

From: Hamerschlag, Kari [mailto:khamerschlag@foe.org]
Sent: Monday, June 29, 2015 11:25 PM
To: Hamerschlag, Kari
Cc: Stacy Malkan; Anna Lappé
Subject: Spinning Food: Please share far and wide
Importance: High

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

Today, my colleagues Anna Lappe, Stacy Malkan and I are excited to share our new report-[Spinning Food industry front groups and covert communications are shaping the story of food.](#)

Our findings are stunning (but may not surprise you): The industrial food sector has spent hundreds of million dollars over the past few years on stealth PR tactics and deployed over a dozen front groups to push cool messages to attack organic food, defend pesticides and the routine use of antibiotics, and promote GMO messages that are making their way, day after day, to the pages of the largest media outlets.

Our blog post about the report is [here](#).

Our aim is to shed light on how the food and agrochemical industry is trying to defuse concerns about the of chemical-intensive industrial agriculture and undermine public confidence in the benefits of organic and diverse, ecological production systems. We also hope to encourage journalists, opinion leaders and to bring increased scrutiny to industry's messages and messengers and to inspire greater investment in communications within our own organizations and the funder community.

Will you be our echo chamber and help us spread the word about this report and our findings?

Why do they do it? Because it works, obviously. These are not scientists, they are cultural spokespeople, some of them are quasi-religious firebrands possessed with the spark of true conviction about their food process, so they truly think they are in a holy war against Evil Corporations who control science, but for the most part these are just corporate toadies doing the work of the companies and trade groups giving them dark money. (1) They sound crazy paranoid, especially to those of us who are supposedly part of this cabal on the science side, but if your marketplace is zealots you have to feed them ideological red meat. Sorry, I mean *red organic veggie* burgers.

Obviously if you have read the first page of Google about us, or the Wikipedia page on us that is being constantly hijacked by these contractors for environmental groups, you know they have mastered the echo chamber really well. The Internet is chock full of propaganda about us but we are also not the only ones who have been smeared. We are instead victims of a well-orchestrated denial conspiracy that claims to be combating a conspiracy among scientists - but it is one that elites in environmental groups invented.

I have quite literally never had anyone on the pro-science side - not a scientist, not a journalist, not a blogger, no one - ask me to be their echo chamber. It would be bad form, downright unthinkable, because it suggests we are too stupid to be able to decide for ourselves what is worth sending around to our friends.

What does that say about how Friends of the Earth regards its donors and fellow anti-science activists? Nothing good.

Still, we are in a culture war against people who have no ethics and will do anything for money, and history is only written by the winners. So given that reality, why don't we do it too? I suppose we never thought of it. It also probably wouldn't work. Trying to control scientists is like herding butterflies, except really mean ones with Internet access who will lambaste you if you try to manipulate them - it's a big waste of time and a lot will probably go wrong and it will end up in lost friendships.

Plus, a big disadvantage we have is that our supporters are usually working at their jobs; sane, employed people don't have time to get email alerts about their hatchet pieces on Wikipedia being edited to not be crank screeds, or scour the Internet to shout down scientists and doctors. But Friends of the Earth and Sourcewatch and U.S Right To Know and some 300 other organizations either created or funded by organic company trade reps count those kinds of evangelists as their most prized possessions; it provides the veneer of validity even though the world of science knows they are just astroturfing an issue they are being paid to rant about.

So please read what we write, comment if you'd like. It's why we're here.

But don't be my echo chamber. Because if we all think the same way, there isn't any need for more than one of us.

NOTE:

(1) So as not to look like I am only highlighting Friends of the Earth, here is the PR group run by anti-science activist Gary Ruskin, which they ironically named U.S. Right To Know. Only 1.5% of their funding *does not* come from a corporation.



Donors & IRS Filings

At U.S. Right to Know, we believe that transparency is key to building a better, healthier food system. And we believe that transparency is key to building a better, healthier food system.

We are not required to disclose our major donors (contributions of \$5,000 or more).

Major Donors

Organic Consumers Association: \$314,500

Dr. Bronner's Family Foundation: \$30,000

Westreich Foundation: \$5,000

IRS Form 990

2015

2014

COPYRIGHT © 1978-2016 BY THE AMERICAN COUNCIL ON SCIENCE AND HEALTH

Source URL: <https://www.acsh.org/news/2016/09/22/will-you-be-our-echo-chamber-10197>