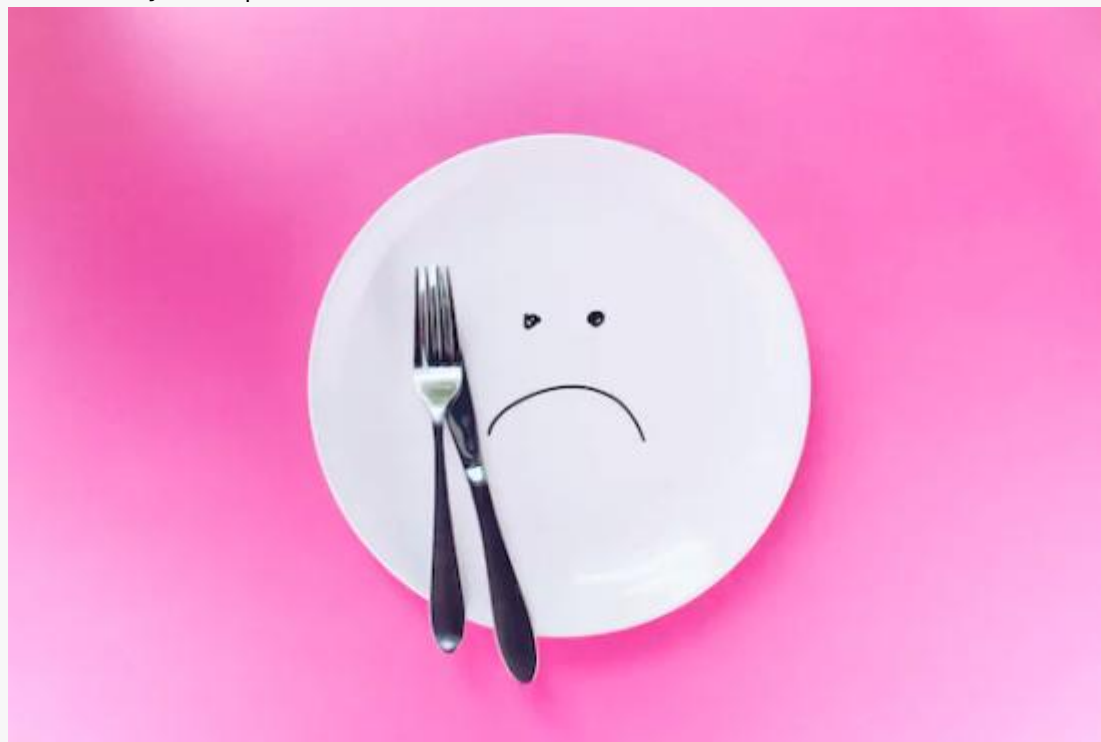


Study: Largest Nutritionists' Group Captured by Food, Pharma and Agribusiness Companies

written by GEG | October 26, 2022



The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics accepted millions of dollars from food, pharmaceutical and agribusiness companies, provided favors in return through its policies, and invested in ultra-processed food company stocks, according to a [study](#) published in *Public Health Nutrition*. The Academy accepted more than \$15 million from corporate and organizational contributors in the years 2011 and 2013-2017, according to its draft IRS forms 990. The top contributors to the Academy in 2011 and 2013-2017 were: the National Dairy Council, Conagra, Abbott Laboratories, PepsiCo, Coca-Cola, Hershey, General Mills and more.

The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics accepted millions of dollars from food, pharmaceutical and agribusiness companies, had policies to provide favors in return, and invested in ultra-processed food company stocks, according to a [study](#) published today in *Public Health Nutrition*.

The [Academy](#) says it is “the world’s largest organization of nutrition and dietetics practitioners” representing “more than 112,000 credentialed practitioners” including registered dietitian nutritionists and other food and nutrition professionals.

The study was produced by public health scholars and U.S. Right to Know, a nonprofit investigative public health group that obtained tens of thousands of pages of internal Academy documents through state public records requests.

The study describes a “symbiotic relationship” between the Academy and corporations, and found the Academy acts as a “pro-industry voice” with policy positions that sometimes clash with its mission to improve health globally.

"The documents reveal a depressing chapter of corruption at this influential nutrition group," said Gary Ruskin, executive director of U.S. Right to Know, and one of the study's co-authors. "If we're going to get healthier, live longer and lower our astounding rates of obesity and diabetes, we've got to clean out the corruption at health groups like the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics."

The study reveals that the Academy accepted more than \$15 million from corporate and organizational contributors in the years 2011 and 2013-2017, according to its draft IRS forms 990.

The top contributors to the Academy in 2011 and 2013-2017 were: National Dairy Council \$1,496,912; Conagra Inc. \$1,414,058; Abbott Nutrition \$1,246,389; Abbott Laboratories \$824,110; AND Foundation 801,261; PepsiCo Inc. \$486,335; Coca-Cola Co. \$477,577; Hershey Co. \$368,032; General Mills Inc. \$309,733; Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality \$296,495; Aramark Co. \$293,051; Unilever Best Foods \$276,791; Kellogg USA \$273,272.

Here are the Academy draft IRS 990s (with donor data) for [6/11-5/12](#), [6/13-5/14](#), [6/14-5/15](#), [6/15-5/16](#) and [6/16-5/17](#), as well as for its foundation for [6/12-5/13](#) and [6/13-5/14](#).

The documents show that the Academy and its foundation invested funds in ultra-processed food companies. [The Academy's investment portfolio](#) in January 2015 included \$244,036 in stock holdings in Nestle S.A. and \$139,545 in PepsiCo. The [Academy foundation's investment portfolio](#) in June 2013 included \$209,472 in stock holdings in Nestle S.A and \$125,682 in PepsiCo.

"Nutrition groups should not buy ultra-processed food stocks. They are a blaring conflict of interest," Ruskin said. "Public health groups should not invest in companies that make products that detract from our health or directly conflict with their mission."

The Academy appears to have allowed [quid pro quo purchases of "rights and benefits"](#) by corporate sponsors. Internal communications show that the Academy "distinguishes its 'sponsors' from its 'supporters'. Corporate sponsors 'pay a fee, and in return the Academy provides a right or a benefit'...Corporate 'supporters' provide 'a charitable contribution with no (explicit) expectation of a commercial return.'"

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