

INNOVATION PATHWAYS TO SUSTAINABILITY

Distinguished Lecturers Series

Prof. Ruth DeFries

“NATURE’S SECRET FOR NAVIGATING UNCERTAIN TIMES”

January 26, 14 h CET, Zoom

Abstract:

In the last year, the covid pandemic and historic fires have exposed humanity’s inabilities to effectively manage shocks. Innovations that make society more resilient to shocks is a key aspect of sustainability. Nature has persisted through unpredictable disease, asteroids, and extinctions and survived for billions of years. These strategies and their lessons for human societies, highlighted in the recently published book “What Would Nature Do?”, include: investments in diversity; redundancy in civilization’s transport and trade networks; bottom-up decisions rather than top-down impositions from authorities; and self-regulating feedbacks that stem cascading failures. These strategies run counter to the efficiency paradigm that dominates development decisions, but they could help prepare society for an uncertain world. The talk will provide two examples of these strategies based on the author’s research: diversity of cereals in India for climate resilience and the benefits and perils for feeding humanity through the global food trade network.

About the speaker:

Ruth DeFries is a professor of ecology and sustainable development at Columbia University in New York. Her research uses images from satellites and field surveys to examine how the world’s demands for food and other resources are changing land use throughout the tropics and the effects on climate, biodiversity and other ecosystem services, and human well-being. DeFries is a member of the U.S. National Academy of Sciences, received a MacArthur “genius” award, and is the recipient of many other honors for her scientific research. In addition to over 100 scientific papers, books for popular audiences include “The Big Ratchet: How Humanity Thrives in the Face of Natural Crisis” and “What Would Nature Do?: A Guide for Our Uncertain Times”.

Registration for the event: <https://www.uni-bonn.de/forschung/forschungsprofil/innovation-und-technologie-fuer-eine-nachhaltige-zukunft/registration>

The lecture is held via Zoom and will be recorded and published afterwards. The Zoom access data will be sent to those registered a few days prior to the lecture.

About the Lecture Series

The lecture series on Innovation Pathways to Sustainability is a forum for high profile and internationally visible scientists who are active in academia or at the science-policy interface. The lectures address an interdisciplinary audience of experts from natural, social, and engineering sciences as well as representatives from international and implementation-oriented organizations.

Save the date for the next lecture:

- February 17, 15 h CET, Prof. Sebastian Bauhoff

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