What I’ve Learned From You This Year

Wenonah Hauter, Executive Director

As the year draws to a close, I’m thankful for the opportunity that my new book Foodopoly has given me to meet so many Food & Water Watch supporters and to hear how committed people are to fighting to reclaim our democracy and to fix our dysfunctional food system.

While I was on the road over three-quarters of this year, I was always met with so much hospitality in the bookstores and cafés and other places I spoke. It was especially palpable in the small towns I visited. In Athens, Ohio, I went to a local bakery to get a cup of coffee; the barista told me that she’d been instructed that if I came in, I was to be afforded everything on the house. Everywhere I went, I felt as if I could move right in and be part of a wonderful community of activists and caring people.

In towns big or small, I also met many people who had never heard of Food & Water Watch — who had heard of the book and were interested in food. Many people told me they were so happy to hear about our work and that they wanted to get involved.

As I settle down for the end-of-year holidays, I’m looking forward to some rest and relaxation with family and friends. In January 2014, I will begin writing my new book about fracking. Already, I’m occasionally peppering the Foodopoly book events with interviews of citizens who are organizing to stop fracking in their communities. I’m continually inspired and restored by the people I meet on the road, and hope to meet more supporters in the coming year.

Thanks for all you do. Happy holidays and best wishes in the New Year.

Government Shutdown Didn’t Stop Trade Deal Negotiations

While the federal government shut down at the beginning of October, the U.S. Trade Representative wasn’t going to be shut out of the ongoing negotiations for the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP). The TPP is a new multinational trade agreement that seeks a back door to removing important laws that protect families while avoiding the messy process of passing new laws. If approved, it

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CDC Recognizes Factory Farms as Source of Antibiotic Resistance

In September, a report released by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommended that factory farms stop using antibiotics on healthy animals. Right now, 80 percent of the antibiotics used in the United States are used for industrial agriculture, and most of these drugs are routinely fed to animals to make them grow faster and compensate for filthy conditions. But the American public pays through antibiotic-resistant infections.

For decades, the Food and Drug Administration has failed to regulate this industry’s use of antibiotics. That’s why we’re campaigning to ask Congress to pass the Preservation of Antibiotics for Medical Treatment Act in the House and the Prevention of Antibiotic Resistance Act in the Senate to stop the abuse of medically important antibiotics on factory farms. Stay tuned for opportunities to take action, or visit foodandwaterwatch.org to learn more.

Fracking Update, continued from A-1

Environmental Protection Agency to reopen abandoned investigations into water contamination in Wyoming, Texas and Pennsylvania.

At the state level, we continued to ramp up our pressure on key decision makers, forming Marylanders Against Fracking to pressure Governor O’Malley to reject fracking, protesting Governor Christie across the state of New Jersey, organizing actions across Ohio to push for a ban on injection wells and continuing our relentless push to pressure Governor Cuomo to not allow fracking in New York.

All of this led into the October 19 Global Frackdown, the international day of action to ban fracking. This year, there were over 250 actions in more than 30 countries on six continents. Across the United States, communities came together to hold rallies, screen Gasland II and do outreach to engage, educate and hold decision makers accountable. From Oregon to Connecticut, Florida to Colorado, California to Michigan, and everywhere in between, the Global Frackdown was our opportunity to focus national attention on the impacts of fracking and the need to ban this harmful and destructive practice.

Global Frackdown events in October 2013 included anti-fracking rallies across the U.S. and as far away as Spain (left) and Lithuania (right).
This quarter, working with our allies, we achieved the following significant victories:

- The U.S. Food and Drug Administration banned three arsenic-based drugs in animal feed, following our successful campaign in Maryland last year to ban arsenic in chicken feed.
- Passed ordinances banning fracking in New Brunswick and Highland Park, New Jersey.
- Passed a resolution calling for a ban on fracking in Marin County, California.
- Defeated a Wisconsin bill that would have prevented SNAP (food stamp) recipients from spending food dollars on organics, among other things.
- Stopped the St. Louis mayor’s plan to privatize the city’s water system, following grassroots pressure.
- Stopped water privatization plans in Bethel, Connecticut.
- Supported allies in Ojai, California, who successfully passed a measure to raise funds to purchase their water system from the private Golden State Water Company.
- Recruited dozens of campus coordinators for the fall semester — in some places, our campus coordinators were active over the summer, including at New Mexico State University, where we received a commitment to install water filling stations.

