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Book Review: Six Arguments for a Greener Diet

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Six Arguments for a Greener Diet.

Jacobson MJ, and the Staff of the Center for Science in the Public Interest, 2006. Center for Science in the Public Interest, 1875 Connecticut Avenue, NW, #300, Washington, DC 20009, paperback, 234 pp, \$14.95, ISBN 0-89329-049-1.

Six Arguments for a Greener Diet analyzes the multitudinous and far reaching effects of livestock production and consumption. Diet-related diseases account for hundreds of thousands of premature deaths each year, and these authors argue their views on the contribution of animal food products to these statistics. Consuming large quantities of animal products has inevitable environmental consequences. Among the questions this book seeks to answer are "What is the cost to the environment of raising so many food animals?" and "What is the cost to our bodies of eating them?" The book also asks, "What is the cost to the animals?"

Six Arguments for a Greener Diet provides a description of the links among the typical Western diet and its cause and effect relationship with environmental and health issues. This thought-provoking book critically examines the health, environmental, and animal welfare consequences of raising and consuming animal products. Six Arguments for a Greener Diet is divided into 3 main segments: the context, the 6 arguments, and methods for making change, both at the individual and governmental levels. This book may be appealing to many readers because it not only presents some convincing data to support the arguments, but it also gives the reader some approaches to changing one's own food habits toward a greener diet. Two appendices, one focusing on foodborne pathogens and the other on Internet resources, are included, as well.

Six Arguments for a Greener Diet is factual, well documented, and current. Forty pages of notes and references are included at the end of this book to justify arguments and points in all chapters. The overall premise of the text is one-sided; the authors' argument is that a largely plant-based diet is preferred for a multitude of reasons. The reasons, or arguments, include: less chronic disease and better overall health; less foodborne illness; better soil; more and cleaner water; cleaner air; and less animal suffering. The authors argue one side to this controversy, with no support given to the other side of the issue, but this is purposely done. However, the arguments are well justified and based on the statistics provided. Numerous tables and graphs are included to support the authors' positions.

This book would appeal both to supporters of this viewpoint and to others who may want to understand the "eating green" viewpoint. It is definitely geared toward health professionals, those interested in policy for agriculture and food production, or those who have interest in the fairly technical data and its interpretation. As the book is written at the 12.8 grade level, it might not be suitable for the general public.

However, the book is well organized with a logical format. A separate definition section is included and helpful.

Six Arguments for a Greener Diet is an interesting read, informative, and thought provoking. The authors' first argument is that a greener diet will result in less chronic disease and better overall health. This argument provides the reader with studies conducted on vegetarians, Seventh-day Adventists, and followers of a "prudent" diet, DASH diet, and Mediterranean diets. The findings support the authors' contention that diets rich in meat and dairy products increase the risk for such chronic diseases as hypertension, heart disease, and cancer. In the chapter on "Changing Your Diet," readers will find 2 healthy diets that are easy to follow and that promote the greener diet philosophy. The authors suggest eating more vegetables, fruits, beans, whole grains, and healthy oils, plus eating modest amounts of fish along with some fat-free or low-fat meat and dairy products; thus, the greener approach is not necessarily a vegetarian diet.

The authors, Dr. Michael Jacobson and the staff of the Center for Science in the Public Interest, promote safe and nutritious diets that protect public health and the environment. Dr. Jacobson is a highly respected critic for reform of the food industry who has successfully campaigned for laws requiring nutrition facts on packaged food products. The JNEB reader will find this book a good read because it is a well-written dissertation on the philosophy to eat lower on the food chain for both health and environmental reasons. Additionally, *Six Arguments for a Greener Diet* provides nutrition educators and scholars ample fuel for discussing these current issues.

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