

## THE ‘BUSINESS OF MALNUTRITION’: THE PERFECT PUBLIC RELATIONS COVER FOR BIG FOOD

*Patti Rundall*<sup>1</sup>

“The secret of success is sincerity. Once you can fake that you’ve got it made.”  
Unknown author

Concern about all forms of malnutrition, especially undernutrition and overnutrition, has brought food corporations and the human right to adequate food and nutrition into sharp focus. This article examines how non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the governments of developing countries are being lured into partnerships and ‘multi-stakeholder’<sup>2</sup> arrangements with corporations through the ‘business of malnutrition’. It argues that these approaches are unlikely to solve the problem of malnutrition, and may even worsen matters by giving corporations unprecedented access to policy-making processes, especially in developing countries. This could undermine confidence in bio-diverse culturally appropriate and affordable foods and create larger markets for highly processed fortified foods, supplements and snacks that have significant adverse health implications. The article proposes that engaging in corporate social responsibility (CSR) strategies is not a benign activity and poses serious risks, including preventing corporations from being held fully accountable for their actions.

### VOLUNTARY COMMITMENTS VS. BINDING REGULATION<sup>3</sup>

Overnutrition (obesity) is one of the underlying causes of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) such as cancer, heart disease and diabetes, which are fast consuming national health care system and family budgets in rich and poor countries alike. Obesity occupies most of the public spotlight, and undernutrition—i.e. the stunting, wasting of young children, specifically during their first 1,000 days—has caught the attention of development NGOs, UN agencies, industrialized countries and donors.

There is consensus that the marketing of highly processed products with high levels of fat, salt and/or sugar (‘Big Food’) is a major cause of the overnutrition and obesity problems.<sup>4</sup> This has led to increased calls for the regulation of such marketing. These calls are opposed by food corporations who present themselves as an essential part of the ‘solution’, arguing that voluntary commitments to reduce advertising, reformulate their products (reducing sugar, fat and salt) and sponsor health education will solve the problem. As Peter Brabeck, the Nestlé CEO, said at the Nestlé Annual General Meeting (AGM) in 2010: “... tying corporations up in regulatory straightjackets is unnecessary when companies such as Nestlé already have sound principles and core values.”<sup>5</sup>

However, a key part of Nestlé’s CSR program since 1992, for instance, covers ‘nutrition education’ elements that have been criticized for blurring the boundaries between education and marketing.<sup>6</sup> Unfortunately, while experience has shown that this repositioning is mostly a public relations (PR) strategy designed to prevent regulatory action, part of the international development community supports and engages in CSR initiatives.<sup>7</sup> Concern around this issue dominated the 2015 World Health Assembly (WHA): should governments concentrate on regulating problematic industries or ‘engage’ or ‘partner’ with them and accept funding?<sup>8</sup>

1 [Patti Rundall](#) is a Global Advocacy Spokesperson for the International Baby Food Action Network (IBFAN). IBFAN is a 35 year-old global network that works to protect, promote and support breastfeeding and food-based complementary feeding to realize a child’s rights to health and adequate food and nutrition. IBFAN is committed to working with governments, the United Nations and other organizations to help ensure child survival and to draw the world’s attention to strategies that tackle malnutrition in a just, equitable and sustainable way, prioritizing people’s ability to locally produce and access nutritious foods. For more information, please visit: [www.ibfan.org](http://www.ibfan.org). Special thanks to Lida Lhotska (IBFAN-GIFA, Geneva Infant Feeding Association) and Stefano Prato (Society for International Development, SID) for their support in reviewing this article. This article was originally written in English.

2 For further information on ‘multi-stakeholderism’ and its origins, please see the insight box “The Origins of ‘Multi-Stakeholderism’—Why Words Matter” below.

