



SPINNING FOOD

HOW FOOD INDUSTRY FRONT GROUPS
AND COVERT COMMUNICATIONS
ARE SHAPING THE STORY OF FOOD

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Friends of
the Earth



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Executive Summary

How do we know if our food is safe? How are the chemicals used to produce our food impacting our health and the environment? How can journalists reporting on these issues know when their sources are accurate?

Consumers are asking more questions about how their food was grown and raised, and demanding more transparency, as a growing body of science has linked food additives and chemicals used in food production to problems ranging from cancer to bee declines.

These concerns are helping to spur record growth in organic and non-GMO food, which is in turn prompting major brands from Cheerios to Similac to Chipotle to reformulate their products. It's all part of a trend that one food industry veteran recently described in *Fortune* magazine as “the most dynamic, disruptive, and transformational time” he has seen in his 37-year career.

“Major packaged-food companies lost \$4 billion in market share alone last year, as shoppers swerved to fresh and organic alternatives,” wrote journalist Beth Kowitt in her *Fortune* article.¹

In this climate of market disruption, it is getting increasingly difficult to sort fact from fiction in media coverage about our food system. One reason: A particular segment of the food industry — we refer to it here as the industrial food and agriculture sector, including biotech, agrochemical, pharmaceutical and agribusiness companies, as well as industrial livestock producers — is spending hundreds of millions of dollars to manipulate the public conversation about our food.

Rather than responding to changing market demands by shifting the way they do business, these companies are trying to preserve market share and win key policy battles by using “tobacco-style” PR tactics.

In this report, we show how the industrial food sector is using its deep pockets and new tools to shape media coverage of our food system — often without the public or policymakers realizing the story is being carefully crafted. While the food industry's use of public relations to shape popular opinion and policy making is not new, the level of spending, the increase in the use of front groups

to promote industry messages and the deployment of covert social media tactics to spin the story of food is unprecedented.

The growth in food industry public relations “spin” is in direct response to consumer concerns about harmful chemicals in food and the negative impacts of chemical-intensive agriculture and factory farming on public health and the environment. As demand for organic food and GMO-free products has grown, so has the backlash from an agricultural industry that is losing consumer confidence and facing pressure for more transparency and regulatory safeguards.

As this report shows, these corporations and their allies are spending massive amounts of money on stealth communications campaigns that are designed to stall the growth of the organic sector, promote chemical-intensive industrial agriculture, and sway opinion leaders and policymakers on policy decisions affecting our food system. With the future of our food at stake, it is critical to raise awareness about the coordinated messages and covert communication tactics being used by this vast marketing machine.

Key Findings:

The industrial food and agricultural sector spent hundreds of millions of dollars from 2009 to 2013 on communications efforts to spin the media, drive consumer behavior and advance its policy agenda. Spending includes:

- \$126 million spent by 14 food industry front groups that often appear in the media as independent sources but are funded by and serve the interests of the industrial food sector. Six of these front groups have launched just since 2011 (See Annex 4).
- These include groups like the U.S. Farmers and Rancher's Alliance, whose partners include Monsanto, DuPont, Dow and Syngenta; and the Coalition for Safe and Affordable Food, created by the Grocery Manufacturer's Association to fight GMO labeling.
- More than \$600 million spent by four major trade associations — CropLife America, BIO, Grocery Manufacturers Association, and the

American Meat Institute — that promote and defend the agendas of pesticide, biotech and conventional food corporations (including but not limited to PR activities) (See Annex 3).

- Tens of millions of dollars a year on communications campaigns by the federal check-off programs for beef, corn, soybeans and dairy; as well as hundreds of millions more spent to market companies and products in this sector. For example, in 2013 Monsanto alone spent \$95 million on marketing.²

While this is not a complete tally of spending by all the industry front groups, trade associations, industry PR firms or companies shaping the public conversation about food and influencing policy, these figures attempt to convey the scope and scale of such communications activity.

Key Tactics

The food industry is deploying a host of covert communication tactics to shape public opinion without most people realizing the stories are being shaped behind the scenes to promote corporate interests. This report focuses on just six of these tactics:

- Deploying front groups who appear to be independent, but are in fact made up of industry or PR professionals to promote their messages with consumers and the media;
- Targeting female audiences by trying to co-opt female bloggers, elevating female spokespeople and promoting messages to disparage “organic moms” as elitist bullies;
- Infiltrating social media and creating seemingly independent social media engagement platforms, such as GMO Answers, that are in fact run by industry PR firms;
- Attacking the credibility of scientists, advocates, consumers and journalists who raise concerns about industrial food production’s methods and impacts;
- Partnering with prominent media venues on “native advertising” disguised as real news content that promotes industry messages;
- Using third-party allies to foster an echo

chamber of carefully crafted talking points to frame the story of food in favor of chemical intensive industrial food production.



Monsanto's ad in Oprah's O Magazine was pulled after thousands signed a petition urging Oprah to remove the ad. Source: www.foodintegritynow.com (2015)

We created this guide to help reporters, policy-makers, opinion leaders and the public know when sources and “experts” are more focused on promoting corporate interests and messaging than

Our aim is to shed light on how the industrial food and agriculture sector is manipulating public discourse in order to defuse public concern about the real risks of chemical-intensive industrial agriculture and undermine public awareness of the benefits of organic food and diversified, ecological production systems. Our goal is to encourage journalists, opinion leaders and the public to bring increased scrutiny to industry's messages and messengers.

ensuring a healthy, safe, sustainable and transparent food system. Our aim is to shed light on how the industrial food and agriculture sector is trying to manipulate public discourse in order to defuse concerns about the real risks of chemical-intensive industrial agriculture and undermine public confidence in the benefits of organic food and diversified, ecological production systems. We hope this report helps bring increased scrutiny to the food industry's messages and messengers.

Although advocates and educated consumers — backed by powerful new research on the benefits of organic food and farming and the risks of chemical intensive agriculture — are using the tools of social media and organizing to push back against this propaganda, they lack the vast financial re-

sources of industry. Left unchecked, the recent growth in industry-sponsored spin, misinformation and covert communications could succeed in misleading consumers and reducing demand for and access to safe, sustainable and organic food. In order to advance the policies needed to reform industrial food production and build a healthy food system for all, we need to expose industry influence and make sure that we're hearing the real story, not spin.

Reporters and their audiences deserve to be able to trust the sources and information used in coverage of these important issues. We hope this report is helpful in revealing many of the key groups and tactics used by industry and assist in the quest for fair and accurate reporting on our food system.



A note on terms: Throughout this primer we use the term “food industry” or “industrial food sector” as a shorthand and imperfect proxy to refer to the companies involved in the industrial food and agriculture sector. These companies include agricultural biotechnology companies such as Monsanto; agrochemical companies such as Syngenta and Dow; industrial livestock producers such as Smithfield and Tyson; agribusiness companies such as Cargill and ADM; pharmaceutical companies providing antibiotics and other drugs for the livestock industry such as Elanco; and others. While this primer does not focus on specific strategies used by food companies such as Coca-Cola, PepsiCo or McDonald's, or food retailers such as Walmart or Kroger, many of these same tactics and even some of the same front groups, are also employed to serve these interests. Finally, we also note that the food industry is far from monolithic in its communications and its positions, with sectors and companies often working at cross-purposes with each other. In this primer, we focus on many of the shared communications interests of the industrial food sector.

Introduction: The Boom of Spin

The increase of industry-sponsored spin comes at a time when big food and agrochemical companies are waking up to a new consumer. Millions of Americans — and more every day — are concerned about growing scientific evidence of the impacts of agrochemicals, factory farming and GMOs on the environment and on public health. These concerns have translated into skyrocketing sales of organic, sustainable, local and non-GMO consumer products:

- Certified-organic product sales jumped to more than \$35 billion in 2013, up 11.5 percent from 2012, the fastest growth in five years, according to the Organic Trade Association;³
- Farmers markets in the United States have more than doubled in the past decade, to 8,268 in 2014;⁴
- 71 percent of Americans are concerned about biotechnology in food⁵ according to a 2014 Hartman Organic and Natural Survey, and according to Nielsen research, non-GMO certified products reached over \$10 billion in sales in 2014.⁶

Blockbuster movies such as *Food Inc. (2008)*, which grossed more than \$5 million domestically,⁷ books such as *The Omnivore's Dilemma (2007)*, and *Fast Food Nation (2001)*, and public scandals — including numerous meat recalls and food-borne illnesses — have all contributed to increased public awareness and concern about the food system. On social media and in the blogosphere, this dramatic rise in interest in healthier, more sustainable food is reflected in a new wave of bloggers, independent journalists and websites focused on the benefits of organic agriculture and the risks to public health and the environment inherent in the industrial food system.

All of this has not gone unnoticed by the food industry: As one trade publication explained, referring to the groundbreaking work of UC Berkeley journalism professor and journalist Michael Pollan, the industry has become alarmed about the “Pollan-ization” of the public mind.⁸ In response, it has turned up the volume on its spin machine, spending hundreds of millions of dollars and deploying new tactics to convince Americans that industrial



food is safe, healthy and environmentally sound. Many of these tactics are lifted from the playbook of the tobacco industry, which used spin to stall regulation.

While food companies have always engaged in marketing, they are increasingly using covert tactics to shape the public’s understanding about controversial food issues. The California Strawberry Commission can always be expected to advertise strawberries, but when this industry trade association funds a front group, the Alliance for Food and Farming, to defend the hazardous chemicals used to produce those strawberries and disparage organic farming, it is engaging in a covert public relations tactic.

The food industry’s growing investment in covert spin comes at time when mainstream media is contracting, meaning there are fewer resources to do the kind of in-depth reporting to uncover this spin. Today, PR professionals outnumber journalists by a ratio of nearly 5 to 1, according to the Pew Research Center.⁹ As Pew wrote in 2015, many news outlets that once had substantial resources to report on critical issues no longer have those resources and “special interests have filled the void.”¹⁰

It is in this media context that the food industry is working to shape the story of food. The following pages describe how industry-funded front groups and trade associations craft deceptive messages and often use covert tactics to move these messages into the public consciousness. This multi-million-dollar effort aims to craft a narrative about food that is intended to defuse public concern about the real risks of chemical-intensive industrial agriculture and undermine the public’s perceptions of the benefits of organic food and diversified, ecological agriculture systems.

Part I: The Messengers

“Doubt is our product,” wrote executives for tobacco giant Brown & Williamson in a famous 1969 memo on communications strategy. “It is the best means of competing with the ‘body of fact’ that exists in the mind of the general public. It is also the best means of establishing controversy.”¹¹ This core insight became the linchpin for a range of tobacco industry tactics in the ensuing decades, from funding fake science to paying experts to denounce public health findings about the harms of smoking. Today, the food and agrochemical industries have used similar tactics from the tobacco industry’s playbook to sow doubt about the scientifically proven benefits of organic agriculture and the harms of pesticide and antibiotic use on factory farms; for instance, funding a vast array of organizations — from trade associations to front groups — in order to do so.

To convey the scale of Big Food’s public relations efforts, we analyzed the spending and marketing programs of some of the largest trade associations and front groups of the food, biotech and agrochemical industries. We found that four of the largest food and chemical industry trade associations — the Grocery Manufacturers Association, the Biotechnology Industry Organization,¹² American Meat Institute¹³ and CropLife America¹⁴— together spent over half a billion dollars promoting their industries from 2009 to 2013. (See Annex 3). While these funds were neither solely directed to communications work nor focused exclusively on food, farming or agricultural issues, these expenses included significant contributions to communications and public relations efforts on these topics.¹⁵

Unprecedented amounts of money have also been spent in recent years in response to grassroots efforts to label genetically engineered foods. From 2012 to 2014, food and chemical companies spent more than \$103 million on public relations campaigns to defeat GMO labeling initiatives in four states.¹⁶ Industrial beef, corn, soybeans and dairy interests have also spent tens of millions each in the past five years on communications to promote chemical-intensive agriculture through commodity research and promotion programs — known as check-off programs.¹⁷ Additionally, food



The food industry uses many of the same PR tactics perfected by the tobacco industry to sell their harmful products.

Photo source: Stanford School of Medicine, Stanford Research into the Impact of Tobacco Advertising

and agriculture companies spend millions every year on product or company-specific marketing that also benefits the sector as a whole. Monsanto, for example, spent \$95 million, \$87 million and \$100 million on marketing in 2013, 2012 and 2011 respectively, advertising that went beyond promotion of Monsanto products to benefit trade associations, front groups and the promotion of agricultural biotechnology generally.¹⁸

While trade groups have historically focused on lobbying directed at regulators and elected officials, in recent years many of them have stepped up their PR efforts, “putting far more money into advertising and public relations than lobbying” according to an analysis by Center for Public Integrity.¹⁹ Some of these funds went to industry front groups, described below and in Annex 4. Our research found that 14 of the most significant food and agriculture front groups spent roughly \$126 million from 2009 to 2013 on a range of tactics designed to shape what the public and policymakers think about food, health and sustainability, often without disclosing the true source of those funds.²⁰ Seven of these groups were founded just since 2009 (See Annex 4).

Top 11 Food and Agriculture Industry Front Groups

Front Group	Spending 2009-2013*	Leading Corporate Board Members or Donors†	Issue Focus‡	Year Founded
U.S. Farmers and Ranchers Alliance	\$28,677,666	Monsanto, Dow Chemical, DuPont	Defends GMOs, pesticides, routine antibiotic use in livestock	2010
International Food Information Council	\$24,167,350	Coca-Cola, Pfizer Animal Health, Kraft Foods, The Hershey Company	Defends GMOs, processed foods, BPA, sugar, additives, routine antibiotic use in livestock	1985
Center for Food Integrity	\$20,988,003	Monsanto, National Restaurant Assn., United Soybean Board	Defends pesticides, routine antibiotics use in livestock, GMOs	2007
Council for Biotechnology information	\$16,729,325	Monsanto, BASF, Dow, Bayer, DuPont, Syngenta	Promotes safety and necessity of GMOs	2000
Center for Consumer Freedom	\$ 15,880,295	Coca Cola, Tyson Foods, Arby's, Hooters	Attacks minimum wage, Humane Society, organics, sugar-sweetened beverage regulation	1996
American Council on Science and Health§	\$9,107,245	Chevron, Coca-Cola, McDonald's	Defends soda, BPA, GMOs, processed foods, attacks organics	1978
Global Harvest Initiative	\$4,904,123	Monsanto, Elanco, DuPont, IBM, John Deere	Promotes GMOs as solution to feeding the world	2009
Animal Agriculture Alliance	\$2,686,713	National Pork Board, Bayer, Elanco, American Feed Industry Assn.	Defends routine use of antibiotic in livestock and other industrial livestock practices	1987
Protect the Harvest	\$1,371,941	Lucas Oil and Lucas Cattle Company	Attacks the Humane Society, defends industrial farming practices	2011
Alliance for Food and Farming	\$1,205,218	California Farm Bureau Federation, Western Growers, Produce Marketing Association	Defends pesticides, disparages organics	1989
Coalition for Safe and Affordable Food	N/A**	Grocery Manufacturers Association, Biotechnology Industry Organization, CropLife America	Fights GMO labeling, attacks organics	2014

* Based on 2009-2013 IRS Form 990s

† Based on 2013 IRS Form 990s or organizational websites. Corporations listed are either members, donors or their executives serve on the boards of these organizations.

‡ Based on 2013 IRS Form 990s or organizational websites

§ 2013 data not available at time of publication. 2013 figure is an average of previously available expenses.

** Founded too recently to have reported expenditures

Front Groups

In 1913, Austrian-American Edward Bernays, credited as the father of modern-day public relations, hired a team of doctors to promote the benefits of bacon for breakfast. Bernays did not disclose that the doctors he hired were paid by the pork industry. A few years later, Bernays launched the Celiac Project, touting the benefits of bananas for celiac sufferers — without revealing that its sole funder was the United Fruit Company, the biggest banana producer and importer in the country.²¹ Thus was born what has become the public relations tactic known as front groups, or the third-party technique: creating an organization perceived as working in the public interest, but that really benefits a company or industry.

Through running media campaigns, providing friendly and accessible spokespeople to the media, producing reports and even supplying curricula to public schools, front groups have proven to be an effective strategy in shaping public opinion and fighting unfavorable policy.

