CSPI’s Annual Report to the Membership

To: All CSPI Members  
From: Michael F. Jacobson, Ph.D., Executive Director  
Date: November 19, 2014  
Subject: 2014 Highlights & 2015 Challenges

In this report, prepared especially for members, you can read about some of the achievements your support helped make possible in 2014 and the challenges we face in 2015 to:

Make your food safer!

Stop the Reckless Waste of Precious Antibiotics

In the U.S., three times more antibiotics are sold for use in animal farming than are used to treat humans. Precious antibiotics are dispensed in food and water to speed the growth of cattle, chickens, and pigs and to prevent disease in the filthy, overcrowded conditions where they’re raised. The consequence is that bacteria have become resistant to some of the most important antibiotics used to treat human illnesses—making diseases harder to treat and increasing the likelihood that lifesaving surgeries may become increasingly dangerous because the antibiotics used in those procedures will no longer prevent infections!

The irresponsible use of antibiotics puts everyone at risk from the food we eat, but seniors and children are especially vulnerable. The recent outbreaks of antibiotic-resistant *Salmonella* Heidelberg linked to Foster Farms chicken spanned 26 months, sickened more than 750 people in 31 states, and sent more than 230 to the hospital. Three other strains of antibiotic-resistant *Salmonella*—found in everything from chicken to ground beef to milk and cheese—have sickened tens of thousands of people in recent decades.

As a loyal CSPI supporter, you know that we’ve been at the forefront of the battle to stop this reckless misuse and to keep antibiotics working for humans. We developed and maintain a database that now contains four decades’ worth of outbreaks linked to specific foods and that gives policy makers the accurate information essential for prioritizing public-health improvements. We are a founding member of the Keep Antibiotics Working Coalition. And we keep the pressure on government agencies to do the job they’re supposed to be doing.

Part of the problem is that U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) officials refuse to act because they insist the USDA doesn’t have the authority to make the changes needed to protect consumers. We think they are wrong, but to eliminate that excuse, CSPI worked with Representatives Rosa DeLauro (CT) and Louise Slaugher (NY) to introduce the Pathogen Reduction and Testing Reform Act. That legislation, which we urgently need you to help us enact in 2015, would remove any shadow of a doubt that USDA has a mandate to recall products—not only when *Salmonella* is antibiotic-resistant, but whenever any pathogen in food is causing illnesses.

One effect of CSPI’s campaign against antibiotic overuse may be industry’s increasing uneasiness about the issue. Recently, for example, Perdue and Tyson both announced that they are voluntarily stopping the use of medically important antibiotics in their hatcheries. Perdue claims that under its new program, 95 percent of its chickens will never consume an antibiotic that is important for human medicine. CSPI will continue its effort to encourage other poultry producers to do likewise. But our end goal is to convince the government to ban all irresponsible uses of medically important antibiotics on all farms.

**Bottom Line:** We don’t feed our children antibiotics to make them grow, and we shouldn’t permit it in animal farming either! Please help CSPI save precious antibiotics for treating human illness, not for padding industry profits.
Ensure that USDA Protects the Poultry Supply

Whether antibiotic-resistant or not, Salmonella is a serious problem in our nation's food supply. And poultry is one of the biggest causes of illness from Salmonella. This is why CSPI has been a leader in calling for the USDA to reform the inspection system in poultry-processing plants.

Unfortunately, instead of making poultry safer, the plan released by the USDA last summer significantly weakens poultry inspection and focuses more on cutting government's costs than protecting our safety. Specifically, the USDA is reducing the number of federal inspectors on the inspection lines and replacing them with company employees who have no formal training. Two inspectors are supposed to check 140 birds per minute—USDA wanted to increase it to 175 per minute, but we fought and prevailed against that risky increase. Even the U.S. Government Accountability Office and the USDA's own Inspector General agreed with us that it's nearly impossible to spot contaminated birds at that speed. (How carefully do you think a bird can be inspected in less than one second?)

I don't have to tell you how great the hazards are: Chicken is the most widely eaten meat and the most likely to cause severe food-borne illness—the kind that puts you in the hospital. (And you aren't much safer eating turkey.) Hundreds of outbreaks and nearly a million illnesses each year are linked to poultry, many from dangerous bacteria like Salmonella and Campylobacter. Because CSPI is a respected voice in Washington, our analysis affected the structure of the New Poultry Inspection System (NPIS). Unfortunately, we weren't able to eliminate all the hazardous new provisions, and so we need to keep working to protect consumers like you.