3 For further information on the discussion around voluntary commitments vs. binding regulation, please see: Monsalve Suárez, Sofia and Fabienne Aubry. “Rethinking the Voluntary vs. Binding Divide.” *Right to Food and Nutrition Watch* (2014): 22–25. Available at: [www.rtfn-watch.org/fileadmin/media/rtfn-watch.org/ENGLISH/pdf/Watch\\_2014/Watch\\_2014\\_PDFs/R\\_t\\_F\\_a\\_N\\_Watch\\_2014\\_eng.pdf#page=22](http://www.rtfn-watch.org/fileadmin/media/rtfn-watch.org/ENGLISH/pdf/Watch_2014/Watch_2014_PDFs/R_t_F_a_N_Watch_2014_eng.pdf#page=22).

The conflicting interests lying at the heart of policy setting, especially in producer countries, complicate matters further. For example, policy makers in the European Union (EU) know that EU treaties and human rights covenants require that “a high level of human health protection shall be ensured in the definition and implementation of all Community policies and activities.”<sup>9</sup> On the other hand, they also know that ten times as much money can be gained from selling a kilo of infant formula with added nutrients than from selling a kilo of milk powder.<sup>10</sup> Policy makers are also acutely aware of the food industry being Europe’s largest manufacturing and employment sector and the keenness of Ireland, New Zealand and other producer nations to exploit such markets. They also know that attempting to bring in effective regulations is, as one delegate to the World Health Organization (WHO) said, like holding “liquid fire”.

All these factors can have a disincentivizing and chilling effect on those wishing to introduce effective regulation. Moreover, the new pacts enshrined in trade agreements such as the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP), Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), and Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) contain provisions for the investor-state dispute settlement (ISDS), and will allow corporations to sue governments if their regulations interfere with their current and future profits.<sup>11</sup>

With the right support governments can fulfil their obligations to safeguard public health and human rights and regulate corporations. If UN agencies and NGOs stay focused on the long term, they can help governments deconstruct and counter industry arguments and avoid the ephemeral voluntary CSR schemes favored by the corporate sector.<sup>12</sup>

These ‘voluntary’ schemes suit corporations well, especially when they are tasked to develop communication strategies to promote positive behaviors and sponsor educational nutrition programs. This allows them to advertise any incremental changes made, build public trust, and reposition themselves as agents of ‘health and wellness’. The positive image they gain from associating with high profile partners such as governments, the UN and international NGOs, has a substantial financial and emotional value.<sup>13</sup> From a PR viewpoint, they are highly effective at projecting a positive image and blurring the lines between the public and private sectors. They also help facilitate further incursions of corporations into the policy-making sphere.

From a health and education perspective, these strategies risk misleading children about nutrition and are less effective than, for example, taxing junk foods or regulating marketing strategies.<sup>14</sup> The CSR ‘voluntary’ schemes exist only as long as companies want them and rarely reduce the adverse impact of marketing strategies.<sup>15</sup> For instance, in the UK in 2011, the UK’s coalition government created a new partnership with the food and drinks industry entitled ‘Responsibility Deal’. This handed responsibility for reducing alcohol consumption and improving nutrition to corporations and resulted in a backsliding on salt reduction targets.<sup>16</sup>

