

Cultivating Control

Corporate Lobbying on the Food and Farm Bill

HIGHLIGHTS

Giant corporations, along with the industry associations that represent and align with them, dominate the US food and agriculture system. Together, they have hijacked federal farm policy for their profit. Analysis by the Union of Concerned Scientists shows that between 2019 and 2023, giant agribusiness companies and industry associations spent well over half a billion dollars lobbying Congress to influence legislation that includes the next food and farm bill. A pay-to-play food policy that prioritizes corporate profits is bad for the well-being of people and the environment. Lawmakers should center the needs of small and midsize farms, diverse farmers, food workers and farmworkers, consumers, and communities—not just the needs of giant corporations—when writing this legislation.

Appendix A: Methodology

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Lobbying Expenditure Data

The law requires individual lobbyists and organizations that lobby over minimum thresholds to register as lobbyists and report their spending quarterly to Congress (Claybrook 1999; Office of the Clerk, US House of Representatives 2021). Those reports specify the dollar value of lobbying time and list issues lobbied on. Lobbyists sometimes later file amended reports, which may have higher or lower dollar values compared to the original reports.

We examined publicly available data submitted as individual quarterly lobbying disclosure reports to the secretary of the US Senate, as required by the Lobbying Disclosure Act (US Senate, n.d.a). The time period chosen for this analysis was January 2019 through December 2023.

Data Access

The following search criteria and keywords were used in the Senate database to search (US Senate, n.d.b) for quarterly reports (and corresponding amendments, if available) filed between January 2019 and December 2023 that list “farm bill.” We used the “Specific Lobbying Issues” search. Microsoft Excel was used to clean and aggregate data, and tabulate aggregated data.

Search criteria:

- Type: Any type
- Filing Period: Posted between 1/1/2019 to 1/25/2024
- Issue Area: Any issue area
- Specific Lobbying Issues: “Farm bill” (using the quotes here is necessary, as all text written inside quotation marks are treated as a single phrase)

The search yielded specific lobbying reports with individual rows of data. These reports were downloaded as PDFs and are available here.

Data in PDFs was converted to an Excel workbook for cleanup, aggregation, and further analysis. Data cleanup and successive operations were performed in Microsoft Excel using various formulas and functions available on the program. That process is described in subsequent sections.

Parsing Duplicate Data

Data with the filing year listed as 2014 to 2018 was deleted.

The search function of the Senate lobbying database outputs duplicate rows of data, based on the frequency of the cited keyword present within the report used in the search criteria (US Senate, personal communication to the author, January 26, 2024). For example, if a filed report cites the phrase “farm bill” three times, the search will yield three corresponding rows of identical data. The website does not allow exclusion of rows after the search has been performed. This feature of the system created significant duplication of results in the dataset, which needed to be resolved.

To identify duplicate rows of data, a new column was created using the TEXTJOIN formula and used to join data in columns labeled Registrant Name, Client Name, Report Type, Amount, Filing Year, and Posted.

Subsequently, data in the TEXTJOIN column was highlighted in red using the Conditional Formatting function under Home -> Conditional Formatting -> Highlight Cell Rules->Duplicate Values.

These duplicate rows were then manually deleted, leading to a clean dataset with unique records.

Amendment and Termination

In addition to regularly filing reports, lobbyists also often file amendments to a report to correct a previously filed report or to inform automation in the relationship between the client and lobbyist. We followed the methodology reported by OpenSecrets when assessing terminations and amendments for reports.

Amendment: When an amendment for a quarter is reported, the associated report data was deleted, and the corresponding data of the amendment retained.

Termination: When a termination for a quarter was reported, the associated report value was deleted, and the corresponding termination data was retained.

For reports where several amendments were associated with the filing of a certain quarter, the data with the time stamp of the most recent filing was retained and others were detailed.

Name Discrepancy Correction

Because companies and industries often hire multiple lobbying firms to represent them on issues, we discovered discrepancies in spellings of certain client names or several iterations of the same entity name in the clean data as filed by separate lobbying entities. Correction of name discrepancy was performed manually after data aggregation (Table A).

Table A. Names Listed and Corresponding Version Retained and Reported

Name listed	Name listed	Name listed	Name retained
Association Of Public and Land-Grant Universities (APLU)	Association Of Public and Land-Grant Universities (APLU) Formerly NASULGC	Association Of Public and Land-Grant Universities	Association Of Public and Land-Grant Universities (APLU)
Bayer Consolidated	Bayer Corporation		Bayer Corporation
BIO	Biotechnology Innovation Organization	Biotechnology Innovation Organization (BIO)	Biotechnology Innovation Organization (BIO)
Boehringer Ingelheim USA	Boehringer Ingelheim USA Corporation		Boehringer Ingelheim USA
Cargill, Incorporated	Cargill Inc		Cargill Inc
CERES Inc.	CERES		CERES
Charter Communications	Charter Communications Inc.		Charter Communications Inc.
Chipotle Mexican Grill Inc	Chipotle Mexican Grill, Inc.		Chipotle Mexican Grill, Inc.
Danone North America Public Benefit Corporation	Danone North America, PBC		Danone North America, PBC
Doordash	Doordash Inc.		Doordash
Elanco Animal Health	Elanco Health Incorporated	Elanco Animal Health US	Elanco Health Incorporated
Electronic Payments Coalition	Electronic Payments Coalition (“Epc”)		Electronic Payments Coalition
Food Marketplace Inc	Food Marketplace, Inc.		Food Marketplace Inc
GEVO	GEVO Inc.		GEVO Inc.
International Paper	International Paper Company		International Paper
Land O’ Lakes	Land O’ Lakes Inc.		Land O’ Lakes Inc.
Propel	Propel, Inc.		Propel, Inc.

