

Dear Editor:

As a vegetarian for 15 years, I found it ironic and unfortunate that Linda Eyster and Jay Tashiro characterized vegetarianism as a topic that deals with essential items in short supply (Using Manipulatives To Teach Quantitative Concepts in Ecology: A Hands-On Method for Detecting & Correcting Misconceptions About Limiting Factors in Eutrophication & Vegetarianism, *ABT*, June 1997). Indeed, it does, but for different reasons than the authors suggest.

The writers perpetuate the old myth that vegetarians must be "careful" if they are to get enough of the eight essential amino acids required by, but not produced in, the human body. This myth is founded on studies of rats (which have different nutritional requirements than do humans) done six decades ago. The reality for humans is that a minimally varied vegetarian diet provides ample quantities of the essential amino acids (Havala & Dwyer 1988). To suggest otherwise is unscien-

tific and detrimental to the image of biology teachers.

Indeed, it is an excess of protein, not a lack of it, that sends so many Americans to the hospital and the grave with such maladies as heart disease, stroke, and osteoporosis. The notably conservative Dietary Guidelines for Americans, issued jointly by the Departments of Agriculture and Health and Human Services, now recognize the vegetarian diet as "meeting the Recommended Dietary Allowances for nutrients," and acknowledge that vegetarians "enjoy excellent health."

The irony is that meat-centered diets put arable land in short supply by using it to grow feed for livestock and not food for humans. Cycling plants through animals to produce meat is an inefficient way to feed humans. The Council for Agricultural Science and Technology estimates that the planet can sustain billions more humans on a vegetarian diet as on a meat-based one (CAST 1994).

As a topic with important ecological,

health, ethical, and economic implications, vegetarianism deserves inclusion in the biology curriculum. But to stigmatize it as being nutritionally problematic is antiquated and erroneous, and does a disservice to students drawn to it for any number of valid reasons.

Jonathan Balcombe, Ph.D.
Vice President

The Vegetarian Society of the District of Columbia
P.O. Box 4921
Washington, DC 20008

References

Council for Agricultural Science and Technology. (1994). *Growing Population May Need Less, Not More, Land to Feed Itself in Fifty Years*. News Release March 4, 1994. Ames, IA. 2 pp.
Havala, S. & Dwyer, J. (1988). Position of The American Dietetic Association: Vegetarian diets—technical support paper. *Journal of The American Dietetic Association*, 88, 352–355.

Downloaded from <http://online.ucpress.edu/abt/article-pdf/59/8/470/48223/4450360.pdf> by guest on 05 December 2020

THANK YOU...

NABT salutes the following organizations for their continued support:

ORGANIZATIONAL MEMBERS

- American Society for Microbiology, Washington, DC
- Andrew Jackson High School, Jacksonville, FL
- Baldwin High School, Baldwin, FL
- CT United for Research Excellence, Farmington, CT
- Costa Rica Rainforest Outward Bound School, Quepos
- Cynmar Corporation, Carlinville, IL
- D Anderson School of the Arts, Jacksonville, FL
- Dept. of Def. Dependent Schools, International
- Englewood High School, Jacksonville, FL
- First Coast High School, Jacksonville, FL
- Fletcher High School, Neptune Beach, FL
- Forest High School, Jacksonville, FL
- Harvard College Observatory, Cambridge, MA
- Huntington Botanical Gardens, San Marino, CA
- Kansas City Museum, Kansas City, MO
- Karin Bosgh, Madison, WI
- Nashua Sr. High School, Nashua, NH
- Newman Preparatory School, Boston, MA
- Optical Data Corporation, Atlanta, GA
- Raines High School, Jacksonville, FL
- Randolph Northside Skills Cntr, Jacksonville, FL
- Ribault High School, Jacksonville, FL
- Robert E. Lee High School, Jacksonville, FL
- Sparta High School, Sparta, NJ
- St. Peters College, Jersey City, NJ
- Terry Parker High School, Jacksonville, FL
- The Colorado College, Colorado Springs, CO

SUSTAINING MEMBERS

- Benjamin/Cummings, Reading, MA
- Carolina Biological Supply Co., Burlington, NC
- Connecticut Valley Biological, Southampton, MA
- EDVOTEK, Inc., West Bethesda, MD
- FOTODYNE Inc., Hartland, WI
- Lab-Line Instruments, Inc., Melrose Park, IL
- Nasco, Inc., Fort Atkinson, WI
- Peregrine Publishers, Wakefield, MA
- Prentice Hall, Upper Saddle River, NJ
- South-Western Science, Cincinnati, OH
- Sargent-Welch/VWR, Buffalo Grove, IL
- Vernier Software, Portland, OR
- Ward's Natural Science Est., Rochester, NY

FOR INFORMATION ON BECOMING A
SUSTAINING OR ORGANIZATIONAL
MEMBER, CALL NABT AT
(703) 471-1134.