

## Chapter 22

# Food Industry and Political Influences on American Nutrition

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**Keywords** Politics • Consumer rights • Public advocacy • Corporate self-regulation  
• Food and Drug Administration • US Department of Agriculture

### Key Points

- The USDA is the government organization responsible for promoting healthy eating habits, but it is also under pressure to maintain consumption of foods purchased as commodities such as butter and sugar.
- The dollars spent on advertising by private industry far outweigh the dollars spent on public service nutrition information.
- Our food consumption patterns are influenced by commercial activities such as advertising. This starts in childhood where we develop the eating patterns we carry with us as adults.
- Legal measures (lawsuits) can be used by either public advocacy groups or private industry to influence the formation and implementation of nutritional policy.

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## 22.1 “Influence: A Power Indirectly or Intangibly Affecting a Person or Course of Events”

We eat what we buy and decisions about what we buy are heavily influenced by the food industry, government policies, and our personal beliefs about food. A nutritionist's viewpoint with respect to eating is expected to be governed largely by objective, peer-reviewed science, but the beliefs of most people are insulated from that primary layer of information. In modern industrialized nations, most people's beliefs and behaviors about nutrition are influenced directly or indirectly by, amongst other factors, governmental nutritional policy. For all of us, appreciating the influence placed on our nutrition habits can be a tough pill to swallow.

Individual behavior and governmental policies are shaped by the pressures exerted by food companies. By exploring how this influence occurs, this chapter looks at the general nature of nutritional policy and its practical application by consumers in the United States. This chapter is based on the book *Food Politics: How the Food Industry Influences Nutrition and Health*, written by one of us (MN) [1]. The reader is directed to that book for a more detailed description of this history and examples of how US food policy has been manipulated by the food industry.

The starting point for any understanding of the food industry and its game plan is to appreciate that the primary goal for each and every food company is to expand market share and generate more profit. In that respect, the food industry is little different from most other industries. Take the car industry, for example. Ford regularly launches new models and then markets them to potential customers. Its goal is clearly to boost sales, increase its market share, and generate profits. In exactly the same way food companies launch new brands of breakfast cereals and then market them to the target groups of potential customers.

There is overwhelming evidence that food companies have very little interest in the effects of their products on the health of their customers. Sometimes the new product offers a health benefit to the consumer. For example, in recent years low-salt vegetable juices have been marketed. But more often new products are as unhealthy as the majority of other food products. The common denominator is that new foods are marketed if—and only if—higher sales might be generated.

The food industry is well aware that most of its sales and the lion's share of its profits come from the sale of unhealthy foods. For that reason, these are the ones that are most heavily advertised. But the food industry goes well beyond trying to increase sales by conventional marketing, it also actively lobbies governments so as to protect its commercial interests.

## 22.2 The Food Industry and Its Influence

Eating-related behavior, purchasing in particular, occurs in a very complicated social context in which marketers play a huge part. Advertising is the most obvious tool by which the food industry attempts to manipulate consumer habits. But other marketing strategies are also employed and these are usually much more subtle.

### 22.2.1 Advertising and the Problem of Manufactured Food

Tremendous amounts of money are spent on advertising to boost the consumption of particular products. In 1999 direct media spending (advertising that goes through agencies) by McDonald's, Burger King, Taco Bell, and Coke and Diet Coke was \$627, \$404, \$207, and \$174 million, respectively [2]. This total had increased to \$5.6 billion in 2010 [3], with McDonald's contributing \$1.2 billion of that sum. In addition, companies are investing heavily in social media. Coca-Cola's direct media expenditure of \$758 million in 2010 [4] is likely to represent one-third to one-half of total marketing expenditures [5].

In light of the financial resources available for marketing, it is not surprising that the 2010 Dietary Guidelines and the new "MyPlate" program from the USDA have a lot of work to do if they wish to truly "change" the food habits of our nation. The federal government has done, and perhaps can do, little to redress this imbalance. As a result the quality of the American diet worsens and the prevalence of "diseases of the waistline" continues to grow, with diabetes now affecting approximately 10% of the population, a topic discussed in greater detail in Chap. 6 by Franz and Chap. 7 by Temple and Steyn.