To change that, CSPI is going to Congress and working with Senator Kirsten Gillibrand (NY) to support the Safe Meat and Poultry Act, which would mandate more and smarter testing in facilities that produce beef, pork, and poultry products; adequate numbers of government inspectors; and updated adulteration standards. 

Bottom Line: We still have a long road ahead to make poultry safe, but it's a staple in most diets. Please stick with us to fight against the powerful meat and poultry industry and to force government to do the right thing.

Make the Food Safety Modernization Act Work for All of Us

Just a few months ago, a federal jury convicted the former head of a peanut-processing company of conspiracy and other criminal charges in connection with a deadly Salmonella outbreak. You may remember that food scandal, in which Salmonella-contaminated peanuts sold by the Peanut Corporation of America sickened 700 people and killed nine in 2008–2009. Not only did company officials know that their peanuts were contaminated, they purposely didn't tell their customers and even falsified lab reports.

That landmark case demonstrates a change in the attitude of the federal government: U.S. attorneys are now more willing to pursue violators with criminal charges than they had been. Their forceful action in the peanut calamity should motivate food producers to pay more attention to food safety than they do now. And that's good news for all of us!

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has also started to use several other important new powers under the Food Safety Modernization Act: ordering companies to recall contaminated foods from stores and homes, keeping foods suspected of being contaminated from ever reaching consumers, and suspending the registration of food processors caught selling unsafe food. That's more good news for us all.
But the bad news is that since the law was passed almost four years ago, some of the most critical safeguards have not yet been put into effect. One would require every manufacturer to have a food-safety plan, another would set safety standards for produce farms, and a third would increase the safety of imported foods. While the administration has been dragging its feet on finalizing new regulations, 26 multistate outbreaks have occurred that could have been prevented, among them:

A four-state outbreak of the deadly E. coli O157:H7 from salads and wraps sickened 33 people, sending seven to the hospital, two with a life-threatening form of kidney failure. Frozen berries and Pomegranate Mix with Hepatitis A made 165 people ill. Dairy products contaminated with Listeria sent seven people to the hospital, one of whom died. Organic Sprouted Chia Powder containing Salmonella Hartford caused an outbreak that sickened 94 people, five requiring hospitalizations.

Sad to say, the progress that could have been made to keep all those people safe hasn’t been made. According to a recent Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) report, the number of illnesses caused by E. coli O157:H7, Listeria, and Salmonella all stayed about the same between 2006–2008 and 2013. And remember, Salmonella causes the most illnesses (38 percent of foodborne illnesses), and too many of them now involve antibiotic-resistant strains. Campylobacter is not far behind (35 percent).

But the “winner” is Vibrio, a potentially deadly bacterium that is causing twice as many illnesses now as occurred in 2000. It lives in warm ocean waters where it contaminates shellfish, which, when eaten raw or undercooked (as they often are), can cause potentially life-threatening infections in people. The real tragedy is that the illness can be reduced or eliminated through closures of contaminated harvest waters and pasteurization of shellfish harvested during months when the waters are warm. But the FDA hasn’t taken the seafood industry to task; instead the FDA has allowed the industry to police itself—with catastrophic results.

You can see how much remains to be done to make our food safer—and how much we need the Food Safety Modernization Act to be fully implemented and enforced. The last step in that process is adequate funding. Recently, the FDA estimated it would need more than $300 million to implement the law—and you can count on CSPI to work hard to get those funds. That’s a lot of money, but not in comparison to the $15 billion that foodborne illness costs our nation each year. And since the FDA has made it clear that imported food—which accounts for 10–15 percent of all the food that goes on our table—will be the last to be regulated if new funding isn’t provided, we could be headed for another major public-health disaster.

**Bottom Line:** To make America’s food safer, it is absolutely critical that the FDA fully implement the Food Safety Modernization Act. We need your continued support to get it done.

### Get Dangerous Additives Out of Our Food

**Sugar substitutes:** Everyone knows that artificial sweeteners are in diet drinks, but people are often shocked to find them in everything from popcorn to English muffins to frozen dinners! Are they safe? CSPI’s research shows that several are not and others are poorly tested—but the FDA has been more protective of companies than consumers.

The biggest problem is aspartame (NutraSweet and Equal), which is used in Diet Coke and thousands of other products and has been controversial since the FDA approved it in 1981. Most of the safety studies done over the years have been sponsored by manufacturers, who—no surprise—find the sweetener to be safe. But since 2005, a reputable lab in Italy has conducted three high-quality animal studies. All three found that aspartame causes cancer. When the FDA, which seems to bend over backward to ignore problems, dismissed the Italian studies, CSPI persuaded the authoritative International Agency for Research on Cancer (a division of the World Health Organization) to make evaluation of aspartame a high priority. If that global agency concludes that aspartame is a possible or probable human carcinogen, it will put tremendous pressure on governments around the world—including our own—to ban or limit aspartame. In 2015, CSPI will formally call on the FDA to ban aspartame.

