

The Sustainability Secret: Rethinking Our Diet to Transform the World

By Kip Andersen and Keegan Kuhn, November 2015

Book Review: Dale Lugenbehl, American Vegan, Winter 2016, Volume 16, Number 1, page 7.

This book is just out, and is a follow up to the sensational documentary *Cowspiracy*, also created by Kip Andersen and Keegan Kuhn. For anyone who cares at all about the environment and climate change, this book is absolutely **MUST** reading. It is by far the best book on these two issues that I've seen, and unquestionably climate change needs to be our very top priority as a species.

The book is extremely clear, well written and engaging, and very well researched. The authors do a compelling job of establishing that animal agriculture is *by far the single biggest force* causing planet-threatening climate change, deforestation, rainforest destruction, unsustainable water consumption and pollution, habitat loss, species extinction, ocean dead-zones, and topsoil erosion.

The Prologue and Chapter 1 of the book (12 pages total) contain Kip's thoughts about, and his interviews with, various environmental organizations from the early part of *Cowspiracy*. The remaining 10 chapters of the book contain huge amounts of excellent information that is not in the video. Even if you already have the video, it is still very much worth having the book.

Many of us have wondered why one environmental organization after another has had essentially nothing to say about the role animal agriculture has to play in environmental problems, even though there is a mountain of research implicating it. So Kip Andersen set out to interview representatives and former officials from Greenpeace, Sierra Club, Rain Forest Action Network and many others to find out "*Why?*" and the book contains numerous transcripts from those interviews. What Andersen finds out is fascinating and provides a startlingly revealing and insightful perspective on these organizations and their operation.

The authors' material about greenhouse gases is one important section among many. Essentially, we have been encouraged to put all of our focus on reducing carbon dioxide emissions. Yet methane is 86 *times* more potent than carbon dioxide in causing the greenhouse effect, and nitrous oxide is 296 *times* more potent. Globally, the digestive tracts of cattle alone produce 150 *billion* gallons of methane *per day*, and 65% of all atmospheric nitrous oxide emissions come from animal agriculture, primarily from manure.

Additionally, methane breaks down in the atmosphere 5 to 10 times faster than carbon dioxide, so drastically reducing methane emissions can dramatically reverse the greenhouse effect in 10 to 20 years, as compared to the roughly 100 years it would take for us to see results from drastically reducing carbon dioxide production. According to a World Watch study, *animal agriculture accounts for 51% of*

the human-created greenhouse effect which threatens all life on our planet. Yet all we hear about is carbon dioxide.

Each chapter contains equally powerful revelations. Have you ever wondered about the claim that grass-fed beef is better for the environment? Andersen and Kuhn report research that shows that grass-fed beef is actually *considerably worse* for the environment than factory farmed beef.

There are excellent chapters on water, factory farms, oceans, rainforests and biodiversity, corporate and government obstacles to progress, dairy and eggs, health, veganic agriculture, and changing the world.

The book contains many enlightening interviews with Howard Lyman, Richard Oppenlander, Michael Pollan, Michael Klaper, Will Tuttle and others who have come to see animal agriculture as at the center of the most pressing problems threatening the world today.

The material presented in this book is extremely valuable and accessible both for people new to the ethics of an herbivore diet and to people who are lifetime vegans. This book, as well as the documentary video *Cowspiracy* which preceded it in 2014 (available from cowspiracy.com), come with the highest possible recommendation.

---Reviewed by Dale Lugenbehl, *American Vegan* Environmental Editor.