- 4 Robert Moodie *et al.*, “Profits and Pandemics: Prevention of Harmful Effects of Tobacco, Alcohol, and Ultra-Processed Food and Drink Industries.” *The Lancet* 381 (2013): 670–679.
- 5 Baby Milk Action. “Nestlé Challenged at its Annual General Meeting, 2010.” Presentation made at Nestlé’s Annual General Meeting, Lausanne, Switzerland, April 15, 2010. Available at: [www.babymilkaction.org/archives/618](http://www.babymilkaction.org/archives/618).
- 6 Baby Milk Action. *Tackling Obesity: How Companies Use Education to Build ‘Trust’*. Cambridge, UK: Baby Milk Action, 2012.
- 7 See, for instance, the EU Commission Platform for Action on Diet, Physical Activity and Health. Available at: [ec.europa.eu/health/nutrition\\_physical\\_activity/platform/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/health/nutrition_physical_activity/platform/index_en.htm).
- 8 IBFAN. *Letter to WHO Commission on Ending Childhood Obesity*. Geneva: IBFAN, December 17, 2014. Available at: [www.babymilkaction.org/archives/2860](http://www.babymilkaction.org/archives/2860).
- 9 Article 168 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union. Available at: [eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:12012E/TXT&from=EN](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:12012E/TXT&from=EN).
- 10 Coriolis. *Infant Formula Value Chain*. Auckland: Coriolis, 2014. This was prepared for the New Zealand Board of the Pacific Economic Co-operation Council, New Zealand. Available at: [nzpecc.org.nz/20901/index.html](http://nzpecc.org.nz/20901/index.html).
- 11 For further information on trade agreements and their impact on human rights, please see article “Inequity Unlimited: Food on the WTO Table” in this issue of the *Right to Food and Nutrition Watch*.
- 12 See the insight box “The Origins of ‘Multi-Stakeholderism’—Why Words Matter” below.
- 13 Monbiot, George. “How a Corporate Cult Captures and Destroys our Best Graduates.” *The Guardian*, June 3, 2015. Available at: [www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/jun/03/city-corporates-destroy-best-minds](http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/jun/03/city-corporates-destroy-best-minds).
- 14 Rayner, Mike. “Population Approaches to Non-communicable Disease Prevention: The Evidence.” Paper presented at the BMJ Evidence Based Medicine Conference, London, April 14, 2015.
- 15 Hawkes, Corinna, and Jennifer L. Harris. “An Analysis of the Content of Food Industry Pledges on Marketing to Children.” *Public Health Nutrition* 14 (2011): 1403–1414. More articles are available at: [info.babymilkaction.org/node/466](http://info.babymilkaction.org/node/466).
- 16 Hope, Jenny. “Ministers’ Shame on Killer Salt: Government Sabotage of Drive to Cut Intake Has Cost 6,000 Lives, Say Doctors.” *Daily Mail*, April 29, 2015. Available at: [www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3059765/Ministers-shame-killer-salt-Government-sabotage-drive-cut-intake-cost-6-000-lives-say-doctors.html](http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3059765/Ministers-shame-killer-salt-Government-sabotage-drive-cut-intake-cost-6-000-lives-say-doctors.html).

## THE 'BUSINESS OF MALNUTRITION': ANOTHER ENTRY POINT

... the *Scaling Up Nutrition [SUN]* is not an initiative approved by the set of countries members of the UN. It is about a voluntary mechanism in which the integrant members, including the countries, manifest their interest in adhering, and for such, they commit themselves to follow its principles and *modus operandi*... [SUN] is structured around five networks of equal weight: from the countries, organizations of the civil society, the UN agencies, the business sector, and the donors.<sup>17</sup>

Elisabetta Recine and Nathalie Beghin (CONSEA Counselors)

When it comes to undernutrition, corporations have found another entry point into global and national policy-making through the SUN initiative. This initiative was launched by the World Bank (WB), UNICEF, World Food Programme (WFP) and WHO in 2010 to tackle malnutrition, with a focus on the first 1,000 days of a child's life.<sup>18</sup> Closely linked to SUN through the SUN Business Network (SBN) is the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN). This is a public-private hybrid entity with assets of US \$60 million,<sup>19</sup> mainly from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

While IBFAN and other public-interest NGOs acknowledge the need to raise the profile of nutrition across all sectors, they have heavily criticized both SUN and GAIN.<sup>20</sup> The close involvement of corporations in decision-making, including in SUN's governing body (the Lead Group),<sup>21</sup> has led to conflicting interests and the prioritization of fortified foods and micronutrient interventions in many countries, including by donors. This has resulted in development funds being diverted from addressing the underlying causes of all forms of malnutrition. Another major concern is the SUN's establishment of 'multi-stakeholder' platforms in developing countries that include corporations.<sup>22</sup> Finally, SUN's Multi-Partner Trust Fund enlists the support of "multiple national and international stakeholders including government departments, civil society, *responsible businesses*, donors and UN system agencies" [emphasis added].