While CSPI is continuing to press the FDA to do the right thing on sugar substitutes, we’re not ignoring the millions of Americans who want answers to safety questions now. So we’ve just published a new booklet that will help

[www.cspinet.org](http://www.cspinet.org)
consumers wend their way through the sweetener jungle. It’s called Sweet Nothings: Safe . . . or scary? The inside scoop on sugar substitutes. Check it out at www.NutritionAction.com!

Food dyes: This is another group of additives that CSPI has had in its crosshairs for some time. They’re everywhere—in cereals and candy, of course—but also in salad dressings, pickles, mayonnaise, cake mixes, yogurt, and more. Why? Because artificial dyes are cheaper than natural, plant-based colorings.

As a result, the amount of artificial food dyes certified for use by the FDA increased fivefold, per capita, from 1950–2012, according to a study recently released by Purdue University scientists. The study reveals, for the first time, the amount of dyes in packaged foods, which has been a closely-kept industry secret. What’s clear from the study is that children are consuming huge amounts of dyes—a partial reason why child behavioral problems, such as hyperactivity and inattention, have increased during the same period. For example, General Mills’ Trix cereal lists Yellow 6, Blue 1, and Red 40 as ingredients; but until now, no one would have known that Trix has 36.4 milligrams of those chemicals per serving. Or that Cap’n Crunch’s Oops! All Berries weighs in at 41 milligrams. So what is a safe level for children? Clinical trials show that just 30 milligrams or so of dyes a day will affect significant numbers of children, an amount that many children are already consuming.

CSPI has been sounding the alarm about food dyes for many years. In 2008, we petitioned the FDA to ban eight widely used dyes. In response, in 2011, the FDA finally acknowledged that food dyes can cause behavioral problems in some children, but has not done anything to actually protect children. When our petition languished, we urged the FDA to at least require warning notices on foods containing dyes. (The European Union requires warnings on most dyed foods; as a result, very few foods in Europe contain dyes.) Again, the FDA has done nothing. One of our priorities for 2015 is to get Congress to commission the U.S. Institute of Medicine to review the connection between food dyes and behavior and then to advise the FDA what course to follow.

While waiting—yet again—for the FDA to act, CSPI is urging companies to stop using artificial dyes. And here we have had some partial success in protecting consumers, building on actions taken by Frito-Lay, Kraft, General Mills, and others to reduce the use of dyes. Pepperidge Farm, Nestlé, and Chick-fil-A are now taking steps in that direction, too. Kudos to them!

Caffeine: CSPI also raised a public alarm about the hazards of excessive amounts of caffeine being added to a growing number of foods and energy drinks. In the last 10 years, 276 adverse events, including 34 deaths, have been linked to highly caffeinated energy drinks. We’ve recommended limits on caffeine levels and disclosure on labels of how much caffeine a product contains. But the FDA has done nothing. No public warnings, no testing, no regulations. The overuse and misuse of caffeine in the food supply is creating a Wild West marketplace, and it’s time the sheriff noticed and did something.

To keep you and others informed about the safety of food additives, we continually update our Chemical Cuisine website, booklet, and free Smartphone app. That’s become a great source of reliable information for consumers, as well as journalists and academics.

Bottom Line: It’s long past time to get dangerous and poorly or untested additives out of our food. No other group monitors food additives like CSPI, and we need your help to keep the pressure on manufacturers and to move the FDA to action.

While fighting for safer food, CSPI must also continue to lead efforts to:

Make your food healthier!

Force Food Companies to Tell the Truth

I’m sure you’ve been frustrated—and sometimes cheated—by the countless confusing and misleading labels in grocery stores. I know I have been!

There’s Nabisco’s 100-calorie Oreo Thin Crisps that brags “Made with 5g of whole grain.” Yet the product is mostly sugar and white flour. Other companies brag about having a half or whole serving of vegetables, but some use vegetable powders that are not nearly as healthful as whole veggies. And Kashi’s Berry Fruitiful cereal is “berry deceitful”—it’s not full of berries at all, but made with apple powder, raspberry puree concentrate, etc. You get the idea.

As you probably know, CSPI has targeted false and misleading advertising for many years, pressing manufacturers to clean up their act and doing what the FDA should be doing to give consumers the honest information they need to make healthy food choices.

