earth-policy.org/books/wote.