By avoiding mention of or only selectively disclosing funding sources, these groups obfuscate their real agenda. As public-interest lawyer and author Michele Simon writes in *The Best Public Relations Money Can Buy*, “front groups often have deceptive-sounding names and attempt to create a positive public impression that hides their funders’ economic motives.”²² Through running media campaigns, providing friendly and accessible spokespeople to the media, producing reports and even supplying curricula to public schools, front groups have proven to be an effective strategy in shaping public opinion and fighting unfavorable policy.

Front Groups: A Closer Look

In the following section, we highlight several prominent food industry front groups that are often quoted in the media with no mention of their industry connections. For detail about these and

others, see Annex 1. Keep in mind this is just a selection of existing food and agriculture-related front groups.

U.S. Farmers and Ranchers Alliance

Mission: “to enhance U.S. consumer trust in modern food production to ensure the abundance of affordable, safe food”

Founded: 2011

Expenses (2013): \$10,213,470

In September 2010, the trade publication *Agri-Pulse* reported on internal discussions of a cross-section of food industry trade groups and companies on the development of a major new agricultural image campaign in response to growing public concerns over the food system.²³ As *Agri-Pulse* put it, the campaign would help:

reverse consumers’ negative perceptions about a broad range of issues including so-called ‘factory farming,’ the use of agricultural chemicals, livestock management practices, processed ‘industrial food,’ and high-fructose corn syrup (HFCS).²⁴

The industry publication also noted that this image campaign was being created as a preemptive strike against anticipated regulation, from potentially tighter rules on pesticides to a ban on routine use of antibiotics in animal agriculture.²⁵

Brought together by this shared interest in unified messaging, a number of the country’s biggest chemical, animal pharmaceutical, biotech and agribusiness companies launched the U.S. Farmers and Ranchers Alliance in 2010. A representative from Ketchum, one of its PR firms, described the new group this way: “People see *Food, Inc.* and think everything in that movie is accurate,” but USFRA wants to ‘clear the air’ and ‘get a national dialogue, a conversation, going.’²⁶

Today, USFRA’s paying members include chemical and agricultural biotech and chemical companies such as DuPont, BASF, Dow, Syngenta and Monsanto; trade groups like CropLife America; and animal pharmaceutical companies such as Elanco Animal Health, Merck Animal Health and Zoetis. Since 2011, USFRA has spent more than \$29 million, roughly \$10 million a year, position-



Source: USFRA Antibiotics Messaging and Antibiotics Working Group - Linda Eatherton, Partner/Director, Global, Food & Nutrition Practice, Ketchum, from the 2014 NIAA Annual Conference titled 'The Precautionary Principle: How Agriculture Will Thrive', March 31 - April 2, 2014, Omaha, NE, USA.

ing itself as a voice for all of the country’s farmers and ranchers.²⁷ But there is not one organic or sustainable industry group among its members. Meanwhile, its policy platform defends GMOs, the routine use of antibiotics in animal agriculture, and the safety of synthetic pesticides, and its programs have sought to boost consumer confidence in industrial agriculture and the practices and products of its funders.

Front groups like USFRA often create working groups of like-minded members to promote particular issues through aggressive lobbying and common messaging. To address the growing public concerns about routine antibiotics use on factory farms, for instance, USFRA created the Antibiotics Working Group to develop educational materials and train spokespeople to downplay the risks of routine antibiotics. Its messages contradict well-documented evidence of the widespread misuse of routine antibiotics and the alarming connection between this overuse and antibiotic-resistant bacteria.²⁸

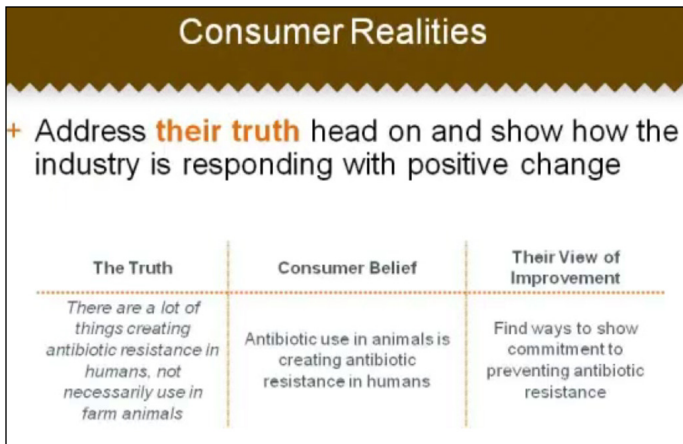
Members of this working group have attended editorial board meetings, held media briefings in New York and Washington, D.C., and written op-eds.²⁹ They have also helped craft and place letters-to-the-editor and developed online content, including antibiotics-related infographics, blog posts and message maps, along with answers to Frequently Asked Questions on the USFRA web-

site, FoodDialogues.com.³⁰ In much of the resulting press coverage, including a piece in the *Wall Street Journal* that USFRA documents in its annual report, there is no disclosure of its ties to the industry that benefits from antibiotic use.³¹

USFRA also has a private online community forum of 300 Consumer Food Connectors, including chefs, dietitians, farmers, researchers, nurses, educators and marketers who are used as a “springboard for testing new content and ideas surrounding USFRA programming.”³² In its annual report, USFRA noted that this group helped to show that exposure to messages from the alliance made consumers more likely to feel like the “U.S. is heading in the right direction in the way farmers and ranchers grow and raise our food.”³³

One of USFRA’s cornerstone activities is its Food Dialogues, hosted around the country and live-streamed online. Although these “dialogues” are billed as fair and balanced and boast moderators from mainstream media like CNN, the panels are constructed to serve USFRA’s messaging goals. Take the “dialogue” on antibiotics. While the five-person panel included Jean Halloran from the Consumers Union, one of the nation’s most vocal critics of antibiotics overuse in animal agriculture, the other participants unilaterally downplayed, and even denied, the connection between routine antibiotics use and the crisis of antibiotic resistance — even though this connection has long been accepted as fact.³⁴ The USFRA touted Halloran’s participation as evidence of balance, but the other views presented, which were not backed up by evidence, created the perception that livestock producers do not use antibiotics routinely or, worse, that the majority of panelists are right and there is no reason to be worried about antibiotic resistance.³⁵

USFRA also mobilizes farmers as spokespeople through its EASE (“Engage, Acknowledge, Share and Earn Trust”) trainings. Through the training program, participants learn how to engage with consumers, using USFRA talking points and research on consumer attitudes.³⁶ From 2011 to late 2013, the USFRA reports that it trained more than 8,500 farmers and ranchers in 22 states.³⁷



Source: USFRA Antibiotics Messaging and Antibiotics Working Group

Every year, the USFRA also selects farmer representatives to play a high-visibility role through media interviews, advertisements and public appearances.³⁸ For these one-year terms, farmers are given a \$15,000 stipend and professional media and speaker training.

Some of these USFRA trained farmers were trained to echo the antibiotic-use-is-no-problem frame, writing in the *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, “Despite what you might have heard, we treat our animals with antibiotics only when they are sick, and then at the recommendation of a veterinarian.”³⁹ One USFRA-trained hog farmer, wrote an op-ed for CNN’s *Eatocracy* explaining, “Antibiotics are just one of the tools we have in our toolbox; we don’t rely on them as part of our daily care plan.”⁴⁰

Center for Consumer Freedom

Mission: “devoted to promoting personal responsibility and protecting consumer choices”

Founded: 1996

Expenses (2013): \$1.3 million

Richard Berman, founder of the Center for Consumer Freedom, has been called “the king of corporate front groups and propaganda.”⁴¹ Over the years, Berman’s organization has received millions of dollars from the restaurant, alcohol, tobacco and food industries to fight common-sense laws in the public interest. The group’s board includes executives with ties to major restaurant chains, like Ruby Tuesday and Denny’s, as well as

the former president of public affairs for Wal-Mart and the government relations director for Darden Restaurants.⁴²

Registered as a 501(c)(3) as Center for Organizational Research and Education, the Center for Consumer Freedom has fought the New York City Department of Public Health ban on sales of sugary drinks larger than sixteen ounces. It has battled Mothers Against Drunk Driving on behalf of the alcohol industry. And it has taken on the Humane Society of the United States over its policy initiatives on factory farming. A secret recording of Berman speaking to oil and gas executives published by *The New York Times* reveals Berman’s tactics and thinking: “You can either win ugly or lose pretty.”⁴³ Berman further explains that companies must be willing to “exploit emotions like fear, greed and anger” to turn them against environmental groups.⁴⁴

In 2010, the Center for Consumer Freedom ratcheted up its campaign against the Humane Society, spending nearly \$1 million on *HumaneWatch.org*, which it calls “a watchdog effort to educate the public about the Humane Society.” Berman’s organization has continued to target the Humane Society ever since, including running an attack ad during the 2012 Academy Awards.⁴⁵ Berman claims the Humane Society spends only a fraction of its budget on direct service to animals, with the rest going to ballot initiatives and lobbying. Indeed, the Humane Society’s successful work pushing for legislation to improve the conditions for factory farm animals is likely what has CCF’s anonymous funders concerned.⁴⁶ As Humane Society Director Wayne Pacelle told *Mother Jones*: “They’d love it if we put all our money exclusively into rescuing animals on the street and didn’t get to the source of the problem.”⁴⁷

In 2012, the Humane Society filed a legal complaint, alleging that Berman illegally used nonprofit legal structures for the benefit of his corporate clients.⁴⁸ The lawsuit pointed to IRS filings that showed that the majority of Center for Consumer Freedom’s income went directly to Berman’s for-profit PR firm.⁴⁹ The Center’s 2011 Form 990 shows it paid 61 percent of that year’s budget, or \$1.29 million, to Richard Berman and Company, Inc., for

management, advertising, research and accounting fees.⁵⁰ Confirming Humane Society's criticism of this spending, Charity Navigator wrote: "We find the practice of a charity contracting for management services with a business owned by that charity's CEO atypical as compared to how other charities operate and have therefore issued [a] Donor Advisory."⁵¹

Center for Food Integrity

Mission: "to build consumer trust and confidence in the contemporary U.S. food system by sharing accurate, balanced information, correcting misinformation, modeling best practices and engaging stakeholders to address issues that are important to consumers"

Founded: 2007

Expenses (2013): \$5,711,445

The Center for Food Integrity is directed by a board that includes representatives from the National Restaurant Association, American Farm Bureau Federation, the National Pork Board and companies including Tyson Foods and Monsanto. Jason Clay of World Wildlife Fund is the lone non-profit 501(c)(3) group representative that sits on its board, according to the organization's website.

CFI develops polls and training sessions that help its members craft their messages to resonate with consumers and build consensus on the benefits of member companies' products and practices.⁵² CFI has an Issues Advisory Team to add industry-vetted information on the website *BestFoodFacts.org*, downplaying concerns about chemicals in food. CFI also touts relationships with more than 250 food- and health-focused influencers with webcasts and other events.⁵³

One of its initiatives is called "A New Conversation about Food." With a \$1.5 million budget, this program is described as initiating public engagement to connect with customers, influencers, policymakers and consumers.⁵⁴ For instance, when food bloggers called on Subway to stop using the additive azodicarbonamide in its bread, based on a precautionary approach to health concerns (the additive is banned for use in the EU), CFI developed an "Issues Advisory Team" to add information on its *BestFoodFacts.org* website, defending

the additive's safety.⁵⁵

CFI also develops webinars for its members on such topics as "Cracking the Code on Food Issues: Insights from Moms, Millennials and Foodies," sharing consumer polling research to help hone industry messaging. Other webinars include tips for communicating about issues like antibiotic resistance and genetically engineered foods in an effort to assuage consumer concerns about these food safety issues.⁵⁶



Source: Center for Food Integrity Webinar Presentation (2015): *Cracking the Code on Food Issues: Consumer Insights on Animal Agriculture presentation*

Alliance for Food and Farming

Mission: "a resource for science-based information on the safety of organic and conventional produce"

Founded: 1989

Expenses (2013): \$243,782

While the Alliance presents itself as a science-based resource on the safety of organic and conventional produce, its funding comes from trade groups for industrially grown apples, citrus, pears and grapes, among other industry groups.⁵⁷ The group's IRS filings make it clear their real purpose is to "promote food safety and the benefits of *agricultural chemicals* in ensuring safe, affordable food supply for consumers" [emphasis added].⁵⁸

With a relatively small budget, the Alliance has used various approaches to convince consumers, especially moms, that produce grown with agrochemicals is no less safe for people or the planet than organic produce.

Its strategy has been to target journalists with reports, surveys and webinars critiquing EWG's *Shopper's Guide to Pesticides in Produce* (see below caption) and make the case for the safety of pesticides.⁵⁹ As the Alliance says, its goal "is to generate more balanced media reporting and change public perception about the safety of produce when it comes to pesticide residues."⁶⁰ Despite increasing evidence of the impacts of even low-level exposure to harmful chemical pesticides, from the President's Panel on Cancer⁶¹ and peer-reviewed science, the Alliance's spin has focused on correcting what it calls a "misconception that some fresh produce items contain excessive amounts of pesticide residues."⁶²

Other Alliance messaging has focused on bringing organic consumers back to conventional food with marketing pieces like, "A Dozen Reasons Why Eating Both Conventional and Organic Produce is the Right Choice for You." The Alliance also published a report called "Pesticide Use Regulations on Organic Fruit and Vegetable Farms" that highlights the few, less-toxic, less persistent pesticides allowed by the National Organic Program, spuriously implying that there are few differences between organic and conventional food.⁶³



Since 2010, with an initial \$180,000 grant from the California Department of Food and Agriculture, the Alliance has focused primarily on trying to discredit the EWG's *Shopper's Guide to Pesticides in Produce*, also known as the "Dirty Dozen" list, a widely used tool to educate consumers. It has also targeted Pesticide Action Network's consumer resource guide, *WhatsOnMyFood.org*.

Council for Biotechnology Information

Mission: "communicates science-based information about the benefits and safety of agricultural biotechnology"

Founded: 2000

Expenses (2013): \$4,982,754



Image captured at GMOAnswers.com The Council on Biotechnology launched GMOAnswers.com in 2013 to "help clear up confusion and dispel mistrust" about genetic engineering.

With a nearly \$5 million budget in 2013 raised from its corporate members, the Council for Biotechnology Information focuses on promoting the benefits of GMOs and fighting labeling initiatives and other policies that would regulate genetically engineered foods. The Council's board includes representatives from DuPont, BASF Group, Bayer CropScience, Monsanto, Dow AgroSciences and Syngenta. Among other work, the Council creates policy briefs for regulators, funds media training sessions and conferences for students, farmers and academics on the "benefits of ag biotech,"⁶⁴ and partners with grower groups and academic institutions to enhance "acceptance of ag biotech."⁶⁵ In Canada, its programs include "training third-party spokespeople (farmers, academics, dieticians) to educate media and the public about risk and about the benefits of ag biotech."⁶⁶

According to its 2012 Form 990, the Council worked with its members to engage with consumers in addressing concerns about agricultural biotechnology, and conducted "outreach to environmental, anti-hunger, and corporate entities, as well as international officials to advance the understanding of agriculture biotechnology and the challenges related to unpredictable regulatory systems."⁶⁷ In practice, the Council works to discredit opponents of biotechnology and downplay the evidence of its risks, including growing weed resistance, increased chemical use and food safety concerns. It also funds other organizations that promote GMOs: In 2011 and 2012 the Council provided \$204,000 to the Hawaii Crop Improvement Association for "outreach, education, lobbying, and communication activities."⁶⁸

The Coalition for Safe and Affordable Food

Mission: provides “policy makers, media, consumers and all stakeholders with the facts about ingredients grown through GM technology” and “advocates for common-sense policy solutions that will only further enhance the safety of the GM crops and protect the vital role they play in today’s modern global food supply chain”

Founded: 2014

Expenses (2013): N/A



Source: Coalitionforsafeaffordablefood.org

The Coalition for Safe and Affordable Food was founded by the Grocery Manufacturers Association, the Biotechnology Industry Organization and CropLife America (the trade association for agrochemical producers), to respond to state GMO labeling initiatives and advance a federal voluntary GMO labeling bill that would preempt and prevent mandatory labeling at the local, state and federal levels.⁶⁹ To accomplish its policy objectives, the Coalition actively promotes its core pro-GMO messages via its website, aggressive press outreach, social media and other vehicles, stating on its website that GMOs help “provide Americans with a safe, abundant and affordable food supply,” that “GMOs are safe,” that they are “better for the environment” and use “less water” and “pesticides”⁷⁰ — despite numerous articles and studies challenging these assertions.⁷¹

Keep Food Affordable

Mission: “brings together consumers, farmers, and food security organizations to keep food safe, affordable, and available for all Americans”

Founded: 2012

Expenses (2013): N/A



A graphic posted on Keep Food Affordable’s facebook page on May 12, 2014 in order to sway consumers against country of origin labeling, an important labeling program that allows people to know where their food comes from.