Through private meetings and in courtrooms, CSPI has curbed misleading labels used by many of the largest food manufacturers, including Sara Lee, General Mills, Campbell, and Frito-Lay. Last January we threatened to sue Kraft for claiming that
its Crystal Light “Natural” Lemonade was natural—even though it contains everything from aspartame and acesulfame-potassium artificial sweeteners to Yellow 5 dye and BHA preservative. Kraft took the claim off the label. We also persuaded Smart Balance to stop making worthless and illegal claims about preventing heart disease. Right now we’re suing Coca-Cola for deceptive claims about Vitaminwater and General Mills for touting its Nature Valley products as “100% Natural,” when they’re made with high-fructose corn syrup and other unnatural ingredients.

It’s satisfying when a small organization like ours can persuade or force major companies to provide more honest labels, but going after them one by one is an endless task. That’s why we worked closely last year with lawmakers in both chambers of Congress to craft and introduce a new bill—the Food Labeling Modernization Act. That bill would fix many of the problems on food labels, both stopping the deceptive claims and providing more useful information to consumers. For instance, the bill would require easier-to-read ingredient labels, labeling of whole grain and caffeine (which is being added to candy, gum, pancake syrup, and other products), and disclosures on the front of packages when foods contain artificial colorings or sweeteners.

Most important, the bill would require a simple, easily understood label on the front of packages to indicate a food’s overall nutritional value. That would be a tremendous help to harried health-conscious consumers and the millions of people for whom the current Nutrition Facts label is too complicated.

Last March, the FDA proposed revamping the Nutrition Facts label on all packaged foods—something CSPI has been advocating for some years now. The new label will likely include a new line to show the amount of added sugars in foods—even though the food industry is fighting it. For example, when choosing a jar of applesauce, you’d be able to tell how much of the sugar came from the apples themselves and how much sugar has been added by the manufacturer during processing. The new labels should also fix misleading serving sizes, so that a 20-oz. bottle of soda or juice is listed as one serving, not two-and-a-half 8-oz. servings.

(Who stops at eight ounces? Or multiplies by 2.5 to figure out the calories?) We also have urged the FDA to require the amount of sugar to be expressed in teaspoons, not just grams.

I am proud that several of CSPI’s previous recommendations formed the basis for some of the FDA’s proposals to update the Nutrition Facts label. We’ve met with lawmakers, allies, and agency officials to push for strong leadership on the label changes, filed official comments to the FDA, and testified at the agency’s public hearing to make clearer, more-informative labels a reality.

**Bottom Line:** CSPI needs your help to require food manufacturers to give you clear, honest, and complete information about their products and to stop the disinformation.

### Finish Off Trans Fat

CSPI is coming down the home stretch in one of the most important health victories for consumers ever: getting the FDA to ban artificial trans fat (from partially hydrogenated oils). A decade ago, trans fat was causing 50,000 or more premature deaths every year, mostly from heart attacks. With

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### How to Make a Better Label!

#### Current Label

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nutrition Facts</th>
<th>Serving Size</th>
<th>1/4 Cup (107g)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Calories</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>From Fat 16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Daily Value</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Fat</td>
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<tr>
<td>Saturated Fat</td>
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<tr>
<td>Trans Fat</td>
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<tr>
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<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sugars</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protein</td>
<td>0g</td>
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</table>

#### Better Label

<table>
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<th>Nutrition Facts</th>
<th>Serving Size</th>
<th>1% whole</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Calories in 1 serving</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>116%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 Servings per Box</td>
<td>4,400</td>
<td>1,376%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amount per serving</td>
<td>314g</td>
<td>116g</td>
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<tr>
<td>% Daily Amount*</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Fat</td>
<td>14g</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturated Fat</td>
<td>5g</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trans Fat</td>
<td>0g</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cholesterol</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Fiber</td>
<td>3g</td>
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<tr>
<td>Added Sugars</td>
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<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protein</td>
<td>4g</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Ingredient Facts

**Major Ingredients:**
- Sugar (sugar, corn syrup, high-fructose corn syrup), white grape juice concentrate (53%), skim milk, Refined triglycerides (high-fructose corn syrup, vegetable oil, sucrose, mono- and diglycerides, sodium chloride, artificial flavor and color, BHT, BHA), 5% of the Daily Value for saturated fat, trans fat, cholesterol, sodium, and added sugars.

**Allergen Information:** Contains MILK, WHEAT, EGGS, and SOY.

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CSPI leading the fight, three-fourths of trans has been replaced by healthier fats. A recent review of Americans’ diets over the past decade found that the reduction in trans fat was the single biggest improvement. That’s a huge public-health accomplishment that your support helped make possible!

