

Book draws protests from food leaders

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Marion Nestle's book "Food Politics," has drawn protests from some leaders in the US's food industry who are stung by Nestle's charges that top food companies engage in financial lobbying to buy support and legal bullying to silence their critics.

The Sugar Association has threatened to sue Dr. Nestle, professor and chairwoman of the department of nutrition and food studies at New York University. "Many of the nutritional problems of Americans, not the least of them obesity, can be traced to the food industry's imperative to encourage people to eat more in order to generate sales and increase income," said Nestle in the book published by the University of California Press. Corporate funding underwrites entire departments at universities, while papers presented at conferences sponsored by food companies are sometimes published as supplements to journals, said Nestle. The number of obese people in the US has doubled from the late 1970s to the early 1990s. Around 14 per cent of children were overweight as were 12 per cent of teenagers and 35 per cent among adults. Nestle asserts that the US food industry manipulates and influences what Americans eat by spending around \$33 billion a year in advertising, promotion, and millions more on lobbying. She said that among companies that sponsor university-based researches and nutrition journals are Coca-Cola, Procter & Gamble and Slim-Fast. She said even the fact sheets issued by the American Dietetic Association are sponsored by companies like Monsanto, NutraSweet and Campbell. Nutrition groups also routinely seek corporate sponsorship of meetings.