

# DIET FOR A NEW AMERICA

## by John Robbins ; A Book Review

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Every caring person should read DIET FOR A NEW AMERICA. It may just prove to be the most important book of this generation. If you're concerned about the environment, the ethical treatment of animals, maintaining good health, and the kind of world we'll leave our children, this is a book to track down and read.



It is estimated that if Americans reduced their meat consumption just ten percent, it would free over twelve million tons of grain yearly—enough to adequately feed every one of the sixty million human beings who will starve to death on the planet this year. You see, as Robbins points out, for every sixteen pounds of grain and soybeans fed to cattle, we get back only one pound of meat. The other fifteen pounds ends up as mostly manure. (Amazingly, the livestock of the U.S. produce twenty times the excrement of the entire human population of this country!) And to produce one pound of meat it takes up to one hundred times more water than it does to produce one pound of wheat. The cost of all this: water and grain is subsidized by the federal government; in other words, the taxpayer bears the costs. If it weren't subsidized, Robbins calculates the cheapest

hamburger meat would cost thirty-five dollars a pound.

The Meat Importers Council reports that of the meat which is imported, ninety percent is from Central and Latin America. Robbins' research discloses that most of this meat goes to fast food restaurants for hamburgers but at what environmental cost? The South American rain forests are being obliterated so that

American can have burgers. These same rain forests contain 80% of the earth's vegetation which

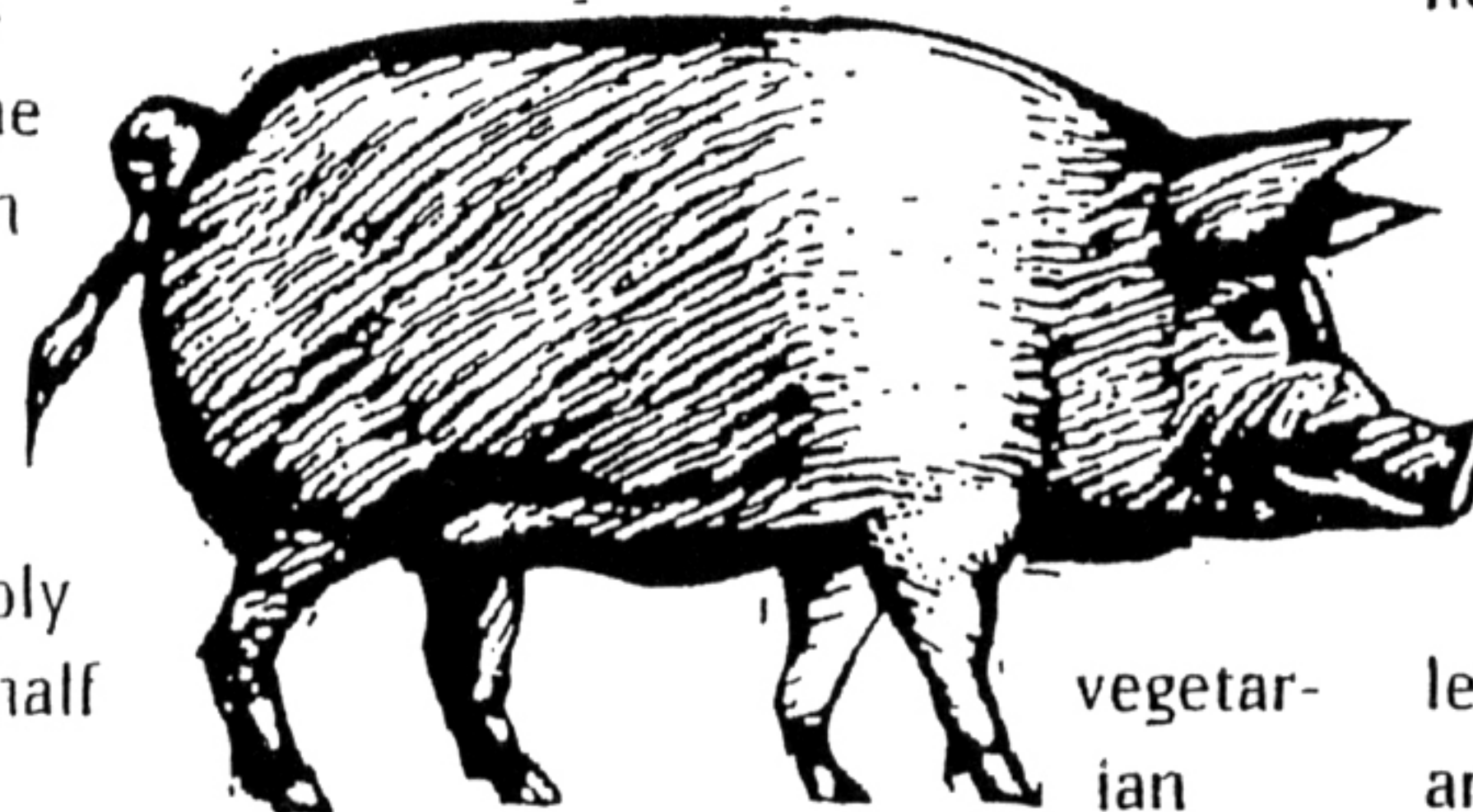
provide a substantial percentage of our oxygen supply and are home to over one half of all the species on Earth.