Foods are consumed in their raw state that is commonly called a "whole food" or after processing. Processing in theory increases the palatability, appearance, marketability, and consumption of food products. The cost of the raw materials ("farm cost") is about 55% for eggs, 13% for frozen peas, 10% for corn flakes, 9% for canned tomatoes, and 4% for corn syrup [6]. The remainder of the consumer cost (45–90%) is for such things as transportation, labor, and packaging, and, most importantly, advertising to promote demand. On average, 80% of the cost of a food product went for these costs [7, 8], and this figure still holds [9].

Farm subsidies in the USA further exacerbate this problem by favoring corporate farmers producing corn and beans which have become "cheaper" in the last 40 years while largely unsubsidized fruits and vegetables have become more expensive [10].

For the manufacturer, it is enormously advantageous if the degree of food processing is increased because this allows huge price markups. The price per kilogram will be about three times higher for the manufactured foods than for the cost of the basic ingredients. Food corporations therefore have an obvious incentive to concentrate their advertising on manufactured food. If 10% of the product price is used for advertising and a raw apple costs 20 cents, then 2 cents would go to advertising the raw product. But if the apple is converted into an "instant microwaveable apple crisp" that sells for a dollar, then 10% means that 10 cents is now available for advertising. In other words, the funding available for advertising has jumped fivefold after the apple has been processed. And that, in brief, helps explain why so little money is spent on the advertising and promotion of raw food. Improving our nutrition may be as simple as teaching people to cook foods from raw ingredients [10], which explains the efforts of many advocates to restore cooking and home economics classes to public schools in the USA.

Food packaging includes FDA-approved labels that are "intended" to improve the consumers understanding of their nutritional "value," a problem highlighted in a

recent commentary “Front-of-Package Food Labels: Public Health or Propaganda?” [11]. When people consume manufactured food, they generally have little idea of the nutritional value of their food and how well their diets conform to their nutrition guidelines. The content, convenience, and availability of these foods, and the money spent on their marketing, all hinder the implementation of healthful nutritional policy. The myriad of package claims is broad enough that Consumer Reports now has a special online tool for the consumer to understand what these claims are and determine if they carry any scientific merit [12]. The real nutritional value of food may be further obscured by the addition of supplemental vitamin and mineral “fortification.” The FDA has recently sought to increase the documentation needed to support a claim and regularly sends warning letters [13], but it has also been met with resistance from industry arguing the First Amendment and their “right to free speech” on package labels.

### ***22.2.2 Influential Association***

One way the food industry influences people is through “image management.” Consider, for example, a donation from a corporation that aggressively markets a product known to negatively affect the oral health of children. Should this act be judged as good for society or harmful? Illustrating this, in 2003 Coca-Cola donated a million dollars to the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry (AAPD) for research [14]. The action runs the risk of undermining the science incriminating sugar-rich soda in poor dental health. It can potentially confuse the message of the AAPD which states that consumption of soft drinks may be harmful to dental health.

Following the successful drive to eliminate smoking, another movement was created that involved lawsuits blaming food companies for obesity. This led to the introduction of campaigns and bills to prevent advertising to young people (e.g., HeLP or the Healthy Lifestyles and Prevention America Act of 2004), and schools banning soft drinks sales and pulling out of “pouring rights” and similar deals (in sum, these were exclusive arrangements to market soft drinks in schools in return for a payment). In 2005, the HeLP bill was introduced to congress, attempting to “improve the health of Americans and reduce health care costs by reorienting the Nation’s health care system toward prevention, wellness, and self care,” without success. Reintroduced in 2011, HeLP has been referred to the committee of finance but it not expected to pass this time either [15].

### ***22.2.3 Schooling Young People to Become Adult Consumers***

Pouring rights provide marketers with a valuable tool to influence brand name loyalty in children. This form of marketing undermines sound nutritional teaching and has been criticized as being exceptionally unethical. What many of these perceived

healthy choices have in common is misleading. A fruit juice or fruit snack, for example, may contain little or no fruit, while its calories derive from added sugars or sweeteners. Acknowledging that very young people need help to make sound nutrition choices, Coca-Cola, in November 2003, vowed to improve its corporate image by, amongst other moves, refraining from promoting the sale of soft drinks to elementary students during the day [16]. While it has become less socially, and therefore financially, acceptable for beverage companies to enter into strict pouring rights agreements for soft drink distribution to junior and high school kids, universities are apparently another matter. Purdue University is one such school that recently entered into a pouring rights agreement with Coca-Cola [17].