In 2012 IBFAN reported GAIN's efforts to dissuade the Kenyan government from introducing a strong law banning the promotion of baby foods.<sup>24</sup> The Kenyan government resisted this pressure and adopted the Breastmilk Substitutes (Regulation and Control) Act No. 34 of 2012. Its monitoring of the International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes since 2008 and training of health professionals is clearly working: the 2014 Kenya Demographic and Health Survey (KDHS) showed that exclusive breastfeeding rates almost doubled since 2008/9 (61% compared to 32%) and helped reduce infant mortality from 52/1,000 to 39/1,000.

## BY-PASSING DEMOCRATIC PROCEDURES

SUN often requires its member states to approach policy-makers individually rather than using democratic governmental processes that allow public debate about whether a country should join the initiative. Governments are led to believe that if they care about nutrition they should become a 'SUN country' and that by doing so they increase their chances of external financial support. Therefore, overnight, people are finding themselves in a SUN country, working under the SUN label. In many of these countries the successes of ongoing programs are quickly 'claimed' by the business-backed SUN newcomers.

- 17 *Official Comment to the Second International Conference on Nutrition (ICN2) by the Brazilian National Council on Nutrition.* Brazil: CONSEA, 2014. Available at: [www.ghwatch.org/sites/www.ghwatch.org/files/Recine&Beghin\\_201140306\\_InternationalNutritionAgenda\\_En.pdf](http://www.ghwatch.org/sites/www.ghwatch.org/files/Recine&Beghin_201140306_InternationalNutritionAgenda_En.pdf).
- 18 Schuftan, Claudio and Urban Jonsson. "The Right to Nutrition: Strategies to Hold Multilateral and Bilateral Donors Accountable." *Right to Food and Nutrition Watch* (2011): 47–55. Available at: [www.rfn-watch.org/fileadmin/media/rfn-watch.org/ENGLISH/pdf/Watch\\_2011/Watch\\_2011\\_ENG.pdf#page=47](http://www.rfn-watch.org/fileadmin/media/rfn-watch.org/ENGLISH/pdf/Watch_2011/Watch_2011_ENG.pdf#page=47).
- 19 GAIN. *Report of the Statutory Auditor on the Consolidated Financial Statements to the Board of the Foundation Consolidated Financial Statements.* Geneva: GAIN, 2014. Available at: [www.gainhealth.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/Financial-statements-2013-2014.pdf](http://www.gainhealth.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/Financial-statements-2013-2014.pdf).
- 20 For another civil society critique of SUN, please see article "The Corporate Capture of Food and Nutrition Governance: A Threat to Human Rights and Peoples' Sovereignty" in this issue of the *Right to Food and Nutrition Watch*. See also Schuftan, Claudio and Ted Greiner. "The Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Initiative." *Right to Food and Nutrition Watch* (2013): 22–25. Available at: [www.rfn-watch.org/fileadmin/media/rfn-watch.org/ENGLISH/pdf/Watch\\_2013/Watch\\_2013\\_PDFs/Watch\\_2013\\_eng\\_WEB\\_final.pdf#page=22](http://www.rfn-watch.org/fileadmin/media/rfn-watch.org/ENGLISH/pdf/Watch_2013/Watch_2013_PDFs/Watch_2013_eng_WEB_final.pdf#page=22).
- 21 Business members include Ajinomoto, BASF, Britannia, Cargill, DSM, Nutriset and Unilever. More information is available at: [www.scalingupnutrition.org/the-sun-network/lead-group](http://www.scalingupnutrition.org/the-sun-network/lead-group).
- 22 See the insight box "The Origins of 'Multi-Stakeholderism'—Why Words Matter" below.
- 23 SUN. *The Multi-Partner Trust Fund: A catalytic instrument to support SUN efforts.* SUN, 2013. Available at: [scalingupnutrition.org/resources-archieve/sun-mptf](http://scalingupnutrition.org/resources-archieve/sun-mptf).
- 24 IBFAN and International Code Documentation Centre (ICDC). *ICDC Legal Note.* Penang: 2013.