While the Keep Food Affordable Coalition presents itself as a coalition of consumers, farmers and food security organizations, with a shared mission of promoting accessible, affordable food, it is actually funded by industry trade associations, including the National Pork Producers Council and the Egg Farmers of America. It was founded in response to animal welfare and food advocates’ attempts to pass legislation to improve factory farm conditions. The Coalition’s messaging aims to undermine such efforts by claiming that those regulations — including requirements to stop the abuse of antibiotics in livestock production — would cause food prices to skyrocket.⁷² Yet, evidence from a Consumers Union report shows that antibiotic-free meat prices were not necessarily higher in various supermarkets, and in fact were sometimes actually lower than the national average for meat raised with antibiotics.⁷³

The above groups, which together spend an average of at least \$20 million a year communicating the interests of the industrial food sector, are just some of the more prominent or recent food front groups. Other industry-tied groups that we discuss later in this report are using similar tactics and messages to create a drumbeat of support for industry’s agenda. In the next section, we look at some of the key messages these groups are promoting.

Part II: The Messages

A core function of these front groups is to promote messages that benefit the bottom line and advance the policy agenda of industrial agriculture. These frames are designed to become part of the dominant narrative of our food system. In this section, we share five of these messages developed by industry to respond to real-world concerns raised by scientists, public health advocates and elected officials about the risks and impacts of industrial agriculture. This is not meant to be an exhaustive compendium of these framing messages, nor a thorough refutation of them, but an opportunity to showcase five being pushed by front groups using the tactics we describe below.



Source: USFRA Antibiotics Messaging and Working Group

(1) "Organic is no better than conventional and not worth the money."

The Spin: The past several years have seen a strong push from industry to convince the public there are no clear benefits to eating organic food, claiming in particular that organic methods use pesticides, too. Many media outlets have picked on up this message, running with headlines such as "Save your cash? Organic food is not healthier" (*NY Daily News*); "Organic food no better than conventional for kids" (*NBC News*); "Is It Worth Buying Organic? Maybe Not" (*Time*).⁷⁴



How to sell a toxic pesticide the smart way—call it organic

Hank Campbell | October 24, 2014 | Genetic Literacy Project

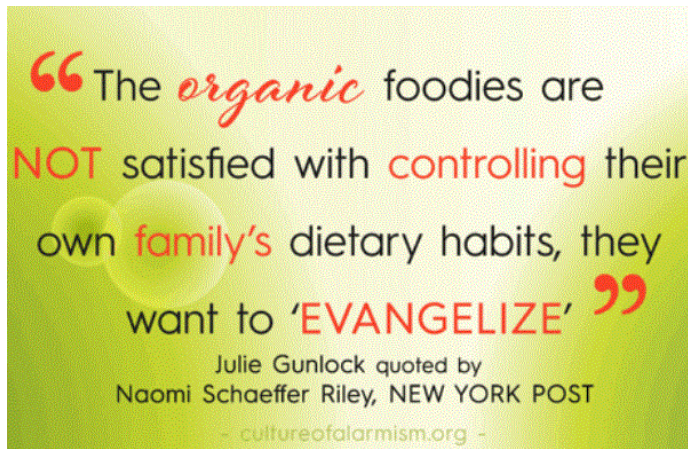
From the Genetic Literacy Project
www.geneticliteracyproject.org

The Reality: There is a rich literature describing the risks of chemical pesticide residue on food and the nutritional, public health and ecological benefits of choosing organic.⁷⁵ A large and growing body of peer-reviewed science demonstrates how agrochemicals degrade water and air quality, damage critical ecosystems and beneficial organisms, and pose serious risks to farmers, pesticide applicators and farmworkers and their families as well as nearby communities.⁷⁶ UC Berkeley's CHAMACOS study has been tracking farmworker children, from the womb on, and finding neurodevelopmental implications of *in vitro* pesticide exposure.⁷⁷ The Agricultural Health Study has been following tens of thousands of U.S. agricultural workers since 1993, finding that agrochemical exposure leads to higher rates of certain cancers — including leukemia, non-Hodgkin's lymphoma and cancers of the lip, stomach, skin, brain and prostate — and other health effects, from asthma to neurologic disorders to reproductive problems.⁷⁸ Recognizing that the public is concerned about pesticides, industry groups have been pushing a corollary talking point that organic agriculture uses pesticides, too; however, this ignores the evidence that organic pesticides tend to be far less toxic, degrade faster, and are used as a last resort, compared with the massive quantities and toxic-level levels of chemicals on industrial farms.⁷⁹

(2) "Organic food advocates are elitist food nannies."

The Spin: The assertion that advocates for healthy, sustainable food choices are elitists and finger-wagging scolds out to undermine personal freedoms dates back to at least 1981. That year, a *Washington Post* op-ed described public health advocates' attempts to rein in junk food marketing to children as the efforts of the "nanny state."⁸⁰ This language is being used with increasing fre-

quency, both to disparage the efforts of communities to promote healthy food and as a way to shift attention from the veracity of the messages by demonizing the messengers. A few examples:



Source: Independent Women's Forum www.iwf.org/blog/2793752/Meet-the-Organic-Mom-Mafia

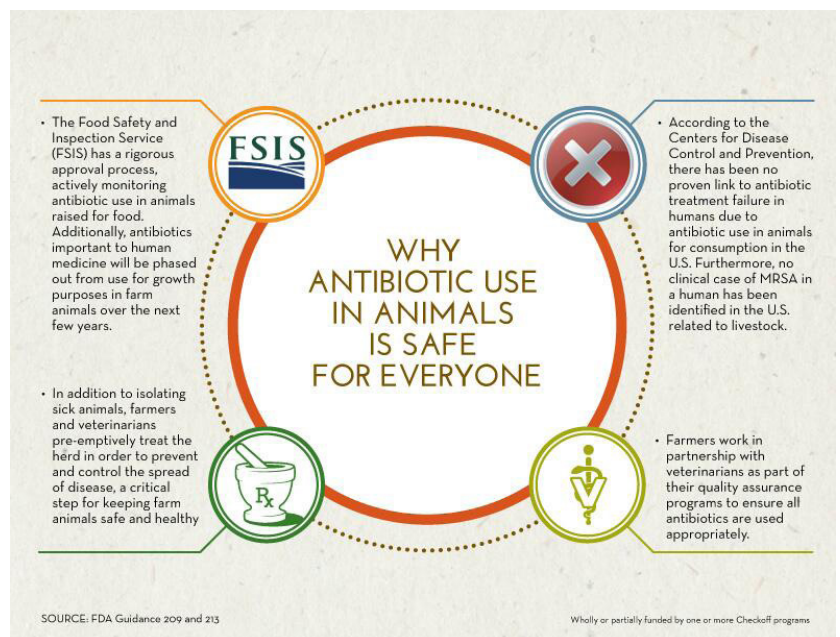
“We live in a food nanny state” (*Globe and Mail* 2011);⁸¹ “Food nanny Mike declares war on salt in NYers diet” (*New York Post* 2010);⁸² “Food nanny activists’ ‘studies’ support non-solutions to childhood obesity” (*Forbes* 2012);⁸³ “Snobby first lady made dough from ‘cheese dust’” (*Boston Herald* 2015);⁸⁴ “The tyranny of the organic mommy mafia” (*New York Post* 2014).⁸⁵

The Reality: Some of the most vocal advocates for getting toxics out of the food supply and for building a just and sustainable food system are among the most vulnerable — and decidedly un-elite — among us: farmworkers on the frontlines of toxic pesticide exposure like the Coalition of Immokalee Workers; food justice advocates fighting for healthy food access and better working conditions like the Food Chain Workers Alliance; working-class communities and their children living in toxic pesticide drift zones like those organizing with Pesticide Action Network; and labor advocates exposing unsafe workplace conditions in food production facilities like the unions representing meat packing workers. There is a growing body of science that is guiding vulnerable communities and parents to make healthier, organic choices

for themselves and their children. These include studies linking low-level exposure to pesticides during pregnancy and early childhood to learning disabilities and lower IQ, as well as recent designations of some of our most common pesticides as hormone disruptors and carcinogens.⁸⁶ In fact, the most recent data available shows that growing numbers of African American and Hispanic families are choosing organic; a 2014 survey of 1,200 households conducted by the Organic Trade Association found that the demographics of organic buyers closely follows the demographics of the American population.⁸⁷

(3) “U.S. meat production is safe, efficient and does not overuse antibiotics.”

The Spin: U.S. industrial meat production, including the widespread use of hormones, growth promoters and routine antibiotics, is completely safe.⁸⁸ In addition, the industry, including the Animal Agriculture Alliance and the American Meat Institute, often tout how it is committed to the “judicious” and responsible use of antibiotics to maintain the health of livestock⁸⁹ and that antibiotic resistance is primarily a result of overuse of antibiotics in human medicine.⁹⁰



Source: Graphic funded wholly or partially by one or more checkoff programs and posted at *TheFarmer'sDaughterUSA.com*⁹¹, *The Stalder Family Farms* blog and more.

The Reality: According to experts, including those at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the National Academies of Science, the routine overuse of antibiotics in U.S. meat production is contributing to the rise of antibiotic resistance, one of the country's most serious public health problems.⁹² Pharmaceutical industry data provided to the Food and Drug Administration indicate that 70 percent of the antibiotic types used in human medicine are sold for use in food-producing animals.⁹³ According to the FDA, sale of these drugs for use by the livestock sector surged 16 percent between 2009 and 2012.⁹⁴ And according to many public health advocates, solving the growing problem of antibiotic resistance will only be possible with a dramatic reduction in the routine use of antibiotics in animal production.⁹⁵ There are also serious health and animal welfare concerns about the extensive use of growth hormones⁹⁶ and growth promoters⁹⁷ in beef, pork and turkey.

(4) “We need GMOs to feed the world.”



Screenshot from Monsanto.com (March 2015)

The Spin: From Monsanto's website to the op-ed pages of the biggest media outlets, the biotech industry promotes the message that GMOs are essential to feeding the world's growing population, largely based on the claim that biotech crops increase yields and use fewer resources.

The Reality: Since their first commercialization in 1994, genetically engineered traits have largely been introduced into commodities like corn, soy and cotton that are mostly grown for animal feed, biofuels or fiber. These crops are not being grown to feed people directly, or at all. Of the genetic engineering traits developed to date, the most common ones create herbicide tolerance or insecticidal properties. According to the USDA,

Contrary to the repeated myth that industrial farming is the only way to feed a growing population, a growing body of research — including a recent 2014 UC Berkeley meta-analysis — shows that organic, diversified agriculture is highly productive, and can deliver high yields at or just below the level of industrial agriculture while producing important ecological and health benefits and freeing farmers from dependency on purchased seeds, toxic pesticides and synthetic fertilizer.

more than 90 percent of these genetically engineered crops planted in the U.S. are designed to resist the spraying of herbicides.⁹⁸

In addition, more than 20 years of research shows that genetic engineering has not produced the yield boom industry promised.⁹⁹ GMO companies point out that yields for U.S. corn jumped by 28 percent from 1996 to 2008, the period when GMO corn was first widely planted.¹⁰⁰ But this confuses correlation with causation. According to an analysis of USDA data by the Union of Concerned Scientists, any increases in yields during this time were largely the result of conventional breeding and other improvements in farming methods and had little to do with genetic engineering.¹⁰¹

Moreover, many have observed that genetically engineered seeds for herbicide tolerance or insecticidal purposes do not address the root causes of hunger that afflicts nearly a billion people globally. As the head of the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization, Graziano de Silva has said: "...food production is not a sufficient condition for food security."¹⁰² Indeed, feeding a growing population is not primarily a productivity issue. High rates of poverty, low wages, and lack of access to land, water and other basic infrastructure for small-scale farmers — who already produce 70 percent of the world's food — are the main barriers to feeding

the world.¹⁰³ Furthermore, contrary to the repeated myth that industrial farming is the only way to feed a growing population, a growing body of research — including a recent 2014 UC Berkeley meta-analysis — shows that organic, diversified agriculture is highly productive, and can deliver high yields at or just below the level of industrial agriculture.¹⁰⁴ Most importantly, it can do so while producing important ecological and health benefits and freeing farmers from dependency on purchased seeds, toxic pesticides and synthetic fertilizer.



(5) “The science is settled — GMOs are safe.”



The Spin: Over the past few years, the biotech industry has pushed a narrative that there is a consensus about the safety and positive benefits of GMO production, including in the reduction in the use of pesticides. More recently, industry and the media have spuriously compared

GMO critics to anti-science climate deniers.

The Reality: Among the global scientific community, there is great debate about the safety and benefits of GMOs.¹⁰⁵ In December 2015, the journal *Environmental Sciences Europe* published a paper signed by 300 scientists from around the world that clarified the ongoing scientific debate over the risks and benefits of genetic engineering. The authors write that the claim of consensus about GMO safety “is misleading and misrepresents or outright ignores the currently available scientific evidence and the broad diversity of scientific opinions among scientists on this issue.”¹⁰⁶

A report co-authored by hundreds of scientists from around the world and commissioned by the

World Bank and other global institutions, meanwhile, found consensus about the need to deploy agroecological solutions to address the roots of hunger and shift agricultural systems away from the reliance on agrochemicals in farming that genetic engineering perpetuates.¹⁰⁷

Contrary to the often published industry myth that GMO crops reduce the use of pesticides, A University of Washington study found that the widespread planting of GMOs has resulted in a net increase of 400 million pounds of pesticides applied on the soil from 1996-2011.¹⁰⁸ Agrochemical companies have long promoted glyphosate, the primary herbicide applied on GMOs as “safe and benign,” but the World Health Organization

Contrary to the often published industry myth that GMO crops reduce the use of pesticides, A University of Washington study found that the widespread planting of GMOs has resulted in a net increase of 400 million pounds of pesticides applied on the soil from 1996-2011.



Industry has often claimed that chemicals are perfectly safe when overwhelming scientific evidence has eventually proven otherwise. Source: www.thesocietypages.org (2015)

has recently listed the chemical as a probable human carcinogen.¹⁰⁹ And the U.S. Geological Survey, which recently concluded that glyphosate is widespread in our nation's air and water, has noted that "many studies indicate that commercial glyphosate formulations can be more toxic than pure glyphosate due to the toxicity of additives, such as surfactants (detergents)."¹¹⁰ Many experts,

including the USDA, predict that the next generation of 2,4-D-resistant GMO crops will lead to significant increases in the use of even more toxic pesticides.¹¹¹

The next section outlines the communications tactics used by industry groups to move these messages into the media and into the public conversation about food and farming.

words to lose -	words to use +
Pesticides	Preventing bugs and other pests from eating crops
Fertilizer and Nitrogen	Nurturing crops with nutrients at exactly the right time, at the right rate, and in the right amounts to make them thrive
GMOs	Seeds that grow stronger, more resilient and better tasting crops
Antibiotics	Keeping animals healthy
Hormones	MAINTAINING growth

U.S. Farmers & Ranchers Alliance

Source: USFRA Ag Forward Communications Strategy (September, 2011) webadmin.pork.org/filelibrary/Retail/092711USFRAPresentation.pdf

Part III: The Tactics

Even in his wildest dreams, the father of modern-day public relations, Edward Bernays, could likely never have imagined the vast potential of the Internet — of online media outlets, blogs, Twitter and Facebook — to shape what we believe. But he might not have been surprised to see how the chemical, biotech and food industries have tapped these platforms to advance their agenda. Bernays understood the importance of constant PR innovation: If the public “becomes weary of the old methods used to persuade it to accept a given idea or commodity,” he wrote in his 1928 book, *Propaganda*, then corporations must simply “present their appeals more intelligently. Propaganda will never die.”¹¹² Indeed, the food industry is developing new ways to shape public consciousness — through mainstream media, Twitter feeds, mommy blogs and more — all of which make it difficult for consumers to discern fact from propaganda.