School students are often targeted by food companies. Campbell's Soup, Pizza Hut, and McDonalds are just a few of the many manufacturers who create special "educational" materials that highlight the "selective nutritional value" of their products. These materials may focus on, for example, the variety of food types in a slice of pizza, but neglect to mention how the fat content and refined grains may contribute to obesity and diabetes in children who consume too much of them. These companies sometimes distribute alternative food guides that include pictures of their products and marketing symbols. Manufacturers know that children learn to recognize brand names, symbols, and cartoon/action figures as product advocates. The Keebler Elves' Cookies and Crackers, Tony Tiger's *GRRRRREAT* Frosted Corn Flakes, and Ronald McDonald the Clown are a few examples of cartoon personalities that carry a consumer from childhood products through to products marketed to adults.

In the USA, the Food and Trade Commission (FTC) is responsible for regulating advertising and, therefore, the marketing of food and beverages to children [18]. Companies are believed to spend at least \$1.5 billion annually to market products to children. Food industry fears of the threat of direct government regulatory interference has led many to create FTC-approved "self-regulatory actions," such as the Children's Advertising Review Unit (CARU) by the advertising industry to prevent misleading children age 12 and under. The food industry response to concerns about federal interference in corporate policy has been robust with respect to preserving their interests [19]. Standards for improving food industry self-regulation have been suggested to include better transparency, meaningful objectives, accountability, and oversight [20].

### 22.3 Problems with the Food Supply

The USA is able to produce a surplus of food, something that is perhaps both a blessing and a curse for health. Historically, surplus agricultural commodities have been purchased and distributed to needy persons through a series of programs supervised by the USDA. These programs supported farm income and land values, and particularly distributed butter, cheese, meat, and other commodities.

Even though commodity distribution forms a smaller and smaller portion of federal food assistance, the USDA continues to be caught in a conflict of interest.

On the one hand, it is responsible for promoting “eating less” of foods such as meat, butter, and sugar. But, at the same time, it is under political pressure from various lobby groups to boost sales of the products it purchases as part of its price-support programs. Surplus commodities are distributed, in large part, through school lunch programs and to persons of low income. This may partly explain why the prevalence of obesity in the USA is inversely related to income [21]. School lunch programs are where many people learn some of their food preferences, and the poor nutritional habits observed when food commodities are dumped in this manner may well continue into adulthood. Similar problems occur in the behavior of adult consumers who want healthier food items on the menu, but typically choose less healthy options [22].

## **22.4 Influence of Special Interest Groups and Political Action Committees**

There are a great number of special interest groups in the USA, and they exert a tremendous influence on nutritional health policy. Here is one example that implicitly makes this point. A press release from the Grocery Manufacturers of America (GMA) in 2002 reported that former Health and Human Services Secretary Tommy Thompson “encouraged GMA members to ‘go on the offensive’ against critics blaming the food industry for obesity” and “said the industry is ‘doing wonderful things’ to educate people about proper diet and exercise, but that GMA member companies should tell more people about them and implement wellness programs for their own employees” [23].

As explained earlier, the value added to food products during manufacturing and processing allows appreciably higher prices to be charged. The larger revenues generated thereby allow food corporations to influence the direction of nutritional health policy in both obvious and less obvious ways. Advertising was discussed earlier. Corporate funds are used to sponsor lobbyists who influence the writing and enforcement of laws. Special interest groups support lobbyists who work at the state and national levels of government. By giving contributions to campaign funds, corporations help ensure that politicians are sympathetic to the needs and wants of their donors. It has been estimated that in 1998 \$2.7 million dollars were spent lobbying each US Senator and Representative [24]. In 2010, the \$1.44 billion price tag from 1998 had more than doubled, reaching \$3.5 billion [25].

### **22.4.1 *The Sugar Industry Empire Strikes Back***

The manipulation of policy is well-illustrated by looking at the activities of the sugar lobby. Federal nutritional policy guidelines for sugar consumption have

changed in a clear direction of increasing obfuscation. In 1980 and 1985, the US *Dietary Guidelines* for sugar said, simply, and in just four words, "Avoid too much sugar." In 1990, it went to five words, "Use sugars only in moderation," and in 1995 to six: "Choose a diet moderate in sugars." In 2000, the scientific committee recommended that the guideline say, "Choose beverages and foods to limit your intake of sugars" (ten words), but even that was too strong. Under pressure from sugar lobbyists, the government agencies substituted the word "moderate" for "limit" so it read "Choose beverages and foods to moderate your intake of sugars." The committee working on the *Guidelines* for 2005 dropped the sugar recommendation entirely, and discussed the issue under the heading, "Choose carbohydrates wisely....," comments made by the USDA and DHHS, 2005 Report of the Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee [26].