Meanwhile, in line with SUN's model of governance, the World Economic Forum's (WEF) Global Redesign Initiative (GRI) proposes that some issues be taken off the UN's agenda and addressed instead by "plurilateral, often multi-stakeholder, coalitions of the willing and the able."<sup>25</sup> The WEF envisages a world managed by a coalition of multinational corporations, nation states (including through the UN system) and select civil society organizations.

## SUN'S FLAWED CONFLICTS OF INTEREST PROCESS

SUN has responded to the criticism by IBFAN and other public-interest organizations by changing, for example, some of the text on breastfeeding on its website and including references to human rights. Using a US \$1 million grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, it also started a process to prevent, identify, manage and monitor conflicts of interest (COIs). However, for this task, SUN chose the Global Social Observatory (GSO), a Geneva-based organization that represents business interests, receives corporate funding and promotes public-private partnerships (PPP).

Unsurprisingly, GSO redefines COIs to fit and legitimize SUN's multi-stakeholder governance structure. For example, it:

- focuses on 'trust' and 'collaboration' (rather than the need to exercise caution);
- confuses COIs with conflicts caused by disagreements and differences in opinions;
- promotes inclusiveness of all stakeholders as 'good governance';
- covers COIs only on the national level, it does not cover SUN's Lead Group; and,
- lacks mechanisms for whistleblower protection.

## CONCLUSION

CSR is not something benign that helps companies end harmful practices. It is a carefully developed strategy—used effectively by the tobacco industry<sup>26</sup>—that deliberately diverts public attention away from the need to regulate corporations effectively and ensure accountability for human rights abuses. NGOs, policy makers and donors who seek to protect human rights and address the underlying causes of poverty should re-evaluate the wisdom of supporting and engaging in CSR strategies. They should instead stay focused on long-lasting solutions that protect human rights:

- support the adoption and implementation of effective regulations;
- monitor what companies *do*, rather than what they *say*;
- establish sound COI policies that keep public health research and policy making free from undue commercial influence;
- enact legal measures that protect whistleblowers; and, last but not least,
- avoid using business terminology without paying attention to the wider issues, in particular the term 'stakeholders'.<sup>27</sup>

25 WEF. *Everybody's Business: Strengthening International Cooperation in a More Interdependent World. Report of the Global Redesign Initiative*. Geneva: WEF, 2010. Available at: [www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF\\_GRI\\_EverybodysBusiness\\_Report\\_2010.pdf](http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GRI_EverybodysBusiness_Report_2010.pdf). See also Pingeot, Lou. *Corporate Influence in the Post-2015 Process*. Aachen/Berlin/Bonn/New York: Global Policy Forum, Misereor and Bread for the World, 2014. Available at: [www.globalpolicy.org/images/pdfs/GPFEurope/Corporate\\_influence\\_in\\_the\\_Post-2015\\_process\\_web.pdf](http://www.globalpolicy.org/images/pdfs/GPFEurope/Corporate_influence_in_the_Post-2015_process_web.pdf).

26 Brownell, Kelly D. and Kenneth E. Warner. "The Perils of Ignoring History: Big Tobacco Played Dirty and Millions Died. How Similar is Big Food?" *The Milbank Quarterly* 87 (2009): 259–294.

27 See the insight box "The Origins of 'Multi-Stakeholderism'—Why Words Matter" below.

While many governments and large NGOs are focusing on CSR, there are a growing number of NGOs and people's movements recognizing the risks it poses, and working together to empower citizens to hold corporations accountable. Some examples include IBFAN, the People's Health Movement (PHM),<sup>28</sup> Third World Network, the Treaty Alliance that is working for a binding international treaty to address corporate human rights abuses,<sup>29</sup> and the Conflict of Interest Coalition, a network of 161 NGOs and networks that work to protect public health policy setting from undue commercial influence.

Whether the world will wake up to the threat ahead or head blindly into a car-crash will depend on whether these people's movements survive, grow and capture the public's imagination.