As increasing evidence shows connections between the growth in chemical-intensive food production and the rise of adverse health impacts including immune-related illnesses, neurodevelopmental harms and hormone disruption, mothers in particular are increasingly concerned with the safety of food.

Tactic 1: Wooing Women

“Cracking the Code on Food Issues: Insights from Moms, Millennials and Foodies,” is a Center for Food Integrity webinar aimed at helping food brands communicate with women. *SafeFruitsandVeggies.com* declares that, “Moms deserve the truth” and describes itself as a “science-based resource about produce.” In reality, *SafeFruitsandVeggies.com* is funded by the Alliance for Food and Farming, a chemical agriculture front group that downplays the risks of agricultural pesticides. These are just two examples of how food industry messaging targets women. It does so with good reason.

Women in the United States account for over 70 percent of consumer spending and are respon-



Source: screenshot from *SafeFruitsandVeggies.com* produced by front group Alliance for Food and Farming (March 2015)

sible for most food purchasing decisions.¹¹³ Women are often the primary caregivers for children, the current generation of whom is facing rising rates of diabetes, allergies and other diet-related illnesses. As increasing evidence shows connections between the growth in chemical-intensive food production and the rise of adverse health impacts including immune-related illnesses, neurodevelopmental harms and hormone disruption, mothers in particular are increasingly concerned with the safety of food.¹¹⁴ This is one reason industry groups are targeting their message to moms so directly. The messaging tactics include co-opting the voices of women who most powerfully reach other women — bloggers — while at the same time trying to undermine the influence of women food change advocates through cynical messaging to ostracize “organic moms” as elitist bullies.

Co-opting “Mommy Bloggers”

When Bettina Siegel, a school nutrition blogger at *TheLunchTray.com*, released a petition in March 2012 calling on the USDA to stop the national school food program from using “pink slime” — slaughterhouse scraps treated with ammonia or citric acid to kill bacteria and turned into “lean, finely textured beef,” or LFTB — the reaction was explosive.¹¹⁵ In just two weeks the petition garnered a quarter of a million signatures. In one day alone, it gathered 100,000 names. Describing how her petition went viral, Siegel wrote, “Within days, several members of Congress rallied behind my cause and sent their own letters to the USDA. On the ninth day of the petition, USDA relented and

made a change to its school food policy, offering school districts the option of buying ground beef with or without LFTB for the first time.”¹¹⁶

The reach of women like Siegel, to whom the industry refers to as “mommy bloggers,” is striking. The number of blogs run by and for women, especially those talking about food, has skyrocketed in the past decade. Today, *Yahoo! Small Business* estimates there are 4.2 million mom blogs, many of which focus on food, some specifically taking on questions of safety and sustainability.¹¹⁷

Aware of the power of these influencers, the food industry works to shape bloggers’ attitudes about key food issues — and to decrease the chances of another success like Siegel’s. Food industry giants, for instance, advertise on the BlogHer Network, the biggest women blogger network in the country, and sponsor the network’s conferences. At the June 2013 BlogHer Food conference, bloggers could visit the women farmers staffing the Common Ground booth and take home brochures that promised to “sort through the myths” and help them “gather third-party facts” about food.¹¹⁸ Most bloggers would be unaware that this was not an objective third party, but the marketing arm of the federally funded commodity soybean and corn growers — known as check-offs. No wonder, then, that the brochures touted the benefits of industrial agriculture and dismissed concerns about synthetic fertilizers, genetic engineering and antibiotic use in livestock production.¹¹⁹

The food industry also influences what appears on these blogs by trying to influence the tone of content, even paying for posts directly. While bloggers are supposed to disclose such payments, with a hashtag on Twitter or sponsored post language for example, this is not always practiced and rarely enforced. Plus, receiving gifts or payments from companies doesn’t necessarily require disclosure, anyway.

In just one example of how the food industry works to influence bloggers, Monsanto paid bloggers \$150 to attend a brunch hosted by the company, following the 2014 BlogHer conference.¹²⁰ The pitch: “An intimate and interactive panel” with “two female farmers and a team from Monsanto,”

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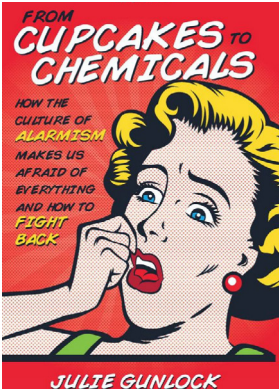
A message posted on Keep Food Affordable's facebook page on May 16, 2014

the invite-only, three-hour brunch promised bloggers a chance to learn about “where your food comes from” and to hear about the impact “growing food has on the environment, and how farmers are using fewer resources to feed a growing population.”¹²¹ Another invite-only event later that same year brought bloggers to a Monsanto facility in Northern California for a tour of its fields and research labs. Though the invitation said “No blog posts or social media posts expected,” the event was designed to influence the opinions and the writing of key influencers on the topic of GMOs and push a key industry message: that we need GMOs to feed the world.¹²²

Attacking Organic Moms

While the food industry tries to shape the perspective of these influencers, it also actively works to undermine the sway of women who are organic food advocates, precisely because evidence shows just how much impact these voices can have. For example, a 2014 *New York Post* story, “The Tyranny of Organic Mommy Mafia,” describes the “arrogance and class snobbery” of moms who feed their kids organic.¹²³ The piece quotes Julie Gunlock of the Culture of Alarmism Project who says these moms are “so crazed” and “worried” they need to be in control of everything when it comes to their kids, even the way food is grown and treated.¹²⁴

What is the Culture of Alarmism Project? It is housed at The Independent Women’s Forum, which receives funding from right-wing foundations and the Koch Brothers and got its start as a defense group for Clarence Thomas, according to Karl Grossman, professor of journalism at the State University of New York.¹²⁵ The group actively opposes climate science education in schools and



has claimed that the evidence on man-made global warming is “junk science.”¹²⁶

Other sources in the story include the front group Alliance for Food and Farming and Academics Review, billed as a “nonprofit group of independent scientists” but which is really another industry-linked front

group.¹²⁷ (See discussion of Academics Review in Tactic 5).

Companies are hiring PR firms to develop social media campaigns, staffing up internally with online engagement positions and recruiting third-party bloggers and individuals on Twitter and Facebook to share industry-friendly messages and online resources designed to look like informational websites but built and run by industry front groups and trade associations.

Examples abound of this demonization of concerned parents, especially women, and the moms-as-bullies meme. At the Pork Network website, you can find this headline: “Stop letting ‘crunchy mommas’ tell your story,” which states that, “The voices of America’s farmers and ranchers are being drowned out by a small minority of consumers called ‘crunchy mommas,’ and it’s time for producers to fight back.”¹²⁸ At the Similac website, you can find the Sisterhood of Motherhood campaign, which features a video called “The Mother ‘Hood” with nearly 8 million views. It depicts breastfeeding mothers as bullies and calls them “the breast police”¹²⁹ — a message that clearly benefits Similac, the leading infant formula producer in the country.

Notably, despite this emphasis on reaching women, an analysis of the gender breakdown of the boards of key food industry front groups reveals where the real power lies: In a review of 17 food industry trade and front groups, men made up 85.8 percent of board members.¹³⁰ (See Groups’ Board

members listed in Annex 1).

Tactic 2: Infiltrating Social Media

In the past decade, social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Pinterest have become central to how millions of Americans consume news and information and come to understand the world. The Pew Research Center for People and the Press found that by 2014, 30 percent of Americans received their news from Facebook.¹³¹ As these platforms have grown, the food industry has innovated new ways to engage and infiltrate social media.

Companies are hiring PR firms to develop social media campaigns, staffing up internally with online engagement positions and recruiting third-party bloggers and individuals on Twitter and Facebook to share industry-friendly messages and online resources designed to look like informational websites but built and run by industry front groups and trade associations. CropLife America created *DebugtheMyths.com*, for example, launched with companion Facebook and Twitter accounts to push its message that chemical pesticides are necessary, beneficial and pose few risks.¹³²



From CropLife America’s *Debugthemyths.com*

In recent years, there’s been a rise in farmer-linked bloggers have been pushing positive messages about GMOs, pesticides and antibiotics on platforms like *NurseLovesFarmer.com*, *TheFarmersDaughterUSA.com* and *AskTheFarmers.com*, founded in 2014.¹³³ On Twitter, they affiliate as “agvocates,” a term coined by AgChat Foundation, an industry funded communications initiative launched in 2010, whose main backers include industrial meat producers such as Tyson and Smithfield, animal pharmaceutical companies such as Elanco and agrochemical companies such as Bayer CropScience.¹³⁴

Companies like Monsanto are expanding the teams that develop social media channels and creating new positions to monitor and engage with the public across social media platforms. In 2013, Monsanto hired PR firm Fleishman-Hillard to “develop a more cohesive communications approach, in the face of sustained NGO criticism,” according to *The Holmes Report*.¹³⁵ This included expanding its social media team. That year, Monsanto created its first Online Engagement Director, responsible for helping to ensure that “accurate information about the company is considered in social media discussions.”¹³⁶ On the *LinkedIn* profile for this position, responsibilities include providing information to bloggers, hosting blogger events and participating in public events on behalf of Monsanto.¹³⁷ Often this engagement includes only oblique references to the company: On the Twitter account of the Online Engagement Director, for example, her more than 75,000 Tweets include occasional references to Monsanto by name, but include links to its sponsored websites like *GMOAnswers.com*.¹³⁸

In 2013, the Council on Biotechnology — funded by Monsanto, BASF, Bayer, Dow, DuPont and Syngenta — launched *GMOAnswers.com* to “help clear up confusion and dispel mistrust” about genetic engineering.¹³⁹ The platform was designed to promote the appearance of transparency and honesty by offering an opportunity for anyone to post questions about GMOs and get answers from experts.¹⁴⁰ But the experts on the site are not disinterested parties; they’re defenders of genetic engineering and some are even paid employees of biotech companies like Monsanto.¹⁴¹

GMOAnswers.com was developed by PR firm Ketchum, which has a long history of working with corporate clients to undermine environmental advocacy. The firm has a roster of clients with vested interest in industrial agriculture, from energy giants BP and Exxon to chemical companies Dow and Novartis. And an exposé by *Mother Jones* revealed that the company systemically spied on Greenpeace and other environmental organizations from the late 1990s to — at least — early 2000.¹⁴²



GMOAnswers.com was developed to shift the story about GMOs, especially on social media. To do so, Ketchum staff tracked negative Tweets about GMOs and responded with Tweets encouraging people to visit *GMOAnswers.com* to learn more. Ketchum boasted that this engagement on Twitter resulted in an “80 percent reduction in negative Twitter traffic as it relates to GMOs” and a doubling of positive media about GMOs.¹⁴³ The GMO Answers campaign was so successful the firm was short-listed for a prestigious CLIO Award for Public Relations: Crisis and Issue Management. In Ketchum’s promo video about the campaign, the firm “brags about how it spun the media on GMO issues, and how it snoops on the social media accounts of people concerned about GMOs,” writes Gary Ruskin from U.S. Right to Know.¹⁴⁴ The video was taken offline after the U.S. Right to Know called attention to it.¹⁴⁵ (The group was co-founded by a co-author of this report, Stacy Malkan).

Tactic 3: Discrediting and Attacking Journalists and Scientists

When Carey Gillam, a veteran Reuters agriculture reporter, began covering the debates about agricultural biotechnology, she found herself at the receiving end of attacks by individuals with industry ties — all for offering a balanced view. In an article that particularly riled her critics, Gillam characterized concerns with GMOs this way:

*[S]ome scientific studies warn of potential human and animal health problems, and GMO crops have been tied to environmental problems, including rising weed resistance. Millions of acres of U.S. farmland have developed weed resistance due to heavy use of crops that have been genetically altered to withstand doublings of Monsanto’s Roundup herbicide.*¹⁴⁶

This and other articles by Gillam have made her a target for biotech defenders. Val Giddings, a former executive vice president of the Biotechnology Industry Organization, wrote that Gillam's reporting is "false, and flagrantly so."¹⁴⁷ The website Academics Review (described in Tactic 5 below) gave Gillam a "failing grade" for her coverage of GMO issues.¹⁴⁸ Jon Entine, executive director of the Genetic Literacy Project (also described in Tactic 5) accused Gillam of "sloppy and biased writing."¹⁴⁹ Giddings wrote, "Perhaps it's time for her editors to move her to a beat that would give her less opportunity to exercise the prejudices she is obviously unwilling to check."¹⁵⁰

Scientists who have raised concerns with GMOs specifically, or chemical agriculture more generally, have experienced very directed attacks meant to undermine their credibility and reputations.

When asked by a reporter about the pressure from GMO proponents, a Reuters spokesperson responded, "We stand by our coverage." At one point, Gillam tweeted: "A bit astonished at the level of fear out there over truthful reporting..."¹⁵¹

Going after the credibility of reporters is a common communications tactic of the food industry. And journalists are not the only ones under fire: Scientists who have raised concerns with GMOs specifically, or chemical agriculture more generally, have experienced very directed attacks meant to undermine their credibility and reputations. In the definitive article on how industry uses personal attacks to undermine the scientific evidence, Rachel Aviv in *The New Yorker* describes the coordinated campaign against UC Berkeley scientist Tyrone Hayes by chemical giant Syngenta. When Hayes' research revealed the harms of the company's chemical herbicide atrazine, Syngenta responded with a coordinated public relations smear campaign to discredit Hayes and his findings, described in detail and reported

from internal memos and emails.¹⁵² In addition to personal and even racist attacks on Hayes, Aviv reported that Syngenta's tactics included ghost writing "editorials about the benefits of atrazine and about the flimsy science of its critics," which were then sent to "'third-party allies,' who agreed to 'byline' articles that appeared in the *Washington Times*, the *Rochester Post-Bulletin*, the *Des Moines Register*, and the *St. Cloud Times*. When a few articles in the 'op-ed pipeline' sounded too aggressive, a Syngenta consultant warned that 'some of the language of these pieces is suggestive of their source, which suggestion should be avoided at all costs.'"¹⁵³ According to company emails, Syngenta had also developed a roster of over one hundred "supportive third party stakeholders," as the emails described them, including 25 professors who could be used to defend atrazine.¹⁵⁴

This tactic plays out on social media, too, in the comment sections of news stories or in the Twitter feeds of scientists or journalists. It's become a well-known tactic of PR firms to try to influence social media by posting disparaging comments on news articles or using inflammatory language to attack critics on social media. For example, a Twitter attack on Dr. Mehmet Oz (a vocal proponent of GMO labeling) prompted a *Washington Post* story with the headline, "Dr. Oz solicits health questions on Twitter, gets attacked by trolls instead." The story describes critics "hammering Oz with a stream of sarcastic questions and attacks on his credibility as a physician."¹⁵⁵ Several Twitter users mentioned in the story happen to be among the most prolific online defenders of GMOs and other food industry talking points.¹⁵⁶

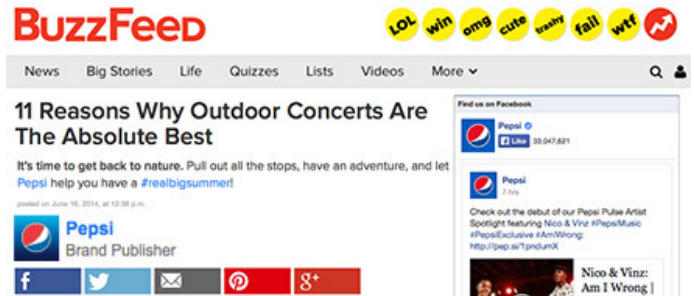
Using charged language and character attacks, this tactic is meant to distract from the content of the messages by maligning the people — the reporters or scientists — instead. It's a tactic used to against advocates, too. A March 2015 op-ed in *The Guardian*, for instance, compared the non-profit advocacy group U.S. Right to Know with climate deniers, claiming that it was engaging in an "attack on science" when it filed a Freedom of Information Act request to investigate any industry ties among *GMOAnswers.com* experts.¹⁵⁷

The bio of the op-ed authors—Nina Fedoroff, Peter Raven and Philip Sharp—included no mention of their connections to the biotechnology industry: Fedoroff is a science adviser to OFW Law whose clients include the Council for Biotechnology Information, a trade group for agricultural biotechnology.¹⁵⁸ Raven is director emeritus of the Missouri Botanical Garden, a beneficiary of the biotech industry, including a \$10 million donation from Monsanto.¹⁵⁹ Sharp is a professor at MIT and a cofounder of Biogen Idec, a biotechnology company.¹⁶⁰ Without disclosure of these ties, readers are left in the dark about these conflicts of interests.

