Food and Water Watch: Nader spinoff NGO targets GMO salmon, pesticides

Food & Water Watch is a non profit that “champions healthy food and clean water for all,” according to its website, with a particular focus in challenging “corporations that put profits before people.” It protests against biotechnology in food, in particular opposing the approval of the genetically engineered AquaBounty AquAdvantage salmon, which received Food and Drug Administration approval in November 2015.

FWW—a spin off from Ralph Nader’s liberal advocacy group Public Citizen—was created in 2005 when Wenonah Hauter, then the Nader-founded group’s chief anti-nuclear and green-energy activist leader, wanted to focus on food policy. Its most visible campaigns have revolved around organic agriculture, bottled water, genetically engineered bovine hormones (i.e. rBST), fracking, GMO labelling, Trans-Pacific Partnership, glyphosate, drinking water standards, ethanol and food irradiation.

It partners with the Organic Consumers Association in the “Toxic Taters” coalition, which makes various claims about adverse health and environmental affects from “pesticide drift” from potatoes in central and north central Minnesota. It previously led a successful campaign to stop Starbucks from using milk from cows treated with rBST on the grounds the hormone was unsafe, despite overwhelming scientific evidence to the contrary. FWW publicized concerns about the high rate of salmonella in US chicken processing plants in July 2006. It has been critical of the bottled water industry for health and environmental concerns and has lead protests against hydraulic fracturing—fracking—claiming the process pollutes groundwater, although the EPA says there is no evidence that is the case.

Many of FWW’s “organic” grassroots campaigns are anti-biotech in nature. It has published a report accusing the State Department of acting on behalf of Monsanto in the third world to promote crop biotechnology. FWW claims that biotech companies are “greenwashing” GMOs—presenting them as benign when they really pose serious ecological problems—and that GMO crops “contaminate” organic fields through windborne cross-pollination. Via board member Maude Barlow with the Council of Canadians, the group is extending its reach to various international campaigns with a new focus on fighting GMOs in Africa.

Organization

Food & Water Watch is a 501c3 charitable organization (EIN:32-0160439) founded in 2006. The group also has a 501c4 Food & Water Watch Fund for non-charitable exempt lobbying purposes which preceded the 501c3 (EIN:32-0160436) founded in 2005.

Food & Water Watch
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Key People

- Wenonah Hauter – Executive Director. Hauter earns $162,000 (2011) and owns her own organic farm[2] and has a long history of environmental activism.[3] She has worked extensively on food, water, energy and environmental issues at the national, state and local level. Her book Foodopoly: The Battle Over the Future of Food and Farming in America examines the corporate consolidation and control over our food system and what it means for farmers and consumers. Experienced in developing policy positions and legislative strategies, she is also a skilled and accomplished organizer, having lobbied and developed grassroots field strategy and action plans. She is currently writing Frackopoly: The Battle for the Future of Energy and the Environment due for publication in 2015. From 1997 to 2005 she served as Director of Public Citizen’s Energy and Environment Program, which focused on water, food and energy policy. From 1996 to 1997, she was environmental policy director for Citizen Action, where she worked with the organization’s 30 state-based groups. From 1989 to 1995 she was at the Union of Concerned Scientists where, as a senior organizer, she coordinated broad-based, grassroots sustainable energy campaigns in several states. She has an M.S. in applied anthropology from the University of Maryland.

- Patti Lovera, deputy director earns $124,000 (2011)

- Lane Brooks – Chief Operating Officer  earns $151,000 (2011). Brooks is the chief operating officer for Food & Water Watch and has overall responsibility for operations including administration, finances, human resources, IT, and development. Lane has more than 25 years experience in nonprofit fundraising and management. Most recently, he served as the director of development at Public Citizen for nine years where he was responsible for the organization’s earned and contributed income programs, and served on the organization’s management team. Previously, he worked for advocacy and performing arts organizations in Washington and Denver. Lane has also served as a leader in Washington, DC’s philanthropic community as President of the city’s chapter of the Association of Fundraising Professionals, as well as conference chair, and, on several occasions, speaker at fund raising conferences. Lane has a B.A. in broadcast journalism from Louisiana State University. He can be reached lbrooks@fwwatch.org.

- Rich Bindell – Communications Officer. He provides writing and blog support, as well as strategic organizational outreach to all teams. He has served the nonprofit world as a communications professional for over ten years, working for organizations such as Bnai Brith International, Volunteers of America, and the Arthritis Foundation, and contributing as a writer, editor, public relations specialist, and media liaison. Rich earned his B.A. in communications and rhetoric at the University of Pittsburgh and has previously worked on environmental issues, including providing communications assistance to the land-recycling program for the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection. Contact Rich at rbindell@fwwatch.org.


- Maude Barlow, board chair (Council of Canadians executive director)
Malcolm “Doug” Lakey, development director earns $118,000 (2011)
Rudolph Amenga Etego, board director (environmental lawyer fighting privatization in Africa)
Dennis Keeney, board director (Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy, IATP)
Elizabeth Perdeo Beltran, board director
Marry Ricci, board treasurer (Editor, PC Gamer)
Kelsie Kerr, board director (Culinary instructor, food & beverage writer/consultant)
Sue Rome, board secretary
Mark Andrew Schlosberg, organizing director earns $118,000 (2011)
Tim Schwab, researcher – Schwab is a food researcher at Food and Water Watch. With a background in journalism, Tim worked as a reporter and as a researcher on a variety of projects before joining Food and Water Watch. He has a master’s degree in journalism from the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana. [5] Schwab has critically written about the NRC process as being tainted by corporate science. [6]

Note: 2011 total FWW salaries reported at $4,029,640 with another $1.5+ million on professional services. It claims 60 employees as of 2011.

**Funding Sources**

- 2008 revenue: $8,468,919
- 2009 revenue: $8,457,795
- 2010 revenue: $9,452,534
- 2011 revenue: $11,497,597
- 501c3

Top contractors:

- PMG Printing, Columbia, MD ($174,000 2011)
- Avalon Consulting Group, Vienna, VA ($165,000 2011)
- Green Corps Inc Consulting, Boston, MA ($139,000 2011)

**Resources**

- Food & Water Watch on Facebook
- Food & Water Watch on Twitter
• Food & Water Watch on YouTube

References

- 4. https://www.linkedin.com/pub/miranda-carter/1a/405/558
- 5. http://www.foodandwaterwatch.org/about/who-we-are/