The current rate of species extinction is one thousand species a year, and most of that is due to the destruction of the rain forests. Robbins states that in our own country "approximately two hundred sixty million acres of forest have been converted into land now needed to produce the wasteful diets most of us take for granted." At the rate we are going, the United States will be stripped bare of its forests in fifty years. However, for every person who



switches to a pure vegetarian diet, an acre of trees is spared every year. Robbins suggests that adopting a vegetarian diet is probably the single most potent act any individual can take in the effort to halt the destruction of our environment and preserve precious natural resources.

Robbins also makes a strong case for the nutritional sense of switching to a



vegetarian

diet. He cites study after study which shows that meat and dairy consumption gives us excess fat, cholesterol and protein, and zero fiber. He goes on to describe the overwhelming evidence correlating meat and dairy product consumption with heart disease, strokes, arteriosclerosis, ulcers, osteoporosis, kidney stones, intestinal disorders, cancer, and the list goes on. Even the American Medical Association stated, "A vegetarian diet can prevent 97% of our coronary occlusions." Yet, the meat and dairy industries go to great lengths and spend millions of dollars on advertising and consumer "education" to downplay the risks.

You may ask, "If what Robbins says is true, why hasn't my doctor made any of these recommenda-

tions?" A recent Senate investigation revealed that the average physician in the U.S. received less than three hours of nutrition training during his or her four years in medical school. It's possible that your doctor doesn't know the facts. For the first time in history, says Robbins, we can make food choices which will dramatically improve the health of our cardiovascular system, prevent heart disease and strokes, and at the same time, reduce suffering in the world.

Robbins goes on to explain that few of us are aware of what animals experience in the factory farms that are now prevalent in the U.S. The slaughter of animals is big business, and it's done as inexpensively as possible. For example, many slaughterhouses don't bother to stun their animals before death because of the savings to the processors, which amounts to a single penny per animal! The quicker animals can be made bigger and fatter (through genetics, hormones, light deprivation and other cruel techniques), the happier the producers are. For example, the fact that a pig's bones are literally crumbling beneath him from weight they were never meant to bear is immaterial to the "pork" producers. Robbins reveals that many animals are crowded together in cages so tightly they can barely move and are driven insane. From birth on they are treated like merchandise—"anyone treating a dog or cat the way these animals are being treated would be arrested."

The great majority of farm animals are fed diets laced with antibiotics and chemicals. Does this practice improve their health? Government reports stated that over 90% of chickens examined have cancer, and 80% of pigs have pneumonia at slaughter time. To develop white, tender flesh, baby veal calves are confined and fed a diet purposefully designed to make them anemic. The value of these animals is gauged by weight, not health. Robbins also points out that the toxic substances and suffering in the animals may be passed on to the humans who eat their flesh.

Robbins' compelling research convinced me that the practice of meat and dairy overproduction is killing our water, stealing our air and natural resources, and costing the consumer every inch of the way. John Robbins' book, Diet For A New America, has deeply involved me from cover to cover, touching me to the very core of my being. It is a beautifully and lovingly written account of the interconnectedness of all things, and as this is a mere skimming of the facts, I fervently hope you have the courage to read this most important book.

Chief Seattle, as quoted in the book, sums up the essence of John Robbins' message: "...man must treat the beasts of this land as his brothers. For whatever happens to the beasts soon happens to man. All things are connected."