**COMING SOON**

**What is your food shopping IQ?**

Do you know more than a food company? Visit foodopoly.org for an interactive quiz about the handful of companies that control the thousands of brands you see in the grocery store.

**Trade Deal Negotiations (continued from A-1)**

Could harm our efforts to ban fracking, label genetically engineered foods and have a robust food safety system.

Despite the shutdown, the Trade Representative traveled to Bali in early October to press the negotiations for the TPP. Back home, pressure to reject the administration’s request for “fast track” authority to quickly pass the TPP continued to build. We hosted a briefing for members of Congress that highlighted the food safety concerns of increasing farm-raised seafood imports from Southeast Asia, and our members sent over 55,000 emails to Congress calling for a “no” vote on fast track!
IN HER WORDS

Jessica Fujan
Midwest Organizer

I had been watching Food & Water Watch for years before I was finally able to join the team in 2012. I grew up in rural Minnesota, driving through seas of genetically engineered (GE) corn and hearing of the struggles of small farmers. I started my organizing career in Guatemala working for agrarian reform, and it became apparent that the struggles of the small farmer are often influenced by the same actors across the globe. As a Midwest Organizer for Food & Water Watch, I am thrilled to meet these issues head on as we fight corporate control of the food system through legislation that would label GE foods in Illinois and all over the country. In the field, concerned citizens who support our mission make it clear to me that while Food & Water Watch does not choose easy battles, people appreciate that we work on policies worth fighting for.

How to Talk to Your Relatives About Fracking During the Holidays

Not everyone agrees with us when it comes to the issue of fracking. And sometimes, the people who disagree are family — maybe folks you see only once in a while, like during holidays. Want a quick guide to talking about fracking with your family? We’ve got you covered — here are some quick facts to bust the myths about fracking during heated discussions about energy policy at the holiday table.

Myth 1: Natural gas is cleaner than coal.
Gas burns cleaner than coal, but methane, a highly potent greenhouse gas, is released during the extraction process, meaning that the greenhouse gas benefits of gas over coal are negligible.

Myth 2: Natural gas is a bridge fuel to renewable energy.
Natural gas is not a bridge fuel. We’re building out decades of infrastructure (like pipelines and export facilities) to support the continued use of fracked gas — instead of ramping up renewables now.

Myth 3: Natural gas will provide energy security.
Why do we need export facilities for liquefied natural gas? Because we will be exporting it to places like China and India. Energy security is a rallying cry that the industry uses to justify our continued reliance on fossil fuels.

Myth 4: Fracking equals jobs.
Fracking provides jobs, but often those are short-term jobs for people already in the energy industry — not the communities getting fracked. Meanwhile, the communities are left to deal with the social costs of fracking — like increased disorderly conduct arrests, traffic accidents and even increases in sexually transmitted infections in communities with heavy fracking (as compared to communities not heavily fracked.)

Want to arm yourself with more information on fracking? Go to foodandwaterwatch.org/fracking.

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On October 19, more than 250 actions were held in 30 countries across the world as part of the Global Frackdown, an international day of action to ban fracking. Here are some of the photo highlights.
There are big reasons to avoid chicken grown by the biggest poultry companies. JBS, Tyson, Perdue and Sanderson slaughter and process more than half of the chicken consumed in the United States, which gives them significant market and lobbying power. These companies act as middlemen between farmers and consumers, and they eat up most of the profit in the supply chain.

Before you sit down to your holiday turkey, consider these four facts:

1. Because there are just a handful of players in the poultry market, these companies are able to call all the shots — and reap large profits. For every $19 twelve-piece chicken bucket from KFC, only 25 cents goes to the farmer that raised the poultry, while $3–5 goes to the chicken processor. (The rest goes to KFC.)

2. These large companies use unfair contracts, require expensive equipment and building upgrades, and employ other aggressive tactics to squeeze poultry farmers to produce more and more chickens for less and less money.