Tactic 4: Producing Native Advertising and Entertainment Partnerships

As recently as a few years ago, native advertising was not a significant part of any brand, or industry, marketing portfolio. Today, it is one of the fastest growing segments of the marketing economy. By matching the look and feel of editorial content, native advertising can feel like real news, though it is really meant to sell you a product or a point of view. Native advertising works because it is a way to get your brand — or a broader marketing message — in front of consumers who might otherwise tune out an advertisement or clearly branded message.

This kind of advertising is rapidly expanding across a wide range of platforms, including mainstream news websites.¹⁶¹ In 2014, brands of all types spent \$3.2 billion on native advertising, up 47 percent from 2013, according to *Ad Age*, which expects that number to jump to \$4.2 billion in 2015.¹⁶² Today, most online platforms, including Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Tumblr and WordPress, have formats that allow for native advertising, as these sites move away from banners or more clear advertising displays.¹⁶³ Even *The New York Times* now runs native ads on its website; and in November 2014, it promoted the first-ever native print ad, an eight-page section about the urbanization of the world’s population, funded by Shell.¹⁶⁴ Though *The New York Times* labels its native advertising, the labels identifying the content



Example of native advertising on BuzzFeed.
Source: www.inma.org (2015)

as promotional have shrunk since the first native ads ran in January 2014, reported *Ad Age*.¹⁶⁵

Brands are finding that native advertising works. For Kraft, it generated 1.1 billion ad impressions in one year, “a four-times-better return on investment through content marketing than through even targeted advertising.”¹⁶⁶

Like native advertisement, entertainment partnerships are another way that companies and trade groups are covertly shaping the story about food and farming in the media. In 2013, the U.S. Farmers and Ranchers Alliance helped produce two segments of *Anderson Live* that featured farmers, hand-picked by USFRA, delivering the messages of the trade group. Those segments received a total of 5.7 million impressions, according to the USFRA’s annual report.¹⁶⁷ That same year, the USFRA spent at least \$1.5 million to produce a feature-length documentary film, *Farmland*, which was presented as a balanced exploration of the lives of farmers and ranchers — but whose message, critics pointed out, glorified industrialized farming operations.¹⁶⁸

In another example, Monsanto contracted with the Condé Nast Media Group to develop a series of web-based videos about questions such as: “Are food labels too complicated?” and “GMOs: Good or bad?” Called “A Seat at the Table,” the episodes would feature experts weighing in on these questions and be launched across Condé Nast platforms, including *Self*, *Epicurious*, *Bon Appetit*, *GQ*, *Details*, and a custom YouTube channel. Producers reaching out to potential experts described the project as an exciting video series centered on “food, food chains and sustainability” and featuring “an eclectic mix of industry and non-

industry notables with diverse viewpoints.” Producers did not reveal it was funded by Monsanto, the largest producer of GMOs in the country and a major opponent of GMO labeling. Several prominent food experts reported receiving similar casting requests without the Monsanto funding made clear. After articles about the series and its lack of transparency about its funders appeared on *Gawker*, *Mother Jones*, and *Al Jazeera America*, “A Seat at the Table” was shelved.¹⁶⁹ (Condé Nast producers have not responded to several emails about whether this project was canceled as a result of the controversy.)

Tactic 5: Using Third-Party Allies

In 2011, a lawsuit against the chemical and biotech giant Syngenta disclosed internal documents showing company strategies to undermine the science about its most profitable herbicide, atrazine, and its impact on ecosystems and reproductive health. Among other strategies the documents revealed, the pesticide manufacturer “routinely paid ‘third-party allies’ to appear to be independent supporters, and kept a list of 130 people and groups it could recruit as experts without disclosing ties to the company,” reported investigative journalist Clare Howard.¹⁷⁰

Using third-party allies — as Syngenta has been doing in its fight against atrazine regulation — is a tactic employed by companies across the industrial food sector. These third-party allies include groups and individuals who work directly for industry or are paid by industry-funded foundations as well as those whose careers depend on the acceptance of industrial agriculture, including the use of toxic pesticides, GMOs and routine antibiotics in livestock production. These third-party allies are quoted in mainstream media, given platforms for opinion pieces or produce their own websites — all without revealing industry ties. As a result, third-party allies and their messages are often perceived as independent and are, therefore, an effective means for industry to influence public opinion, mainstream media and policymakers.

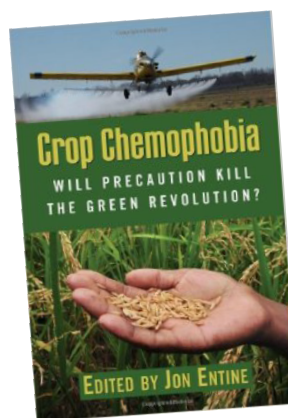
Genetic Literacy Project

In 2013, American Enterprise Institute visiting fellow Jon Entine launched the Genetic Literacy

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Project, a non-profit organization whose website was receiving an estimated 360,000 visitors per month in May 2015.¹⁷¹ The Project claims to provide a platform for “anyone with a thoughtful opinion grounded in science... to share their thoughts and reach a wide audience.”¹⁷² But our review of dozens of the blogs on the site reveals an echo chamber of industry talking points on anti-GMO labeling, attacks on organic agriculture and a defense of agrochemicals.¹⁷³ The Project is housed at George Mason University, whose funders include the Templeton Foundation and the Searle Freedom Trust, funders of conservative and free-market think tanks including the Heartland Institute, described by *The Economist* as “the world’s most prominent think tank promoting skepticism about man-made climate change.”¹⁷⁴

Entine has a history of defending toxic chemicals and genetic engineering. His consulting firm, ESG MediaMetrics, provides “media strategy, writing, speechwriting, and engagement with critics” for clients, especially at times of “intense media or government scrutiny - or to head off unfair attacks,” according to its website.¹⁷⁵ Current and past clients include Monsanto, the Vinyl Institute trade group and the natural gas company NiSource.¹⁷⁶ He is also the editor of *Crop Chemophobia: Will Precaution Kill the Green Revolution?*, a book published in 2011 that dismisses concerns about



toxic chemicals.¹⁷⁷ In the same year, he authored a lengthy “position paper” for the American Council on Science and Health, entitled *Scared to Death: How Chemophobia (“Irrational Fear of Chemicals”) Threatens Public Health*.¹⁷⁸ The ACSH is a science front group whose corporate donors include a “who’s-who of energy, agriculture, cosmetics, food, soda, chemical, pharmaceutical, and tobacco corporations,” according to a *Mother Jones* exposé.¹⁷⁹ Specific donors include Coca-Cola, Bayer CropScience, agribusiness giant Syngenta and McDonald’s.¹⁸⁰

The organization where Entine is a fellow, the American Enterprise Institute, is also tied to the fossil fuel, agribusiness, and pharmaceutical industries and known for its attacks on climate change science, including offering cash to scientists to refute the findings of the Nobel-Prize winning international climate consensus group known as the IPCC.¹⁸¹

Academics Review

Academics Review is another recent entrant into industry spin: Founded in April 2014, the organization claims to be an “association of academic professors and researchers” from around the world “committed to the unsurpassed value of the peer review in establishing sound science.”¹⁸² Yet its primary backer has a self-interest in defending GMOs and criticizing organic food: co-founder Bruce Chassy, a retired professor, was also among eleven scientists named by the Center for Science in the Public Interest in a 2003 complaint to the journal *Nature* for failing to disclose “close ties to companies that directly profit from the promotion of agriculture biotechnology.”¹⁸³ As the letter notes, Chassy “has received research grants from major food companies, and has conducted seminars for Monsanto, Genencor, Amgen, Connaught Labs and Transgene,” all companies with a stake in pesticides and genetic engineering in agriculture.¹⁸⁴ Chassy also serves on the advisory board of the front group, the American Council on Science and Health.¹⁸⁵

In 2014, Academics Review produced a report accusing the organic food industry, advocates and nonprofits of using “deceptive marketing” practi-

es to instill “false and misleading consumer health and safety perceptions” of conventional foods.¹⁸⁶ In coverage of the report, *New York Post* ran an article titled “Report: Organic Industry Achieved 25 Years of Fast Growth Through Fear and Deception,” and Food Safety News published “The Organic Industry Has Been Fibbing All Along.” None of the coverage mentioned the conflicts of interest of Academics Review or the lack of evidence to back up the claims in the report, according to an analysis in *Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting* (penned by two authors of this report).¹⁸⁷

Individual Voices

In addition to platforms like Academics Review and the Genetic Literacy Project, there are many of other third-party allies who defend the chemical agriculture industry with frequent commentaries on blogs and in mainstream media outlets. Henry I. Miller is just one example: He regularly publishes anti-organic and pro-GMO opinion pieces in outlets such as *Forbes*¹⁸⁸ and *The Wall Street Journal*.¹⁸⁹



Based at the Hoover Institution, Miller has long touted the benefits of industrial chemicals and downplayed their proven toxicity. As Gary Ruskin of U.S. Right to Know noted in the report, “Seedy Business,”¹⁹⁰ Miller has written in *The Wall Street Journal* about a supposed lack of proven connection between neonicotinoid pesticides and colony collapse disorder, despite well-documented evidence that the pesticides are a key contributor to bee declines.¹⁹¹ For *Forbes*, Miller has penned op-eds decrying Rachel Carson’s “deadly fantasies” about DDT, despite solid science on the toxicity of the chemical,¹⁹² and he has claimed the concerns about the toxic chemical bisphenol-A are unfounded.¹⁹³ Despite the clear misinformation in his writings, Miller is still given a platform on legitimate news outlets.

The Echo Chamber Effect

Ultimately, what these third-party allies can achieve is an echo chamber: industry talking points reverberating across social media platforms, news outlets and blogs, moving up the ladder of credibility to ever more prominent media outlets. The result is that messages, often crafted by or benefiting industry, are reinforced by seemingly disparate and independent sources, and take on the semblance of veracity.

Assault on Organics

To give one example, consider how the echo chamber effect has worked to attack organic agriculture on the basis that it uses toxic pesticides, too. In a 2012 *Forbes* article, Henry I. Miller claims, “organic pesticides pose the same health risks as non-organic ones” with the use of natural pesticides, such as rotenone.¹⁹⁴ He wrote: “there is a well-known association between rotenone exposure and Parkinson’s Disease.”¹⁹⁵ This was not the first time this accusation against organic farmers had been raised, and it certainly wouldn’t be the last.¹⁹⁶ A 2014 *Slate* article disparaging the value of organic food (shared 48,000 times on Facebook) warned consumers about the threat of rotenone, claiming the pesticide is “allowed in organic farming” and is “far more toxic by weight than many synthetic pesticides.”¹⁹⁷ Since 2012, *Consumer Affairs*, *The Wall Street Journal* and other media outlets have all published pieces criticizing rotenone use in organic agriculture.¹⁹⁸ And you see this accusation appearing in the comments fields of online articles about organic agriculture, on blogs, in references in Twitter.¹⁹⁹ What all this coverage fails to mention is that rotenone has been disallowed by the national organic program since 2002, and was banned by the EPA for use on food in 2007.²⁰⁰

Assault on GMO Critics

National Geographic’s “The War on Science” magazine cover listed these anti-science attacks: “Climate change does not exist; Vaccinations can lead to autism... Genetically modified food is evil.”²⁰¹ Putting critics of biotechnology into the same anti-science camp as climate change de-

Ultimately, what these third-party allies can achieve is an echo chamber: industry talking points reverberating across social media platforms, news outlets and blogs, moving up the ladder of credibility to ever more prominent media outlets. The result is that messages, often crafted by or benefiting industry, are reinforced by seemingly disparate and independent sources, and take on the semblance of veracity.

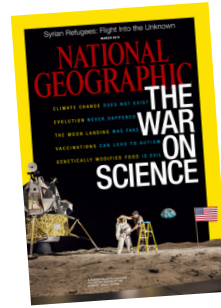
niers and those opposed to vaccinations has been a communications tactic of the biotech industry for years.²⁰² By 2015 this messaging had made the leap into one of the country’s most reputable publications.²⁰³

Over the past few years, opinion commentators in many media outlets have been echoing this frame that those opposed to GMOs are anti-science, and specifically pointing to the climate denialist comparison:

- “The biggest gap between public opinion and scientific consensus in the United States is not in the realm of vaccines, global warming or evolution but regarding the safety of genetically modified (GM) foods.” (*The Washington Post*).²⁰⁴
- “There is an equivalent level of scientific consensus on both issues... climate change is real and genetically modified foods are safe.” (*The New York Times*).²⁰⁵
- “Scientists, who have come to rely on liberals in political battles over stem-cell research, climate change and the teaching of evolution, have been dismayed to find themselves at odds with their traditional allies on this issue. Some compare the hostility to G.M.O.s to the rejection of climate-change science, except with liberal opponents instead of conservative ones.”²⁰⁶

The truth is that there are legitimate and growing concerns about the risks of widespread adoption of the genetically engineered traits that have been commercialized to date, nearly all of which have been engineered to be resistant to herbicides or to express an insecticide. As a direct result of GMO planting in the United States, the use of glyphosate on farm fields has grown 16-fold since the 1990s, when herbicide-tolerant GMOs were introduced.²⁰⁷ This increase has had a number of consequences, from growing weed resistance (nearly half of all American farmers report herbicide-resistant weeds on their farms²⁰⁸) to the eradication of milkweed on farms decimating monarch populations. As for the safety concerns, the World Health Organization’s International Agency for Research on Cancer recently designated glyphosate, that herbicide widely used on GMOs, a probable human carcinogen.²⁰⁹ Yet few media outlets report on these concerns or the statement endorsed by 300 scientists, academics and scholars published in a peer-reviewed journal that argues there is no consensus on the safety and benefits of GMOs.²¹⁰ Instead, we hear from

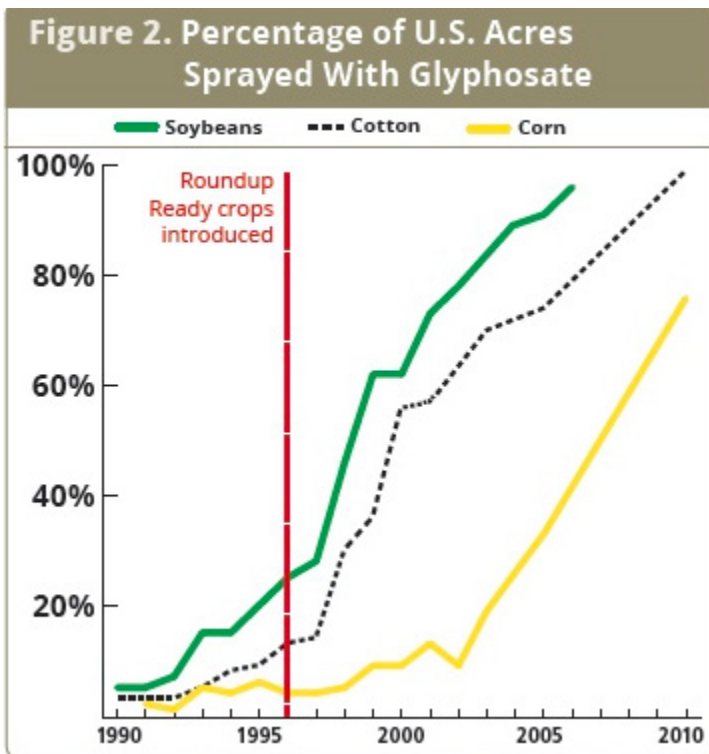
many media outlets, including Slate, that “there is a broad scientific consensus that genetically engineered crops currently on the market are safe.”²¹¹



The *National Geographic* article itself actually barely discussed the science of genetic engineering, even though its cover played up the biotech industry’s spin. As Timothy Wise of the Global Development and Environment Institute at Tufts University wrote, “What we’re seeing is a concerted campaign to do

exactly what *National Geographic* has knowingly or unknowingly done: paint GMO critics as anti-science while offering no serious discussion of the scientific controversy that still rages.”²¹²

Ultimately, the echo chamber creates the illusion that spin is fact, helping to mislead the media and cloud consumer perceptions, and potentially dampening demand for organic and non-GMO products. It also helps shore up industry positions in key policy battles, such as the fight for mandatory GMO labeling or restrictions on pesticides.