The 2010 Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee report stated that "Americans of all ages ... eat too much added sugars, solid fats, refined grains, and sodium." While this return to clarity will be helpful for many, the latter combination is regularly abbreviated as "SoFAS" within the report, potentially adding further confusion to their recommendations. As an example of double-speak, consider the recent Sugar Association reply: "The Sugar Association completed its review of the 112-page Guidelines policy document and has determined that the 2010 Dietary Guidelines do not include or establish an upper limit on sugar or added sugars intake. However, the Association does point out that throughout the text of the Guidelines, there is a call to reduce added sugars intake, which it believes is not science-based" [27].

By contrast, the American Heart Association recommends that added sugar should be limited to no more than 100 and 150 kcal/day for women and men, respectively [28]; this is equivalent to about 5–6% of energy. It is perhaps refreshing to see that the corporate interests for salt and sugar were unable to influence the design of the new MyPlate food guide which leaves no room for snacks and desserts.

The sugar industry's stated interpretation of the evidence has for many years stood in sharp contrast to the opinions of health professionals. A saga during 2003–2004 well illustrates this. WHO issued guidelines recommending a limit on sugar consumption to 10% of total caloric intake. This is an old recommendation, one used by many countries that issue dietary advice and the precise level recommended in the booklet that accompanies the USDA Food Guide Pyramid. Nevertheless, in a campaign characterized by the media and consumer groups as tantamount to blackmail, the year between the initial release and ratification of these guidelines saw vigorous attempts by the sugar industry to prevent their adoption [29]. The Sugar Association argued that the preponderance of evidence indicates that people can safely consume a quarter of their calories as sugar. The sugar lobby's efforts included demands that the report be removed from the internet and threats that the industry would be asking congressional appropriators to challenge the \$406 million in US funding of WHO if the report was not withdrawn [30, 31].

### 22.4.2 *The Influence of TV*

When public service nutrition messages are played on TV, the station must be careful to avoid alienating their advertisers. Messages that promote moderation in calorie, fat, or sugar consumption can provide a valuable public health service, but airing these ads may negatively impact the station's relationships with advertisers from food and beverage companies. Profitability is required for the economic survival of private media outlets and the corporations they are part of. Predictably, a TV station in Iowa, "The Pork State," is likely to be reluctant to air a public service message that says: "... reduce your fat intake ...eat less pork...."

By sponsoring the production and presentation of programs on private and public television, corporations also exert influence on the content of our programming. It would be naïve to believe that public TV programs, underwritten by food manufacturers, would unhesitatingly air a news item that was clearly damaging to the interests of their sponsors. As with private TV, there is no surer way to lose one's funding than to alienate one's sponsors.

### 22.4.3 *Influence of Farm and Corporate Interests on Research*

There are many commodity and farm/food product promotion boards and organizations in the USA. How do commodity groups generate the large amounts of money needed to influence nutritional health policy? Here is one example. The Beef Checkoff Program was established as part of the 1985 Farm Bill. The National Cattlemen's Beef Promotion and Research Board, which administers the national checkoff program, receives \$1 per head on all cattle sold [32]. This program has been very successful in promoting the popular and familiar "Beef: It's What's for Dinner" program. While subject to USDA approval, the organization is a nongovernmental body and its revenues may be used for promotion, education, and research programs to improve the marketing climate for beef.

Marketing boards and corporate interests tend to fund research projects that have the potential to improve the marketability of their products. This seed funding has generated a literal explosion of research studies in areas of corporate/marketing interest. The following example illustrates this. A PubMed search for publications with the word "soy and human" found 78 hits for the 12 months of 1992, but a decade later this same period found 396 hits. Industrial giant Archer Daniels Midland (net sales of \$30.7 billion in 2003, and \$62 billion at the end of the fiscal 2010), and others like it, contribute millions of research dollars into selective projects related to soy proteins and isoflavones. By sponsoring advertisements in peer-reviewed journals, corporate soy advocates help ensure, directly or by indirect influence, that pro-soy publications will likely receive a more favorable passage through the peer-review process.

