

@ Emergent Futures | New Around the World | What Are We Writing About

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*Welcome to the July edition of What's Emerging.*

*For subscribers who may not know the team at Emergent Futures and are wondering who all the people below are, Paul and Sandy are core consultants, Samantha is our co-founder, Syed is our research assistant and Kim is our office manager. We also have a wide network of associates that we work with from time to time. We are in the process of adding more details on our team to our website so you will be able to check out the mugshots soon!*

*This month we have an article on how biofuels may impact on all of us along with plenty of our usual thought provoking links. We hope you enjoy this month's edition.*

*Cheers*

*Paul Higgins, Sandy Teagle, Syed Ahmed Muqthar, Kim Stewart and Samantha Kyle-Little*



## Business Tips

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### Climate change information

For those that want simple clear information on climate change issues the New Scientist has assembled a set of links and information.

### New style video conferencing

HP has released a new video conferencing system using hi speed internet exchanges and large scale screens. The system is expensive – costing US\$425,000 to set up and between US\$18,000 and US\$25,000 a month to run. However when you cost a board meeting at \$750 a participant plus the costs of travel time, paying \$5000 for a 10 person meeting does not look so bad. We are sure the costs will fall and supplying dedicated shared services will reduce the costs significantly.

### Using the Power of Crowds

Many people are looking at using crowds and communities to build their businesses and make better decisions. This podcast is an interview with Craig Newmark, founder and "customer service rep" of Craigslist.com. The interviewer, Jon Spector, is a co-author with Barry Libert of the Wharton School Publishing book, [We Are Smarter Than Me: How to Unleash the Power of Crowds in Your Business](#).



## What's Emerging

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### **Predicting success**

Media Predict is a website where people register to bet on various media predictions such as the success of a new show. The site is taking one of the theories of the internet into practice - that crowds are better predictors of outcomes than individuals or experts.

### **What the world eats**

A fascinating view of what people around the world eat, these images capture families with a week's supply of food. Interesting to compare levels of processed goods to fresh and weekly budgets – and how much we eat compared to others!

### **The ampere strikes back**

A report from the British Energy Saving Trust says that gadgets will use almost 50% of electricity in British homes in 2020.

### **Nanotechnology for brain implants**

Thanks to the application of recent advances in nanotechnology to the nervous system, a novel generation of neuro-implantable devices is on the horizon, capable of restoring function loss as a result of neuronal damage or altered circuit function. The field will very soon be mature enough to explore in vivo neural implants in animal models.

### **Longevity pill tested in humans**

A drug called SRT501 is being tested on humans for effects on diabetes related diseases. It also has the potential to extend a healthy life span. If the product works in this way then it has huge implications for demographics, population numbers, retirement ages, etc.

### **Robotic farmer**

A robot that can identify and eliminate weeds in crops is being developed in Denmark. It is hoped these darliks of the farming world will help reduce herbicide use, soil compaction and labour shortages.

### **Plastic from sugar**

Researchers at Pacific North West Laboratory claim to have made a major breakthrough in the production of plastics from plant material instead of fossil fuels. They have managed to create much higher yields of a chemical called HMF from glucose and fructose, significantly reducing acid impurities in the final product. Another building block in the bioeconomy model.

### **I think I can**

Hitachi have produced a system where you can move a toy train by thinking. The brain-machine interface is a technology called optical topography, which sends a small amount of infrared light through the brain's surface to map out changes in blood flow. Companies are racing to make commercial applications from this sort of technology.

### **Factspotter**

IBM will launch a semantic based web search engine next year which promises searches that return information based on what you are really searching for as opposed to just the words.

### **Patented life**

Scientists at the J. Craig Venter Institute have applied for a U.S. patent on a minimal bacterial genome that they built themselves. According to the patent application, it's "a minimal set of protein-coding genes which provides the information required for replication of a free-living organism in a rich bacterial culture medium."

### **Phone virus arrest**

SPANISH police have arrested a 28-year-old man on suspicion of creating and spreading a virus that affected more than 115,000 high-end mobile phones. A portent of things to come as mobile phones become more and more sophisticated.

### **Cellulose ethanol news**

U. S. Department of Energy (DOE) Secretary Samuel W. Bodman today announced that DOE will invest up to \$375 million in three new Bioenergy Research Centers that will be located in Oak Ridge, Tennessee; Madison, Wisconsin; and near Berkeley, California. The Centers are intended to accelerate basic research.

### **Eco markets for farmers**

Farmers in Jamestown, R.I., are being paid by local residents to delay haying their fields until after birds have completed nesting in a unique test to establish investment markets for ecological services.

### **Virtual philanthropists**

The MacArthur Foundation, a leader in building the field of digital media and learning, is exploring how to be helpful in advancing the use of virtual worlds for social benefit. The foundation is spending money on how virtual worlds can advance philanthropy.

### **Renewable energy and regional development**

A national conference planned for 16-18 September in Bendigo, Victoria, will be looking at regional opportunities from demand for renewable power sources.



## What We Are Writing About

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### **Hidden Biofuels Menace: Higher Prices, Interest Rates**

This month we had an article published in the The Age which looks at the potential for biofuels to cause a significant rise in inflation through impact on prices for food and other products. Click on the link above to download it from our website.