

# Cultivating Control

## *Corporate Lobbying on the Food and Farm Bill*

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### 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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May 2024

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<https://doi.org/10.47923/2024.15464>

## 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**

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

*SOURCE: US Senate n.d.b.*

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

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

*SOURCE: US Senate n.d.b.*

## Data Aggregation

The data associated with this operation is available at [www.ucsusa.org/resources/cultivating-control](http://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**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Criteria</b>
<b>Agribusiness</b>	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
<b>Business and Trade Groups</b>	Represents special-interest groups
<b>Education</b>	Universities and professional societies
<b>Farm Bureau</b>	American Farm Bureau Federation and its state chapters
<b>Finance</b>	Banks, fintech firms
<b>Fuel/Energy</b>	Companies include conventional oil and gas, biofuels, and renewable energy
<b>Hospital/Health Care</b>	Specialized health care facilities and medical professionals
<b>Indigenous Group or Tribal Nation</b>	Federally recognized tribes, or groups serving/representing policy priorities of Indigenous communities
<b>Information Technology</b>	Organizations that develop and sell software and products, and offer tech-based services
<b>Insurance</b>	Crop insurance brokers, providers
<b>Labor Union</b>	Labor unions and groups representing specialized professions
<b>Lobbying Firm</b>	Groups that represent a client hired to lobby on specific policy issues
<b>Manufacturing</b>	Production of chemicals and manufacture of goods from agricultural raw materials
<b>Nonprofit/Advocacy</b>	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.
<b>Pharmaceuticals</b>	Drug development, research, marketing, and groups within Big Pharma
<b>State and Local Governments</b>	State and local governments, city councils, conservation districts within states
<b>Transport</b>	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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