These selective projects generally have some features in common: if their findings are published, they will probably be positive, they will help ensure future grants,



and the results will probably increase product marketability. The best evidence in support of this argument comes from the realm of medical research, especially research on drugs. A study of 332 randomized trials of drugs and other medical interventions published between 1999 and 2001 revealed that those that had received industry funding were 90% more likely to report statistically significant pro-industry findings [33]. This problem appears to be rampant with food research. An analysis was made of studies conducted between 1999 and 2003 on soft drinks, juice, and milk [34]. The findings of each study were classified as being favorable or unfavorable to the industry that sponsored the study. For interventional studies, none of the studies with industry financing reported a finding that was unfavorable whereas 37% of studies with no industry funding did so.

For all types of study (including observational studies and reviews), those with industry financing were 7.6 times more likely to report a finding favorable to industry than studies with no industry financing. Funding this type of research also places pressure on the USDA and other government sources to divert funds to validate and expand on what has already been done. This sequence of events means that the original grant, obtained from industry, has the potential to create an industry-friendly research agenda.

## 22.5 Using the Legal System to Influence Nutritional Policy

Corporate giants, such as ADM and Monsanto, have gone to great lengths to ensure that food labels do not provide information that could hurt product marketing [11]. If a corporation cannot influence nutrition, they can sometimes dictate it via the courts. Classic examples include attempts in recent years to improve consumer acceptance of genetically engineered grains with improved insect resistance and meats produced with bovine growth hormone. Another noteworthy episode concerns attempts to block the ability of the consumer to identify the source and methods used in the production of their food took the form of a lawsuit in Maine. Monsanto filed suit against Oakhurst Dairy, a small dairy company which placed the words: "Our Farmer's Pledge: No Artificial Growth Hormones Used" on its packaging. A settlement was reached where Oakhurst was permitted to keep their original claim as long as their packaging also included this statement: "FDA states: No significant difference in milk from cows treated with artificial growth hormones" [35]. Small companies often find the threat of legal action by a corporate giant is tantamount to blackmail, just by considering the costs of a legal defense.

Lawsuits are a two-way street. A variety of public interest organizations, such as the Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI), the Union of Concerned Scientists, and the Center for Food Safety, have turned to the legal system as a way to influence nutrition and food quality policy. By initiating lawsuits, food producers or government organizations can be influenced. The impact often comes more from the bad press that can be associated with a lawsuit, in addition to any fines that may result. More recently groups with little history of involvement in nutrition have

weighed in, such as the Sierra Club and their dispute with the use of genetically modified grains in the USA and other countries.

Success in the USA with respect to controlling smoking and putting limits on advertising by the smoking industry has hinged in large part on the powers of State Attorney Generals. The national obesity epidemic presents a similar problem that is often managed at the level of a state. *Parens patriae* is the legal responsibility that State Attorney Generals have to promote the well-being of its residents and the interests of the states, although legal limits to this power differ widely between states [36]. They are particularly important for determining whether to enforce laws regarding Unfair and Deceptive Acts and Practices. State Attorney Generals can wield their power by directly filing lawsuits, by promoting/enforcing consumer protection, by drafting new legislation, and developing coordinated multistate actions to address a problem. Coordination between states and the federal government and the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) has also been an important aspect of control, especially with respect to food advertising directed toward children [18].

Self-regulatory bodies within areas of industry seek to limit the negative public image of industry and maintain independence from government interference. The Distilled Spirits Council represents one such self-regulatory body within the US alcohol industry which has had the most successful outcomes [20]. A key part of their "code" is the incorporation of responsible drinking statements in advertisements. However, their use of the phrase "drink responsibly" or "drink in moderation" at the end of a TV advertisement is of little consequence to the habits and actions of potential consumers.

## 22.6 Front Organizations to Influence Public Opinion

Front organizations provide another way for the food industry to influence lawmakers by creating and directing consumer hostility. Food taxes have been suggested as a way to improve the US diet and reduce sugar consumption [37, 38]. Americans Against Food Taxes is a classic "front organization". Their website [39] claims that they are:

..... a coalition of concerned citizens—responsible individuals, financially strapped families, small and large businesses in communities across the country—opposed to the government tax hikes on food and beverages, including soda, juice drinks, and flavored milks. The mission of the coalition is twofold: 1) To promote a healthy economy and healthy lifestyles by educating Americans about smart solutions that rely upon science, economic realities and common sense; and 2) To prevent the enactment of regressive and discriminatory taxes that will not teach our children how to live a healthy lifestyle, and will have no meaningful impact on public health, but will have a negative impact on American families struggling in this economy.