### INSIGHT 2.1

#### The Origins of 'Multi-Stakeholderism'—Why Words Matter<sup>30</sup>

*Lida Lhotska*<sup>31</sup>

While the term 'stakeholder' is in everyone's vocabulary, it is not apolitical. Public-interest actors who want to have a clear discourse and avoid the blurring of roles, particularly in policy-making processes, should keep this in mind. Originally this term was used to press companies, particularly transnational corporations (TNCs), to acknowledge that they are not only accountable to their shareholders. Their operations, practices and actions impact others, and therefore these others have a stake in what the companies do. They are 'stakeholders'.

However, during the preparation of the first UN Conference on Environment and Development held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in 1992 (Rio Earth Summit), TNCs were concerned that more regulation might be proposed as alarm bells had started ringing on climate change and ecological disaster. Thanks to their powerful lobby, they managed to remove a chapter on their environmental responsibility from the Agenda 21,<sup>32</sup> and to recast themselves as one of the 'stakeholder' groups of the conference. Subsequently, their recommendations were clearly reflected in the Conference's final document.

This is when TNCs started asserting that "we are part of the solution" and "have to be treated in an inclusive manner." The negative consequences of this on climate and environment are well known. Now, when public-interest actors use the term 'stakeholder', they automatically accept that it also means TNCs/business, and are thus buying into the rhetoric of the neoliberal economic system and its model of governance.

Does this mean that the word 'stakeholder' should be erased completely from our vocabulary? No, it does not: we need to use the word when being critical of the PPP/multi-stakeholder model, to highlight the risks including conflicts of interest and undue influence on democratic decision-making.

28 Both IBFAN and PHM are members of the *Right to Food and Nutrition Watch Consortium*.

29 For further information on the Treaty Alliance, please see article "The Treaty on TNCs and the Struggle to Stop Corporate Impunity: An Interview with Civil Society" in this issue of the *Right to Food and Nutrition Watch*, and visit the Treaty Alliance's website: [www.treatymovement.com](http://www.treatymovement.com).

30 For further information, please see: Richter, Judith. *Dialogue or Engineering of Consent? Opportunities and Risks of Talking to Industry*. Geneva: IBFAN-GIFA, 2002. Available at: [www.ethik.uzh.ch/ibme/team/affiliert/judithrichter/judith-richter-dialogueq-eoc.pdf](http://www.ethik.uzh.ch/ibme/team/affiliert/judithrichter/judith-richter-dialogueq-eoc.pdf).

31 Lida Lhotska is Regional Coordinator of IBFAN Europe. For more information, please see: [www.ibfan.org](http://www.ibfan.org).

32 Agenda 21 is a non-binding UN action plan regarding sustainable development, and is a product of the Rio Earth Summit in 1992.

## INSIGHT 2.2

### *Citizens United* Ruling: A Dangerous Expansion of Corporate Power in the US

Jonah Minkoff-Zern and Laura-Anne Minkoff-Zern<sup>33</sup>

While the economy improves in the United States (US), food insecurity lingers for over 49 million US residents.<sup>34</sup> Yet public policy in support of adequate and sustainable food and nutrition continues to be obstructed, in part because of the inordinate influence of corporate actors and agendas on our agricultural, food, and health policies. Corporate agribusiness has played an increasingly influential role in food production and provisioning in the US through federal and state programs over the last century—from international food aid to school lunches.<sup>35</sup>

This influence was deepened in 2010, when the Supreme Court ruled in the case *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission* that campaign contributions are a form of “free speech”, and that corporations have the same constitutional rights as individuals, guaranteeing corporations (and ostensibly individuals) the possibility of spending unlimited amounts of money to influence elections. The ruling has helped expand the influence of corporations on our political system, including our food and agricultural policies.<sup>36</sup> The agribusiness sector contributed a total of US \$90 million at the federal level to the 2012 election cycle, their largest cyclic increase in contributions ever. Three quarters of this spending went to republican candidates, looking to stem food safety regulations and disclosure requirements, such as food labeling.<sup>37</sup>

The Farm Bill—omnibus legislation that governs an array of agricultural and nutrition assistance programs in the US—is the subject of heavy lobbying in the US legislature. In 2013, agricultural services and crop production industries, including Monsanto,<sup>38</sup> spent over US \$57.5 million to influence the Farm Bill, which went on to cut billions of dollars in food stamps and conservation programs, even as it authorized a US \$7 billion increase in crop insurance. Legislative lobbying reportedly included the implicit threat of further expenditures for and against members of Congress based upon their voting actions.<sup>39</sup>

Beyond the undue influence of the US Farm Bill, *Citizens United* has led to: industry resistance to labeling of products containing genetically modified organisms (GMO); blocking minimum labor wage; and reducing the impact of the Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act passed in 2010, thus limiting the scope of the financial reform in the US. Election campaigns are overwhelmed by corporate spending.