Planting of GMO crops has led to an increase in the use of herbicides, not less, as is often reported in the media. Chart Source: USDA-NASS Quickstats: Survey, Environmental, Corn, Cotton, Soybean, Application, Percent Area Planted (Average) (Glyphosate)

Conclusion and Recommendations

To make sound decisions about food and farming — from consumer decisions about food to public policies that will determine the future of our food system — it is essential to be able to separate industry spin from science and PR campaigns from public education. But today, with the industrial food sector spending hundreds of millions of dollars every year on front groups, third-party messengers, social media campaigns and other covert marketing tactics to spin the story of food, it is increasingly difficult to sort truth from fiction. The good news is that public interest groups and sustainable food advocates, despite having a tiny fraction of resources, are reaching far more people through community organizing, people-to-people education and social media. (See Annex 2 for our comparison of the public-interest bloggers and advocacy groups and industry front groups.)

The evidence also shows that the public's demand for organic and non-GMO food, and support for sustainable farmers and sound food policies, continues to grow. However, if industry-sponsored misinformation and covert communications is left unchecked, it may become increasingly difficult to maintain market momentum toward healthier food and build public support for policies that incentivize sustainable food and farming systems.

By shedding light on how the industrial food and agriculture sector is manipulating public discourse, our hope is that this report will encourage journalists, opinion leaders and the public to bring rigorous scrutiny to the veracity of industry's messages and messengers. To have an honest conversation, we need to expose this industry influence and make sure that we're hearing the real story. Not spin.

What media institutions can do: We encourage media institutions to become familiar, if they're not already, with the landscape of food-industry PR tactics and front groups. We encourage media outlets to provide adequate funding for investigative reporting necessary to reveal conflicts of interest and to support their staff to report on the complicated issues involved in food and agriculture policy. We also urge media institutions

to maintain robust conflict of interest policies and make those transparent to readers.

What the public can do: We all can play a role by becoming more savvy media consumers: We can be vigilant about looking out for these front groups and their representatives in media stories and be aware when these tactics are being deployed to sway public opinion. We can also engage with the media outlets we rely on, speaking up if and when we see front groups or their spokespeople portrayed as independent sources in news stories and expressing appreciation when stories on these complex issues are reported thoroughly. We can also educate ourselves on these issues from trusted academic institutions and non-profit organizations working for the public good, not in the corporate interest.

What environmental, public health and sustainable food advocates can do: It is as crucial as ever to counter this spin by providing the media and the public with clear, science-based evidence about the benefits of sustainable food systems as well as the impacts of industrial agriculture — from the threats of antibiotic overuse to the harms of toxic chemicals in the field. To do this work and win key policy battles ahead, it is also vital that these groups strengthen their public education efforts and expand their communications capacity.



Organizational Resources

Center for Public Integrity:

www.publicintegrity.org

A nonprofit investigative journalism organization that releases reports via its website to media outlets throughout the U.S. and around the globe. CPI is one of the largest nonpartisan, nonprofit investigative centers in America.

Center for Responsive Politics:

www.opensecrets.org

The Center for Responsive Politics is a nonprofit, nonpartisan research group that tracks the effects of money and lobbying on elections and public policy. Its website, OpenSecrets.org, allows users to track federal campaign contributions and lobbying by lobbying firms, individual lobbyists, industry, federal agency and bills. Other resources include the personal financial disclosures of all members of the U.S. Congress, the president, and top members of the administration.

LittleSis: www.littlesis.org

LittleSis is a free database detailing the connections between powerful people and organizations. It tracks the key relationships of politicians, business leaders, lobbyists, financiers, and their affiliated institutions.

SourceWatch: www.sourcewatch.org

Produced by the Center for Media and Democracy, SourceWatch tracks corporate spin and front groups and houses a user-friendly database on these groups and activity.

U.S. Right to Know: www.usrtek.org

A nonprofit organization devoted to exposing what the food industry doesn't want us to know about what's in our food.

Recommended Readings

- “The Best Public Relations Money Can Buy,” by Michele Simon and the Center for Food Safety. Available at http://www.centerforfoodsafety.org/files/front_groups_final_84531.pdf
- “The Misinformation Industry,” by The Center for Public Integrity. Available at <http://www.publicintegrity.org/politics/consider-source/misinformation-industry>
- “Seedy Business: What Big Food is Hiding with Its Slick PR Campaign,” by Gary Ruskin and U.S. Right to Know. Available at <http://usrtek.org/gmo/seedy-business/>

Articles and reports documenting industry spin:

- “The Assault on Organics,” Freedom and Accuracy in Reporting, July 1, 2014, by Kari Hamerschlag and Stacy Malkan. Available at <http://fair.org/extra-online-articles/the-assault-on-organics/>
- “Follow the Honey: Seven ways pesticide companies are spinning the bee crisis to protect profits,” Friends of the Earth, April 28, 2014, by Michele Simon. Available at: <http://libcloud.s3.amazonaws.com/93/f0/f/4656/FollowTheHoneyReport.pdf>
- “Big Ag’s Fight for Twitter Credibility,” Food First, February 17, 2015, by Teresa K. Miller. Available at: <http://foodfirst.org/big-ag-fight-for-twitter-credibility/>
- “How PR is Killing Journalism,” Take Part, February 13, 2015, by Eric Alterman. Available at: <http://www.takepart.com/feature/2015/02/13/pr-jobs-journalism-jobs>



About the Authors

Kari Hamerschlag is a senior program manager with the Food and Technology Program at Friends of the Earth, where she carries out research and implements market and policy campaigns aimed at reforming animal agriculture, reducing consumption of factory farmed animal products and promoting sustainable, fair, healthy and resilient food and farming systems. Prior to Friends of the Earth, she worked for five years as a senior analyst with the Environmental Working Group where she did research and advocacy on wide range of food and agriculture issues including the U.S. farm bill, GMOs, climate change, organic agriculture, food security and conservation policy. Kari has done extensive research on the links between food production and climate change and was the lead author on a comprehensive web-based Meat Eater's Guide to Climate Change and Health, and numerous other blog posts, op-eds and reports. Prior to EWG, Hamerschlag worked for many years as a sustainable food policy and fair trade consultant. Kari has a Master's from UC Berkeley in Latin American Studies and City and Regional Planning.

Anna Lappé is a national bestselling author and founder of the Real Food Media Project, a creative communications collaborative catalyzing research, films, and mythbusting about food, farming and sustainability. The author or co-author of three books and the contributing author to ten others, Anna's most recent book, *Diet for a Hot Planet: The Climate Crisis at the End of Your Fork and What You Can Do About It*, explores the connections between food and climate. She is a columnist for *Al Jazeera America* and *Earth Island Journal* and a founding principal of the Small Planet Institute and Small Planet Fund. Since

reading *Toxic Sludge is Good for You: Lies, Damn Lies, and the Public Relations Industry and Trust Us! We're Experts: How Industry Manipulates Science and Gambles with Your Future* by Sheldon Rampton and John Stauber in the early 2000s, Lappé has been interested in understanding, and revealing, food industry-sponsored spin. A graduate of Brown University, Lappé has a Master's in International and Public Affairs from Columbia University.

Stacy Malkan is co-founder and media director U.S. Right to Know, a nonprofit organization that investigates and reports what consumers have a right to know about our food. For over 20 years, Stacy has worked on both sides of the media to educate the public about environmental and health issues. She is author of the award-winning book, *Not Just a Pretty Face: The Ugly Side of the Beauty Industry* and co-founder of the national Campaign for Safe Cosmetics, which prompted leading beauty companies to reformulate products to remove carcinogens and other harmful chemicals. In 2012, Stacy was the media director for the California Right to Know ballot initiative to label genetically engineered foods. From 2001-2008, she led communications efforts for Health Care Without Harm, an international coalition working to reduce pollution in the health care industry. Stacy has appeared in many top media outlets, including Good Morning America, *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *USA Today* and Martha Stewart radio, and in several documentaries including *The Human Experiment*, *Unacceptable Levels* and *Pink Skies*. Prior to working as an environmental health advocate, Stacy was a journalist, magazine editor and newspaper publisher.

Annex 1: Food Industry and Agrochemical Industry Trade Associations and Front Groups

Note: The information presented below comes exclusively from the organizations' websites and their Form 990s.

Trade Associations



Biotechnology Industry Organization

www.bio.org

Founded: 1993

Annual Expenses: \$65 million (2012)

Mission: “BIO is the world’s largest trade association representing biotechnology companies, academic institutions, state biotechnology centers and related organizations across the United States and in more than 30 other nations. BIO members are involved in the research and development of innovative health-care, agricultural, industrial and environmental biotechnology products.”¹

Activity highlights: BIO produces the BIO International Convention, the world’s largest gathering of the biotechnology industry, along with industry-leading investor and partnering meetings held around the world. It also runs the blog www.biotech-now.org chronicling “innovations transforming our world.”¹

Key staff and board members:

President/CEO: James C. Greenwood

Board Chairwoman: Rachel King, GlycoMimetics

Board members include:

- Jill Zullo, Cargill
- Philip W. Miller, Monsanto
- Robin Readnour, Elanco
- Bradley Shurdut, Dow AgroSciences
- Frank Terhorst, Bayer CropScience
- Mark Wong, Agrivida
- Matthias Meder, BASF Plant Science
- Eddie Sullivan, SAB Biotherapeutics
- Jay Siegel, Janssen Pharmaceutical Companies of Johnson & Johnson

1 “About BIO.” About BIO. Biotechnology Industry Organization, 2015. Web. 26 May 2015. <<https://www.bio.org/articles/about-bio>>.



CropLife America

www.croplifeamerica.org

Founded: 1933

Annual Expenses: \$15 million (2013)

Mission: “To foster the interests of the general public and the association’s member companies by promoting innovation and the environmentally sound use of crop protection products for the economical production of safe, high quality, abundant food, fiber, and other crops.”²

Activity highlights: CropLife America lobbies for crop protection programs and industrial agriculture. It runs the CropLife Foundation “to promote and advance sustainable agriculture, and the environmental-safe use of crop protection products and bio engineered agriculture.”³ CropLife America’s member companies produce, sell and distribute virtually all of the crop protection and biotechnology products used by American farmers. These members represent the developers, manufacturers, formulators and distributors of genetic engineering for agriculture and pest management in the United States.

Key staff and board members:

President /CEO: Jay Vroom (previously with the National Fertilizer Solutions Association)

Senior Vice President of Science and Regulatory Affairs: Dr. Janet Collins (previously worked at DuPont)

Executive Vice President/COO: William F. Kuckuck (previous president of Tyson Foods International)

Senior Advisor for Trade, Intellectual Property and Strategic Issues: Douglas T. Nelson (member of the United States Industry Trade Advisory Committee on Trade in Chemicals (ITAC3) and Intellectual Property (ITAC15) charged with advising the U.S. Trade Representative and the Secretary of Commerce on U.S. Trade Policy, including the ongoing TPP negotiations and the upcoming EU/US Free Trade negotiations)

Board members include:

- Vern Hawkins, Syngenta
- Diane Allemang, Cheminova
- Dan Vradenburg, Cheminov
- James Hay, DuPont Crop Protection
- Jeffrey Allison, United Phosphorus
- Jim Blome, Bayer CropScience
- Andrew Bodane
- Susanne Wasson, Dow AgroSciences
- Lisa Safarian, Monsanto

2 CropLife America. “2013 Form 990 – CropLife America.” GuideStar. GuideStar, n.d. Web. 26 May 2015. < <http://www.guidestar.org/FinDocuments/2013/530/190/2013-530190293-0a981736-90.pdf>>.

3 “CropLife America’s Leadership.” *CropLife America*. CropLife International, 2015. Web. 26 May 2015. <<http://www.croplifeamerica.org/about/association-leadership>>.



Grocery Manufacturer's Association

www.gmaonline.org

Founded: 1908

Annual Expenses: \$41 million (2013)

Mission: "The Grocery Manufacturers Association is the voice of more than 300 leading food, beverage and consumer product companies that sustain and enhance the quality of life for hundreds of millions of people in the United States and around the globe."⁴

Activity highlights: GMA lobbies, organizes public communications and funds research for large food industry interests, including anti-GMO labeling campaigns. In 2007, GMA merged with the Food Products Association, making it the world's largest trade association representing food, beverage and consumer products. GMA also runs the website *FactsUpFront.org* with the Food Marketing Institute to encourage moderation in sugar, fat and salt.

Key staff and board members:

President/CEO: Pam Bailey

Board members include:

- Chair: Kendall Powell, General Mills
- William Cyr, Sunny Delight Beverages
- J.P. Bilbrey, The Hershey Company
- John Bryant, Kellogg Co.
- Brian Cornell, PepsiCo
- J. Alexander Douglas, Coca Cola
- Katie Doyle, Abbott Nutrition
- Gregg Engles, WhiteWave Foods
- Jeffrey Ettinger, Hormel Foods

North American Meat Institute

www.meat institute.org

Founded: 2015 (Started in 1906 as the American Meatpackers Association; formed in 2015 with the American Meat Institute/North American Meat Association merger)

Annual Expenses: \$7.8 million (2013 - American Meat Institute); \$3 million (2014- North American Meat Association)

Mission: "The North American Meat Institute (NAMI) is the leading voice for the meat and poultry industry. Formed from the 2015 merger of the American Meat Institute (AMI) and North American Meat Association (NAMA), the Institute has a rich, century-long history and provides essential member services including legislative, regulatory, scientific, international and public affairs representation. NAMI's mission is to shape a public policy environment in which the meat and poultry industry can produce wholesome products safely, efficiently and profitably. Together, the Institute's members produce the vast majority of U.S. beef, pork, lamb and poultry and the equipment, ingredients and services needed for the highest quality products."⁵

4 "GMA." *Grocery Manufacturers Association*. Grocery Manufacturers Association, 2015. Web. 26 May 2015. <<http://www.gmaonline.org/about/>>.

5 "Homepage." *North American Meat Institute*. North American Meat Institute, 2015. Web. 26 May 2015. <<https://www.meat institute.org/>>.

Activity highlights: “NAMI is a national trade association that represents companies that process 95 percent of red meat and 70 percent of turkey products in the US and their suppliers throughout America.”⁶ It lobbies and hosts conferences and events on behalf of the meat and poultry industry. Through the North American Meat Institute Foundation, NAMI has awarded over \$8 million (since 1999)⁷ in research funding for universities and other institutions towards research relating to industrial meat production practices.

Key staff and board members:

President/CEO: Patrick Boyle

Board members include:

- Dave McDonald (Chairman), OSI Industries
- Joe Azzaro, In-n-Out Burgers
- Kerry Doughty, Butterball
- Jeffrey Ettinger, Hormel Foods Corporation
- John Keating, Cargill Meat Solutions
- Tim Klein, National Beef Packing
- Sara Lilygren, Tyson Foods
- Andre Nogueira, JBS USA
- Larry Pope, Smithfield Foods
- David Schamun, Del Monte Meat Company
- Alan Simon, Omaha Steaks International
- Kevin Smith, Costco Wholesale Meats
- Kevin Tulley, Sysco Corporation

Front Groups



Alliance For Food And Farming

www.foodandfarming.info

Founded: 1989

Annual Expenses: \$243, 782 (2013)

Mission: “The mission of the Alliance for Food and Farming is to deliver credible information to consumers about the safety of fruits and vegetables.”⁸

Activity highlights: According to their website, “The primary focus of the Alliance for Food and Farming is on key issue areas involving pesticide residues, microbial foodborne illness and other questions which may impact consumer confidence in the health and safety of fruits and vegetables.”⁹ In 2010, AFF received a \$180,000 grant from the CA Dept. of Food and Agriculture for a project entitled “Correcting Misconceptions about Pesticide Residues.”¹⁰ With some help from this grant, the AFF holds webinars and publishes papers arguing that non-organic produce is safe to eat, “debunking” the Environmental Working Group’s Dirty Dozen report. It runs the website www.SafeFruitsandVeggies.com.