Perhaps we are cynical but with 499 corporate sponsors displayed on their website, there is little doubt as to their true motives.

## 22.7 British Food Policy Goes Bananas

Lest anyone think that the USA is the only place where the food industry has been allowed to hijack food policy, a look across the pond reveals some disturbing trends.

The UK has an agency—or at least it used to have—called the Food Standards Agency (FSA). This agency was set up by the government but had much autonomy. One of its great achievements was to invent the traffic lights food label which is described in Chap. 17 by Cuskelly, Woodside, and Temple. This food label system brought clarity and simplicity to the front of food packaging. In 2010, the UK elected a new government which implemented an economic policy similar to that advocated by the Republican Party in the USA. One of its first actions was to dismantle the FSA and incorporate its pieces into the Department of Health. By this means, the FSA was brought under more direct government control.

Is there a direct link between the traffic lights food label (and other excellent work of the FSA) and its demise? Quite simply, we don't know. But the following episode indicates what the food industry thinks about traffic lights food labels. In June 2010, the European Parliament was debating whether to implement this food labeling system within the European Union. The food industry spent an estimated \$1.3 billion on lobbying to try and kill the plan [40].

Dismantling the FSA was merely the British government's first step in a reorientation of policies related to food and public health. In late 2010 the government announced their intention to set up several groups to provide advice on new policies, such as how best to tackle obesity. These groups would be dominated by fast food and processed food companies, including McDonald's, KFC, PepsiCo, and Mars [41]. For good measure, the lobby group representing the alcohol industry was made chair of the group in charge of formulating alcohol policy.

## 22.8 Conclusions

Today, Americans are locked into an ever-worsening spiral of obesity and diabetes, what are often called "diseases of the waistline." This tells us that American nutritional habits have become terribly misdirected. Vast amounts of money are now spent on advertising and other forms of marketing so as to generate consumer demand for food products much of which is unhealthy.

Lobbyists for the food industry have become entrenched in the political system; their primary function being to serve the narrow financial interests of particular farm and food industry interests. As a result, government food policy is often dictated by questions of economics rather than of health. Trade and political action groups also influence the availability of research funding and the direction of projects funded by otherwise "independent" universities and research centers. Finally, the legal system has become a tool where corporate interests can influence national health policy in such areas as food labeling. More recently, legal measures have also

been implemented by consumer advocacy groups hoping to assert new policies for promoting consumer health.

A variety of voices will continue to influence the way our nutritional health is determined. What remains to be determined is how effective farm and industrial groups will be at influencing the formation of a policy that promotes economic success and profitability. What also remains to be determined is how effective consumer advocacy groups, such as the CSPI, can be at providing a counterbalance to corporate interests. What is most difficult to determine is the extent to which government organizations can be neutral with respect to setting nutritional health guidelines and legislation that ensures both the health of people and the economy.

It is also becoming apparent that transparency is critical with respect to the influence of funding to the nonprofit and advocacy agencies that make recommendations to government. The recent policy recommendations of the American Heart Association could go along ways toward creating a model for transparency in this respect [42].

Many people suppose that, knowing this, governments, like nutritionists, rely heavily on the best available health-related scientific evidence in formulating their nutrition policies. Alas, this is often far from the case. In practice, governmental nutritional policy translates nutrition science then tempers it within the current context of the relevant food market, which leaves it sometimes attempting to serve at once the disparate interests of individuals and economic interests of corporations. As such, the cart of nutritional policy oftentimes seems to be in the lead with the horse of scientific justification following some distance behind. This routinely seems to have been the case with how nutritional health policy was created, manipulated, and implemented in the USA.

What is the answer to our tempering the influence of the food and beverage industry on the formation of our government policy? Asking industry to "play nice" does not appear to be a realistic solution, neither does a strict Stalinist legal code. The solution is somewhere in between, and will be forged in part by the need of industry to maintain its "image" with respect to the risk of government regulatory interference, the need to maintain investor stock value, and the need to maintain enough public image to ensure that their products are not boycotted. The most important part of the solution is to recognize that influence can be a problem.

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