To create a democratic and safe food system, the US must pass a Constitutional amendment to overturn *Citizens United* and return democracy and human rights to the people. This is a crucial movement for all who believe that food must be treated as a human right, not a mere commodity.

33 **Jonah Minkoff-Zern** is Co-Director of Public Citizen’s “Democracy is for People” Campaign. Public Citizen is a national, non-profit consumer advocacy organization based in Washington, D.C. **Laura-Anne Minkoff-Zern** is an Assistant Professor (Department of Public Health, Food Studies, and Nutrition) at Syracuse University. For more information on Public Citizen, please visit: [www.citizen.org](http://www.citizen.org).

Special thanks to Sriharsha Gowtham (Public Citizen), Kathleen Martin (Public Citizen), Smita Narula (Roosevelt House Public Policy Institute, Hunter College) and Anne C. Bellows (Syracuse University) for their support in drafting and reviewing this article. This article was originally written in English.

34 For further information on food policies in the US, please see article “The Right to Food in the US: The Need to Move Away from Charity and Advance Towards a Human Rights Approach” in this issue of the *Right to Food and Nutrition Watch*. See also National Geographic. 16 April, 2015. Available at: [theplate.nationalgeographic.com/2015/04/16/while-u-s-economy-improves-food-insecurity-lingers/](http://theplate.nationalgeographic.com/2015/04/16/while-u-s-economy-improves-food-insecurity-lingers/).

35 Clapp, Jennifer. *Food*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2012; Poppendieck, Janet. *Breadlines Knee-Deep in Wheat: Food Assistance in the Great Depression*. Berkeley, Los Angeles/ London: University of California Press, 2014.

36 Lilliston, Ben. “Agribusiness and Food Corporations are Not People.” *Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy—Think Forward Blog*, January 20, 2015. Available at: [iatp.org/blog/201501/agribusiness-and-food-corporations-are-not-people](http://iatp.org/blog/201501/agribusiness-and-food-corporations-are-not-people); Levitt, Justin. “Confronting the Impact of ‘Citizens United.’” *Yale Law & Policy Review* 29 (2010): 217–234. Available at: [users.polisci.wisc.edu/kmayer/466/Levitt%20Confronting%20Impact%20of%20CU.pdf](http://users.polisci.wisc.edu/kmayer/466/Levitt%20Confronting%20Impact%20of%20CU.pdf).

37 Vendituoli, Monica. “Agribusiness: Background.” *Center for Responsive Politics*, September, 2013. Available at: [www.opensecrets.org/industries/background.php?cycle=2014&ind=A](http://www.opensecrets.org/industries/background.php?cycle=2014&ind=A).

38 “Eight Ways Monsanto Fails at Sustainable Agriculture.” Union of Concerned Scientists—Science for a Healthy Planet and Safer World. Available at: [www.ucsusa.org/food\\_and\\_agriculture/our-failing-food-system/genetic-engineering/eight-ways-monsanto-fails.html#\\_VaeKjvntlBc](http://www.ucsusa.org/food_and_agriculture/our-failing-food-system/genetic-engineering/eight-ways-monsanto-fails.html#_VaeKjvntlBc).

39 Feinberg, Robbie. “Special Interests Heavily Involved in Farm Bill Maneuvering.” *Center for Responsive Politics*, January 30, 2014. Available at: [www.opensecrets.org/news/2014/01/special-interests-heavily-involved/](http://www.opensecrets.org/news/2014/01/special-interests-heavily-involved/).