6 “Homepage.” *North American Meat Institute*. North American Meat Institute, 2015. Web. 26 May 2015. <<https://www.meatinstitute.org/>>.

7 “About.” *North American Meat Institute*. North American Meat Institute, 2015. Web. 26 May 2015. <<http://www.namif.org/about/>>.

8 “About Us.” *Alliance for Food and Farming*. The Alliance for Food and Farming, n.d. Web. 26 May 2015. <<http://www.foodandfarming.info/about-us/>>.

9 “About Us.” *Alliance for Food and Farming*. The Alliance for Food and Farming, n.d. Web. 26 May 2015. <<http://www.foodandfarming.info/about-us/>>.

10 “Taxpayers Funding Pro-Pesticide PR Campaign.” *EWG*. Environmental Working Group, 28 Sept. 2010. Web. 26 May 2015. <<http://www.ewg.org/agmag/2010/09/taxpayers-funding-pro-pesticide-pr-campaign>>.

Key staff and board members:

Executive director: Marilyn Dolan (previously with the California Tree Fruit Agreement)

Board members include:

- Matt McInerney, (Chairman), Western Growers
 - Bryan Silbermann, (Vice Chairman), Produce Marketing Association
 - Barry Bedwell, (Secretary/Treasurer), California Fresh Fruit Association
 - Ray Gilmer, United Fresh Produce Association
 - John Guerard, California Fresh Carrot Advisory Board
 - Alyssa Hultby, California Citrus Mutual
 - Rich Matteis, California Farm Bureau Federation
 - Kathleen Nave, California Table Grape Commission
 - Blair Richardson, U.S. Potato Board
 - Chris Schlect, Northwest Horticultural Council
 - Rick Tomlinson, California Strawberry Commission
 - Mark Villata, U.S. Highbush Blueberry Council
 - Chris Zanobini, California Pear Advisory Board/California Cherry Research and Marketing Program
-



Alliance To Feed The Future

www.alliancetofeedthefuture.org

Founded: 2011

Annual Expenses: \$521,095 (2013) (Primarily funded by the International Food Information Council Foundation.)

Mission: “Raise awareness and improve understanding of the benefits & necessity of modern food production and technology in order to meet global demand.”¹¹

Activity highlights: The Alliance to Feed the Future has an annual “Communicator of the Year Award,” given in past years in collaboration with the American Meat Institute and CropLife America. Additionally, it provides educational resources on conventional agriculture to elementary and middle schools.

Key staff and board members:

President/CEO: Dave Schmidt, International Food Information Council

Giant list of agribusiness members include: American Meat Institute, American Soybean Association, Animal Agriculture Alliance, Biotechnology Industry Organization, Center for Food Integrity, International Food Information Council, National Confectioners Association, Snack Food Association, National Frozen Pizza Institute, CropLife America, Grocery Manufacturers Association, National Chicken Council

Board members: Same as the International Food Information Council (see below).

¹¹ “About the Alliance.” *Alliance to Feed the Future*. Alliance to Feed the Future, n.d. Web. 26 May 2015. <<http://www.alliancetofeedthefuture.org/about>>.



American Council On Science And Health

www.acsh.org

Founded: 1978

Annual Expenses: \$1.8 million (2013)

Mission: “ACSH’s mission is to ensure that peer-reviewed mainstream science reaches the public, the media, and the decision-makers who determine public policy. Our objective is to restore science and common sense to personal and public health decisions in order to foster a scientifically sound and sensible public health policy for the American people. ACSH is committed to improving communication and dialogue between the scientific/medical community and the public and the media, in an effort to ensure that the coverage of health issues is based on scientific facts – not hyperbole, emotion or ideology.”¹²

Activity highlights: ACSH has published papers arguing that cutting greenhouse gases would have a worse effect on public health than global warming,¹³ defends fracking,¹⁴ dismisses concerns with BPA and atrazine,¹⁵ and fights local soda bans.¹⁶ In the fiscal year 2013, ACSH received almost \$400,000 from industry groups, including Chevron, Coca-Cola and McDonald’s.¹⁷

Key staff and board members:

Founders: Dr. Elizabeth Whelan (current), Dr. Fredrick J. Stare, Norman E. Borlaug

Partners: Alliance to Feed the Future, Culture of Alarmism, Golden Rice Petition, SafeChemicalPolicy.org, Competitive Enterprise Institute, No on I-522, No on Prop-37

Past collaborators: Washington Legal Foundation, Cato Institute, Manhattan Institute, Pacific Research Institute, and Heartland Institute

Board members include:

- Gilbert Ross, ACSH
- Thom Golab, Media Research Center (a conservative media watchdog group)
- Herbert I. London, London Center for Policy Research (a conservative think tank)
- Fred L. Smith Jr., Competitive Enterprise Institute



Animal Agriculture Alliance

www.animalagalliance.org

Formerly known as the Animal Industry Foundation

Founded: 1987

Annual Expenses: \$548, 131 (2013)

Mission: “To communicate the important role of modern animal agriculture to our nation’s economy, productivity, vitality, security and that animal well-being is central to producing safe, high-quality, affordable

¹² “About ACSH.” *American Council on Science and Health*. The American Council on Science and Health, 2013. Web. 27 May 2015. <<http://acsh.org/about-acsh/>>.

¹³ “Global Climate Change and Human Health.” *American Council on Science and Health*. The American Council on Science and Health, 1 Oct. 1997. Web. 28 May 2015. <<http://acsh.org/1997/10/global-climate-change-and-human-health/>>.

¹⁴ “The Benefits of Fracking in America.” *American Council on Science and Health*. The American Council on Science and Health, 28 Aug. 2014. Web. 28 May 2015. <<http://acsh.org/2014/08/benefits-fracking-us/>>.

¹⁵ “The Top Ten Unfounded Health Scares of 2010.” *American Council on Science and Health*. The American Council on Science and Health, 29 Dec. 2010. Web. 28 May 2015. <<http://acsh.org/2010/12/the-top-ten-unfounded-health-scares-of-2010/>>.

¹⁶ “Bloomberg’s Soda Ban Defeated Again.” *American Council on Science and Health*. The American Council on Science and Health, 31 July 2013. Web. 28 May 2015. <<http://acsh.org/2013/07/61465/>>.

¹⁷ Kroll, Andy, and Jeremy Schulman. “Leaked Documents Reveal the Secret Finances of a Pro-industry Science Group.” *Mother Jones*. Foundation for National Progress, 28 Oct. 2013. Web. 28 May 2015. <<http://www.motherjones.com/politics/2013/10/american-council-science-health-leaked-documents-fundraising>>.

and other products essential to our daily lives.”¹⁸

Activity highlights: The Animal Agriculture Alliance defends factory farming practices and antibiotic use. In addition to lobbying, the Alliance presents at conventions and hosts an annual Stakeholders Summit for industry groups to discuss industrial animal agriculture.

Key staff and board members:

Executive committee:

- Dr. Christopher Ashworth, Elanco Animal Health
- Pete Block, Hy-Line North America, LLC
- Joel Brandenburger, National Turkey Federation
- Dr. Jamie Jonker, National Milk Producers Federation
- Sherrie Niekamp, National Pork Board
- Paul Pressley, U.S. Poultry & Egg Association
- Donna Stephens, Bayer HealthCare

Board chair: Paul Pressley, U.S. Poultry and Egg Association

Board members:

- Chris Ashworth, Elanco Animal Health
- Sherrie Webb, National Pork Board
- Jamie Jonker, National Milk Producers Federation
- Adnan Aydin, American Veal Association
- Joel Brandenberger, National Turkey Federation
- Delbert Christensen, United Soybean Board
- John Graettinger, Merck Animal Health
- Chad Gregory, United Egg Producers
- Dallas Hockman, National Pork Producers Council
- Ann Nogan, American National CattleWomen, Inc.
- Sarah Novak, American Feed Industry Association



Back To Balance Coalition

www.bk2balance.org

Founded: 2014

Annual Expenses: N/A

Mission: “The Back to Balance Coalition brings together food and beverage organizations, health advocacy groups, and nutrition professionals who are supporters of balance, variety and moderation in dietary guidance. The group aims to bring forward common sense, practicality, economic, and cultural relevance into federal Dietary Guidelines.”¹⁹

Activity highlights: The Back to Balance Coalition provides “fact sheets” on the health benefits of canned vegetables, candy consumption, meat, grains and sweeteners, promoting the consumption of processed foods.

¹⁸ Animal Agriculture Alliance. “2013 Form 990 – Animal Agriculture Alliance.” *GuideStar*. GuideStar, n.d. Web. 26 May 2015. <<http://www.guidestar.org/FinDocuments/2014/541/384/2014-541384916-0b0fdd51-9.pdf>>. ¹⁹ “Homepage.” *Back to Balance*. WordPress.com, 2015. Web. 27 May 2015. <<http://www.bk2balance.org/>>.

¹⁹ Homepage.” *Back to Balance*. WordPress.com, 2015. Web. 27 May 2015. <<http://www.bk2balance.org/>>.

Key staff and board members:

Members include: American Association of Meat Processors, American Bakers Association, American Frozen Foods Institute, Can Manufacturers Institute, Canned Food Alliance, Corn Refiners Association, Food Marketing Institute, Grain Foods Foundation, Grocery Manufacturers Association, National Chicken Council, National Confectioners Association, National Pork Producers Council, National Potato Council, National Turkey Federation, North American Meat Institute, Shelf-Stable Food Processors Association, Snack Food Association, The Sugar Association, Wheat Foods Council

Supporters include: American Association of Meat Processors, American Frozen Foods Institute, Corn Refiners Association, Grocery Manufacturers Association, National Chicken Council, National Pork Producers Council, National Restaurant Association, National Turkey Federation, North American Meat Institute



Center For Consumer Freedom

www.consumerfreedom.com

Founded: 1996

Annual Expenses: \$1 million (2012)

Mission: “Research and education on issues related to consumer choices and the activist community to educate the public on consumer issues, including those related to government regulations, especially those related to product choices; educate the public about the organizations that work on issues related to public policies, especially those working to increase attacking those choices; providing educational information to policymakers, the media and the general public.”²⁰

Activity highlights: The Center for Consumer Freedom runs the websites *ActivistFacts.com*, *Humane-Watch.org*, *PetaKillsAnimals.com*, *ActivistCash.com*, *PhysicianScam.com*, *SweetScam.com*, *Trans-Fat-Facts.com*, *AnimalScam.com*, *ObesityMyths.com*, *CSPIscam.com*, and *MercuryFacts.com*. Its purpose is to advocate on behalf of the restaurant, beverage and food industries using the rhetoric of “promoting personal responsibility and protecting consumer choices.”²¹ Its executive director, Richard Berman, has been described by *60 Minutes* as “the booze and food industries’ weapon of mass destruction.”²²

Key staff and board members:

Executive director: Richard Berman, founder of the American Beverage Institute

Senior Research Analyst: Will Coggin

Directors: James Blackstock, David Browne, D. Lane Cardwell, Daniel Mindus, Richard Verrecchia

Funders:

- Started with \$600,000 from Philip Morris²³
- Many large food companies, including Coca-Cola, Tyson Chicken, Outback Steakhouse and Wendy’s.²⁴

20 Center for Consumer Freedom. “2013 Form 990 - Center for Consumer Freedom.” *GuideStar*. GuideStar, n.d. Web. 26 May 2015. <<http://www.guidestar.org/FinDocuments/2013/260/006/2013-260006579-0af5d15d-9.pdf>>.

21 “Center for Consumer Freedom.” *Center for Consumer Freedom*. Center for Consumer Freedom, n.d. Web. 28 May 2015. <<https://www.consumerfreedom.com/about/>>.

22 Schorn, Daniel. “Meet Rick Berman, A.K.A. “Dr. Evil”” *CBSNews*. CBS Interactive, 25 Feb. 2011. Web. 28 May 2015. <<http://www.cbsnews.com/news/meet-rick-berman-aka-dr-evil/>>.

23 Mayer, Caroline, and Amy Joyce. “The Escalating Obesity Wars.” *Washington Post*. The Washington Post, 27 Apr. 2005. Web. 28 May 2015. <<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/04/26/AR2005042601259.html>>.

24 Schorn, Daniel. “Meet Rick Berman, A.K.A. “Dr. Evil”” *CBSNews*. CBS Interactive, 25 Feb. 2011. Web. 28 May 2015. <<http://www.cbsnews.com/news/meet-rick-berman-aka-dr-evil/>>.



Center For Food Integrity

www.foodintegrity.org

Founded: 2007

Annual Expenses: \$5.5 million (2012)

Mission: “To build consumer trust and confidence in today’s food system by sharing accurate, balanced information, correcting misinformation, highlighting best practices that build trust and engaging stakeholders to address issues that are important to consumers.”²⁵

Activity highlights: The Center for Food Integrity defends factory- and industrial farming practices through its conferences and campaigns. It convenes various meetings and conferences including a “Food Integrity Summit” and a North American Strategy Conference on Animal Agriculture at the McDonald’s campus Hamburger University. In 2012, CFI spent \$1.3 million on its program, “A New Conversation About Food” to promote conventional agricultural practices.²⁶

Key staff and board members:

Board members:

- Ian Reece, Rabobank International
- Sue Hensley, National Restaurant Association
- Mindy Whittle, Monsanto
- Jane Ade Stevens, Indiana Soybean Association
- Craig Hunter, Burnbrae Farms
- Shelly A. Mayer, Professional Dairy Producers of Wisconsin
- Doug Winter, United Soybean Board
- Janet Barrows, Frontier Farm Credit
- Jason Clay, World Wildlife Fund



Coalition For Safe And Affordable Food

www.coalitionforsafeaffordablefood.org

Founded: 2014

Annual Expenses: N/A

Mission: “We are a broad-based coalition representing the entire American agriculture food chain – from farm to fork. We are committed to increasing the public’s understanding about the science and safety of GMOs and advocating for a uniform labeling solution.”²⁷

Activity highlights: The Coalition for Safe and Affordable Food provides information on the cost, environmental, health and hunger “benefits” of GMOs. It lobbies against GMO labeling initiatives at the state and federal level and has been advocating in support of the federal Safe and Accurate Food Labeling Act, a bill that would nullify state GMO labeling bills and codify voluntary GMO labeling.²⁸

25 “Mission & Vision.” *The Center for Food Integrity*. Center for Food Integrity, 2015. Web. 27 May 2015. <<http://www.foodintegrity.org/about-us/mission-vision>>.

26 The Center for Food Integrity. “2013 Form 990 – The Center for Food Integrity.” *GuideStar*. GuideStar, n.d. Web. 26 May 2015. <<http://www.guidestar.org/FinDocuments/2013/204/662/2013-204662713-0b002fe8-90.pdf>>.

27 “About the Coalition.” Coalition for Safe Affordable Food. Coalition for Safe Affordable Food, 2015. Web. 27 May 2015. <<http://coalitionforsafeaffordablefood.org/coalition/>>.

28 “We Need a Reasonable, Common-Sense Solution.” *Coalition for Safe Affordable Food*. Coalition for Safe & Affordable Food, n.d. Web. 28 May 2015. <<http://coalitionforsafeaffordablefood.org/common-sense-solution/>>.

Key staff and board members:

Founded by GMA.

40 Food industry members include: American Bakers Association, American Beverage Association, American Frozen Food Institute, American Soybean Association, Corn Refiners Association, Council for Responsible Nutrition, Flavor & Extract Manufacturers Association, Global Cold Chain Alliance, International Dairy Foods Association, National Association of Manufacturers, National Confectioners Association, National Fisheries Institute, National Restaurant Association, National Turkey Federation and Snack Food Association



Council For Biotechnology Information

www.whybiotech.com

Founded: 2000

Annual Expenses: \$3 million (2012)

Mission: “To promote agricultural plant biotechnology through the exchange of information about its benefits and safety through research, education, advocacy and other means in the United States, Canada, and Mexico.”²⁹

Activity highlights: The Council for Biotechnology Information works to promote the acceptance of biotechnology through trainings, conferences and writing policy briefs. It runs the website *www.GMOAnswers.com*. In the 2012-13 fiscal year, CBI spent \$1.25 million “training third party spokespeople (farmers, academics, dieticians) to educate media and public about risk and about the benefits of ag biotech,” as well as “partner[ing] with grower groups, academia, and food chain to enhance acceptance of ag biotech.”³⁰ CBI also donated money to groups such as the Hawaii Crop Improvement Association for “outreach, education, lobbying, and communication activities”³¹ on biotechnology.