3. The big chicken companies own everything from the chicks and the feed to the trucks, the slaughter facilities and the brand. The grower assumes all the debt associated with the operation, including the mortgages on the special buildings they have to construct to get a contract. The farmer also shoulders the expenses of utilities and of removing waste and dead birds.

4. Concentrating poultry production means concentrating the amount of waste seeping off of factory farms into nearby waterways (like the Chesapeake Bay). These big companies like Perdue leave the farmers to shoulder all the responsibility for dealing with the waste.

If you buy your chicken or turkey from the grocery store, chances are that you are buying a brand owned by one of these large companies. Consider seeking out independent farmers who sell direct to consumers. For additional information, check out our friends at www.eatwellguide.org.

California Chefs Launch Fight Against Fracking in California

Modeled after the successful Chefs for the Marcellus coalition in New York, this quarter Food & Water Watch partnered with Alice Waters and Jerome Waag of Berkeley’s Chez Panisse restaurant to launch a chefs’ petition calling on California Governor Jerry Brown to put a moratorium on fracking in the state. More than 150 of California’s top culinary professionals — including celebrity chefs like Suzanne Goin, Daniel Peterson, Stuart Brioza, Chris Cosentino, Nathan Lyon and Dominique Crenn — have already joined in our campaign to protect the state’s prized agricultural bounty from the dangers of fracking.

The chefs signed a petition to tell Governor Brown to place a moratorium on fracking in order to protect California’s 81,000 farms that produce an annual $43 billion in crops that feed not only the state, but also the nation and the world. The California chefs’ campaign is a tremendous first step toward engaging the food community in the fracking fight — expect to hear more from these famous foodies in the months to come.
Many meat and dairy labels describe only one aspect of how a product was produced. Unlike the “USDA Organic” label, which encompasses many different aspects about how the animal was raised, these labels generally are not based on the same kind of certification program to verify the claims. Be careful not to assume that they provide information about anything other than the one practice the labels describe.

Look out for the following labeling distinctions when you’re at the grocery store:

“Raised Without Antibiotics” or “No Antibiotics Administered” — Indicates that no antibiotics were used over the animal’s lifetime. Some large-scale producers feed animals antibiotics continuously at low doses to promote growth and prevent disease, which is linked to the spread of antibiotic-resistant bacteria in the environment. If an animal receives antibiotics for any reason, its meat, milk or eggs cannot be labeled “organic” or “raised without antibiotics.”

“Raised Without Added Hormones,” “No Hormones Administered” or “No Synthetic Hormones” — Indicates that no synthetic hormones were given to animals. Federal law prohibits the use of hormones on hogs and poultry. The use of any hormone-free label on pork and poultry products is intended to mislead consumers into thinking that the product is different and therefore worthy of a higher price. In the case of beef and dairy cattle, however, federal regulations do permit the use of hormones like recombinant bovine growth hormone (also known as rBGH or rBST), so for these products a label about artificial hormone use is telling you something.

“RBGH-free” or “rBST-free” — Increasingly used on milk products to indicate that synthetic hormones were not given to the dairy cattle.

Keep in mind that these labels do not disclose what the animals were fed or if they had access to pasture.


We at Food & Water Watch hope that all federal employees and their families are recovering from the effects of the government shutdown. Now that you’re back, we hope you will consider Food & Water Watch when you make your Combined Federal Campaign decisions. The CFC is the largest workplace-giving campaign in the world and is a great opportunity for federal employees to make a difference. Please designate Food & Water Watch (CFC #17460) for your Combined Federal Campaign contribution during this year’s campaign. Thank you!

Not a federal employee? Please ask your employer about any giving or matching program they may have, and consider Food & Water Watch when making your workplace giving!
New Food & Water Watch Analysis Reveals the Hidden Social Costs of Fracking

A new Food & Water Watch analysis shows that fracking is associated with increased incidence of traffic accidents, disorderly conduct arrests and sexually transmitted infections in rural communities. The Social Costs of Fracking: A Pennsylvania Case Study found that once fracking began in 2005, these social indicators worsened in counties with fracked natural gas wells, and the trends were especially pronounced in the rural counties with the highest density of fracked wells. To read the report, go to foodandwaterwatch.org.