SOURCE: US Senate n.d.b.

Table B. Names of Entities Retained after Cleaning Out Listed Entities That Lobbied OBO Other Entities

Name listed	Name retained
ARREA BIO OBO Smart Policy Group	Smart Policy Group
Alva Ellio Partner OBO Good Day Farm LLC	Good Day Farm LLC
Bolton St. Johns LLC OBO Ruralorganizing.org	Ruralorganizing.org
Soundary Stone OBO REGROW	REGROW
CJ Lake OBO San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution District	San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution District
CJ Lake OBO California State Senate	California State Senate
Colorado NP Development Center OBO One Chance to Grow Up	One Chance to Grow Up
GWC Public Affairs OBO Western Landowners Alliance	Western Landowners Alliance
Holland & Knight OBO Aerofarms	Aerofarms
Husch Blackwell OBO San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution District	San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution District
Multiplier OBO RIPE Roadmap	RIPE Roadmap
RAFI USA OBO Campaign for Contract Ag Reform	Campaign for Contract Ag Reform
Russel Group OBO Land O'Lakes Inc.	Land O'Lakes Inc.
Smart Policy Group OBO American Biogas Council	American Biogas Council
American Biogas Council OBO Smart Policy Group	Smart Policy Group
Unilever United OBO Hellman's	Hellman's
Williams and Jensen OBO American Association of Crop Insurers	American Association of Crop Insurers
Racy & Associates OBO Pima County	Pima County
Bockorny Group OBO South Dakota State University	South Dakota State University
Bockorny Group OBO Medgene Labs	Medgene Labs
Bockorny Group OBO Elanco Animal Health	Elanco Animal Health

SOURCE: US Senate n.d.b.

Data Aggregation

The data associated with this operation is available at www.ucsusa.org/resources/cultivating-control and at [Cultivating Control: Corporate Lobbying on the Food and Farm Bill - UCS Research Data \(harvard.edu\)](#).

All data in the Clean Data worksheet was selected, and the pivot table function (Insert -> Pivot Table-> From Data/Range) was used to create the following tables:

- Client list, total
- Yearwise total
- Entity sorted by expenditure

Lobbying entities split by sector:

- A copy of the “Client list, total” pivot table was used to categorize entities.

The criteria followed for defining entities and respective categories are listed in Table C.

The pivot table function was then used on the Sector Assignment worksheet to create the following table:

- Sector total

Table C. Subcategories and Corresponding Defining Criteria Created to Categorize Entities Reported in the Dataset

Category	Criteria
Agribusiness	Groups representing multinational corporations involved in businesses comprising livestock, dairy, cooperatives, crop production and processing, food processing, food and beverage manufacture and sales, and agricultural services/products
Business and Trade Groups	Represents special-interest groups
Education	Universities and professional societies
Farm Bureau	American Farm Bureau Federation and its state chapters
Finance	Banks, fintech firms
Fuel/Energy	Companies include conventional oil and gas, biofuels, and renewable energy
Hospital/Health Care	Specialized health care facilities and medical professionals
Indigenous Group or Tribal Nation	Federally recognized tribes, or groups serving/representing policy priorities of Indigenous communities
Information Technology	Organizations that develop and sell software and products, and offer tech-based services
Insurance	Crop insurance brokers, providers
Labor Union	Labor unions and groups representing specialized professions
Lobbying Firm	Groups that represent a client hired to lobby on specific policy issues
Manufacturing	Production of chemicals and manufacture of goods from agricultural raw materials
Nonprofit/Advocacy	Entities lobbying on issues/policies like environmental conservation, resource management. Also comprises groups that align with for-profit agribusiness interest and lobby on commodities, manufacturing, etc.
Pharmaceuticals	Drug development, research, marketing, and groups within Big Pharma
State and Local Governments	State and local governments, city councils, conservation districts within states
Transport	Groups providing transportation services that move goods/people, encompassing land, air, and water

SOURCE: US Senate n.d.b.

OpenSecrets Agribusiness Sector Spending

Total lobbying expenditure of the agribusiness sector was accessed from the [OpenSecrets website](#) (Opensecrets n.d.a). Data for 2019 to 2023 was downloaded individually and aggregated using Microsoft Excel.

Another set of 2019-2023 lobbying data for [the oil and gas sector](#) (Opensecrets n.d.b) was accessed from the same database to compare total lobbying expenditure by both sectors.

Microsoft Excel file available at [Cultivating Control: Corporate Lobbying on the Food and Farm Bill - UCS Research Data \(harvard.edu\)](#).

References

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