Key staff and board members:

Executive director: Cathleen Enright, Executive Director and formerly of the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative

Board members

- Jerry Flint, DuPont Pioneer
- Ralf-Michael Schmidt, BASF Group
- Naomi Stevens, Bayer CropScience
- Jerry Steiner, Sustainability and Corporate Affairs, Monsanto Company
- Brad Shurdut, Dow AgroSciences
- Jessica Adelman, Syngenta
- Cathleen Enright, Executive Director and formerly of the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative

Other groups involved: Aventis CropScience, Novartis, the Biotechnology Industry Organization and the American Crop Protection Association.

29 Council for Biotechnology Information. “2013 Form 990 – Council for Biotechnology Information.” *GuideStar*. GuideStar, n.d. Web. 26 May 2015. < <http://www.guidestar.org/>

30 Council for Biotechnology Information. “2013 Form 990 – Council for Biotechnology Information.” *GuideStar*. GuideStar, n.d. Web. 26 May 2015. < <http://www.guidestar.org/FinDocuments/2013/264/188/2013-264188804-0af09817-90.pdf>>.

31 Council for Biotechnology Information. “2013 Form 990 – Council for Biotechnology Information.” *GuideStar*. GuideStar, n.d. Web. 26 May 2015. < <http://www.guidestar.org/FinDocuments/2013/264/188/2013-264188804-0af09817-90.pdf>>.

Supporting partners for GMOAnswers.com: The American Council on Science and Health, The American Farm Bureau Federation, American Seed Trade Association, American Soybean Association, The American Sugarbeet Growers Association, National Association of Wheat Growers, National Corn Growers Association, National Cotton Council, Ohio AgriBusiness Association, South Dakota Agri-Business Association, The U.S. Beet Sugar Association



Global Harvest Initiative

www.globalharvestinitiative.org

Founded: 2009

Annual Expenses: \$735,542 (2013)

Mission: “The Global Harvest Initiative (GHI) is a private-sector voice for productivity growth throughout the agricultural value chain to sustainably meet the demands of a growing world. GHI believes the right policies can improve global food and nutrition security by accelerating agricultural productivity gains while conserving natural resources. Every year GHI releases its signature GAP Report®, an annual benchmark of the global rate of agricultural productivity.”³²

Activity highlights: The Global Harvest Initiative promotes the removal of global and regional trade barriers in agriculture, enhancing private sector involvement in agriculture and rural infrastructure development, conventional agriculture and genetic engineering. It has worked with organizations like the Bill & Melinda Gate Foundation and the Howard G. Buffett Foundation to promote GE seeds in sub-Saharan Africa.³³

Key staff and board members:

Board members:

- Chair: Claudia Garcia, Elanco
- Richard Kottmeyer, Accenture
- Susan Bunz, DuPont Pioneer
- Stanly Litow, IBM Foundation
- JB Penn, John Deere
- Cory Reed, John Deere
- Gerald Steiner, Monsanto

Due-paying members: DuPont, Elanco, John Deere, Monsanto, Accenture

Consultative partners include: Congressional Hunger Center, Conservation International, WWF, The Nature Conservancy

32 “About Us.” *Global Harvest Initiative*. Global Harvest Initiative, 2011. Web. 27 May 2015. <<http://www.globalharvestinitiative.org/index.php/about-us/>>.

33 “Providing Solutions to Water for Food Challenges.” *Global Harvest Initiative*. Global Harvest Initiative, n.d. Web. 28 May 2015. <http://www.globalharvestinitiative.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/GHI_WaterforFood-4.pdf>.



INTERNATIONAL
FOOD INFORMATION
COUNCIL FOUNDATION

International Food Information Council

www.foodinsight.com

Founded: 1985

Annual Expenses: \$5 million (2013)

Mission: “The International Food Information Council (IFIC) Foundation is dedicated to the mission of effectively communicating science-based information on health, nutrition and food safety for the public good.”³⁴

Activity highlights: In 1991, IFIC created their “educational arm,” the International Food Information Council Foundation. IFIC Foundation projects have included research on media coverage of diet, health, and food safety issues. One of their campaigns, FACTS (Food Advocates Communicating Through Science), was created to “combat deceptive advice, misleading statistics and alarmist tactics in food and nutrition dialogues.” As an example, one FACTS blog post on the website www.foodinsight.org provides information on the “benefits of processed foods.”³⁵

Key staff and board members:

President/CEO: David B. Schmidt. Previously served in the first Bush Administration’s director of external affairs at the USDA’s Food Safety and Inspection Service.

Senior Director of Health and Wellness Communications: Marcia Greenblum. Previously was the Senior Director of Nutrition Education at the Egg Nutrition Center.

Board members include:

- Roger T Lawrence, McCormick & Co
- Nancy Daigler, Kraft Foods
- Philippe Caradec, The Dannon Company
- Susan Bond, Abbott Nutrition (and previously ConAgra)
- Deanne Branstetter, Compass Group
- Leigh Horner, The Hershey Company
- Anne Keys, Pfizer Animal Health
- Anita Larsen, Unilever
- Ted McKinney, Indiana State Dept of Ag (previously with Elanco)
- Michael Mullen, Mount Sinai Hospital
- Maha Tahiri, General Mills (previous Nutrition Director at Coca-Cola)
- Cathy Andriadis, DuPont
- L. Celeste Bottorff, Coca-Cola

34 “About.” *Food Insight*. International Food Information Council, n.d. Web. 26 May 2015. <<http://www.foodinsight.org/about>>.

35 Naqvi, Mehdi. ““The Truth About Processed Foods” Winning Blog Post.” “The Truth About Processed Foods” Winning Blog Post. International Center of Excellence in Food Risk Communication, 15 Mar. 2011. Web. 28 May 2015. <<http://www.foodinsight.org/blogs/truth-about-processed-foods-winning-blog-post>>.



Keep Food Affordable
www.keepfoodaffordable.com

Founded: 2012

Annual Expenses: N/A

Mission: “Keep Food Affordable is a coalition that brings together consumers, farmers, and food security organizations to keep food safe, affordable, and available for all Americans.”³⁶

Activity highlights: Keep Food Affordable provides information on food polices and initiatives while lobbying for factory farm antibiotic use, pink slime, and fighting back against The Egg Bill.³⁷

Key staff and board members:

Founded by the National Pork Producers Council.

Members include: Egg Farmers of America, National Poultry Producers Council



Protect The Harvest
www.protecttheharvest.com

Founded: 2011

Annual Expenses: \$870, 811 (2012)

Mission: “Protect The Harvest was created to fight back and defend American families, farmers, sportsmen and animal owners from the growing threat posed by the radical animal rights movement. The organization has three objectives: 1) Inform America’s consumers, businesses and decision-makers about the true nature and reach of animal rights groups like the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) and the potential consequences of their agenda, 2) Protect our freedoms and way of life by creating lasting legal safeguards for farmers, sportsmen and animal owners, 3) Respond to the activities of radical groups like the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) by opposing their efforts to pass laws or enact regulations that would restrict the rights and freedoms of farmers, sportsmen and animal owners.”³⁸

Activity highlights: Protect the Harvest campaigns against any initiatives or organizations focusing on reducing meat consumption or restricting hunting. The organization focuses on campaigning against the Humane Society of the United States and defending factory farming practices.³⁹

Key staff and board members:

Founder/Chair: Forrest Lucas, multimillionaire founder of Lucas Oil Products (which annually brings in \$150 million in revenue)

Executive director: Brian Kippenstein, beef cattle farmer, former Chief of Staff to Senator Kit Bond

36 “About.” *Keep Food Affordable*. N.p., 2015. Web. 27 May 2015. <<http://keepfoodaffordable.com/about/>>.

37 “Issues.” *Keep Food Affordable*. Keep Food Affordable, n.d. Web. 28 May 2015. <<http://keepfoodaffordable.com/issues/>>.

38 “Mission Statement.” *Protect the Harvest*. Protect the Harvest, 2013. Web. 27 May 2015. <<http://protecttheharvest.com/who-we-are/mission-statement/>>.

39 “Animal Rights Vs. Farmers & Ranchers.” *Protect the Harvest*. Protect the Harvest, n.d. Web. 28 May 2015. <<http://protecttheharvest.com/who-is-under-attack/animal-rights-vs-farmers/>>.



U.S. Farmers And Ranchers Alliance

www.fooddialogues.com

Founded: 2011

Annual Expenses: \$10.2 million (2013)

Mission: "To ensure farmers and ranchers have freedom to operate and market the products they produce."⁴⁰

Activity highlights: USFRA funded a documentary called *Farmland* to counter the films *Food, Inc.*, and *King Corn*.⁴¹ The organization holds forums with panel discussions around the country related to antibiotics, animal welfare, farm size, and media marketing.

Key staff and board members:

Consists of over 80 farmer and rancher led organizations and partners representing big agriculture.

Premier Partners: DuPont, John Deere, Monsanto

Industry Partner Council: BASF, Cargill, CropLife America, Dow AgroSciences, Elanco Animal Health, Farm Credit, Merck Animal Health, Syngenta, Zoetis

Board members include:

- Nancy Kavazanjan, United Soybean Board
- Brad Greenway, National Pork Board
- Mike Geske, National Corn Growers Association
- Dawn Caldwell, NCBA – Federation of State Beef Councils
- Todd Frazier, DuPont Pioneer
- Lisa Lunz, corn and soybean producer and Nebraska Soybean board
- Bob Stallman, American Farm Bureau Federation
- Max Bozeman, Cattlemen's Beef Board/Beef Checkoff
- Jane Ade Stevens, Indiana Soybean Alliance
- Charles Studer, John Deere
- Michael Parrish, Monsanto
- Gene Stoele, Minnesota Soybean Research & Promotion Council
- Forrest Roberts, National Cattlemen's Beef Association
- Chris Galen, National Milk Producers Federation
- Doug Wolf, National Pork Producers Council
- Monty Henderson, US Poultry & Egg Association

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Annex 2: Social Media Reach of Public Interest Advocates vs. Industry Funded Groups

Leading Good Food Advocates	Monthly Website Visitors* (April 2015)	Facebook Likes**	Twitter Followers**
Environmental Working Group	1.1M	456.5K	37.4K
Union of Concerned Scientists	580K	90K	26.4K
Friends of the Earth (US)	290K	202.4K	73.1K
Organic Consumers Association	230K	933.5K	125K
Food and Water Watch	150K	136.9K	47.8K
Consumers Union	140K	139.6K	10.1K
Food Tank	110K	221.7K	119K
Food Democracy Now!	90K	138.4K	89.1K
Pesticide Action Network North America	80K	26K	5K
Center for Food Safety	65K	110.1K	28.7K
TOTAL	2.8M	2.5M	561.6K

Food and Ag Trade Associations/ Front Groups	Monthly Website Visitors* (April 2015)	Facebook Likes**	Twitter Followers**
Coalition for Safe and Affordable Food	220K	82.4K	14.7K
Biotechnology Industry Organization	140K	11.7K	64.5K
Council for Biotechnology Information (CBI)/GmoAnswers.com	CBI: Insufficient page views GmoAnswers.com: 60K	CBI: 5K GmoAnswers.com: 6.1K	GmoAnswers.com: 4.5K
Grocery Manufacturers Association	35K	1.2K	4.4K
U.S. Farmers and Ranchers Alliance	10K	350.3K	23.4K
Center for Consumer Freedom	9K	122.1K	3K
Center for Food Integrity	3K	1.6K	4.9K
Animal Agriculture Alliance	3K	14K	15.3K
Alliance for Food and Farming (AFF)/ SafeFruitsAndVeggies.com	SafeFruitsAndVeggies.com: 1K	AFF: 3.2K	SafeFruitsAndVeggies.com: 0.8K
Keep Food Affordable	Insufficient page views	42.3K	135.7K
TOTAL	481K	639.9K	135.7K

*Statistics from similarweb.com

**Statistics gathered May 2015

Annex 3: Expenses of Industry Trade Associations (2009-2013)

All figures from publicly available Form 990s unless otherwise noted

Expenses by Year

Tax-Exempt Trade Association	2013	2012	2011	2010	2009	Totals	Year Founded
American Meat Institute							
	\$7,793,257	\$8,740,112	\$10,133,280	\$8,803,780	\$10,968,345	\$46,438,774	1949
Biotechnology Industry Organization							
	\$66,176,549	\$64,927,338	\$60,961,422	\$58,750,175	\$63,396,539	\$314,212,023	1993
CropLife America							
	\$15,268,159	\$14,184,752	\$15,525,303	\$13,848,869	\$12,425,369	\$71,252,452	1933
Grocery Manufacturers Association							
	\$41,425,202	\$50,529,926	\$29,637,300	\$33,417,624	\$27,471,260	\$182,481,312	1908
All Groups Total							
	\$130,663,167	\$138,382,128	\$116,257,305	\$114,820,448	\$114,261,513	\$614,384,561	

Note: Some of the above trade associations fund the organizations below, so note these numbers are not additive.



Annex 4: Expenses of Food Industry Front Groups (2009-2013)

Tax-Exempt Front Group							
	2013	2012	2011	2010	2009	Totals	Year Founded
Alliance for Food and Farming (<i>SafeFruitsAndVeggies.com</i>)							
	\$243,782	\$327,494	\$274,278	\$211,404	\$148,260	\$1,205,218	1989
Alliance to Feed the Future*							
	unavailable	unavailable	unavailable	N/A	N/A	unknown	2011
American Council on Science and Health†							
	\$1,821,449	\$1,826,747	\$1,871,639	\$1,625,952	\$1,961,458	\$9,107,245	1978
Animal Agriculture Alliance							
	\$598,321	\$548,131	\$593,883	\$390,306	\$556,072	\$2,686,713	1987
Back to Balance Coalition							
	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	2014
Center for Consumer Freedom (<i>IRS file: Center for Organizational Research and Education</i>)							
	\$1,261,494	\$1,024,582	\$2,121,780	\$2,640,780	\$8,831,659	\$15,880,295	1996
Center for Food Integrity							
	\$5,711,445	\$5,524,539	\$4,441,847	\$2,967,635	\$2,342,537	\$20,988,003	2007
Coalition for Safe Affordable Food							
	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	2014
Council for Biotechnology Information							
	\$4,982,754	\$3,060,427	\$2,824,353	\$2,691,064	\$3,170,727	\$16,729,325	2000
Global Harvest Initiative							
	\$731,871	\$735,542	\$755,887	\$1,074,209	\$1,606,614	\$4,904,123	2009
International Food Information Council							
	\$4,964,113	\$4,714,921	\$5,129,825	\$4,726,838	\$4,631,653	\$24,167,350	1991
Keep Food Affordable‡							
	unavailable	unavailable	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	2012
Protect the Harvest							
	\$451,138	\$870,811	\$49,992	N/A	N/A	\$1,371,941	2011
U.S. Farmers and Ranchers Alliance							
	\$10,213,470	\$11,121,524	\$7,342,672	N/A	N/A	\$28,677,666	2010
Total	\$30,979,837	\$29,754,718	\$25,406,156	\$16,328,188	\$23,248,980	\$125,717,879	

* The Alliance to Feed the Future is funded by the IFIC. See http://990s.foundationcenter.org/990_pdf_archive/521/521439244/521439244_20112_9900.pdf In 2012, the Alliance spent at least \$100,000 on a social media campaign (<https://www.behance.net/gallery/4164963/SM-Policy-for-client-Alliance-to-Feed-the-Future>)

† 2013 data from ACSH not available at time of publication. 2013 figure is an average of previously available expenses.

‡ Keep Food Affordable doesn't separately disclose its spending. According to the National Pork Producers Council, the Council is "the founding organizer of this new grassroots effort." In 2012, the Council's total expenses were \$13.5 million according to its Form 990. Founding member: <http://www.porknetwork.com/pork-news/New-coalition-targets-food-affordability-and-more-158010835.htm>

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