A decade ago, we spurred major progress when the FDA, responding to CSPI’s petition, required trans fat to be listed on food labels. That spurred many companies to reformulate their products and eliminate trans fat altogether. Then, when the FDA failed to act on our 2004 petition to ban trans fats, CSPI mounted hard-hitting publicity and legal campaigns aimed at major companies that were selling foods made with trans fat. We sued Burger King and KFC, accelerating those chains’ switch to healthier oils. And we’ve kept the drumbeat going, last year getting Long John Silver’s to switch to trans-fat-free oils and retire its “Big Catch” special meal with 33 grams of trans fat (16 days’ worth!).

But countless other manufacturers and small restaurants are still selling food with trans fat. The only way to get artificial trans fat completely out of our food is to ban it. And, finally, that’s exactly what the FDA proposed last November. Following the announcement, CSPI mounted a major effort to get thousands of people to support a ban—including more than 5,000 CSPI members like you. Needless to say, we’re facing major opposition from the food industry, including giants like ConAgra, General Mills, the Grocery Manufacturers Association, and others who are opposing an outright ban simply so they can continue to make foods with cheap killer fat and line their pockets with the profits—all at the expense of the public’s health!

**Bottom Line:** The fight against killer trans fat isn’t over. We must keep the heat on the FDA to make sure it follows through with its proposed ban, and we need your support to do it.

**Expose the Hidden Salt**

Would you expect a half cup of cottage cheese (Wal-Mart’s Great Value brand) to contain more than one-fourth of your daily sodium allowance (based on 1,500 milligrams)? Would it surprise you to learn that Shady Brook Farms’ turkey breast cutlets have added sodium in them? Does it annoy you that despite the government’s repeated calls in Dietary Guidelines for Americans for lower-sodium diets, restaurants continue to load their food with so much salt that it can be dangerous to eat out?

Salt is the deadliest ingredient in our food supply, especially for people over 50, with excessive sodium levels causing some 100,000 premature deaths per year from heart attacks and strokes. For more than three decades, CSPI has been leading the battle to reduce salt in Americans’ diets—alerting the public to its dangers and pressing the FDA to set mandatory limits on sodium in processed and restaurant foods. In 2010, the Institute of Medicine (IOM) recommended mandatory limits (in a report paid for with congressional funding that CSPI secured). But four years have passed and the FDA has done absolutely nothing, because of food industry opposition. And industry has even stopped the FDA from setting voluntary sodium “targets,” which, though weaker than legal limits, would help curb the epidemic of premature mortality.

But consider this. In the United Kingdom, a rigorous government program from 2003–2011 resulted in a 15 percent reduction in salt consumption—making it the lowest of any country in the developed world. That reduction is saving thousands of lives a year. If the U.K. can do it, so can we! But we have to get government behind the effort, because the food industry won’t do it all by itself.

We know that companies can reduce sodium because some have already done it! The giant ConAgra (Hebrew National, Chef Boyardee, etc.) has already met its voluntary 20 percent reduction target a year before its self-imposed 2015 deadline. Kraft, McDonald’s, Unilever, and others are working toward their pledges to reduce sodium in their foods by 15–25 percent over the next several years. And while that’s encouraging, CSPI believes that the federal government is the critical player in making sure all food manufacturers and restaurants play their role in taming this massive public-health threat.

CSPI continues to put pressure on the FDA and the White House to act. We met with one of the First Lady’s top nutrition-policy advisers and were joined at the meeting by the American Heart Association, American Medical Association, and American Public Health Association. We’re publicizing the deadly result of the failure to act with our unique “Salt’s Deadly Toll” calculator on the CSPI website (over 446,000 premature deaths since the IOM’s 2010 report). And we’re issuing reports to keep sodium in the news, such as Stalling on Salt: Restaurant Meals Still Loaded with Sodium that documented a mere six percent decline in sodium in 136 chain-restaurant meals we surveyed in 2009 and again in 2013.

**Bottom Line:** The most effective way to reduce sodium in our food and save tens of thousands of lives a
year would be for the FDA to require gradual reductions in sodium in foods. Will you please help us get the FDA to act?

**Improve Our Children’s and Grandchildren’s Food—and Health**

With one in three children either obese or overweight, the improvements CSPI helped win for school food didn’t come a moment too soon. We worked more than a decade for this achievement and it’s one of which I am very proud. Thanks to passage and implementation of the Healthy Hunger-Free Kids Act, school lunches now have less sodium, more whole grains, more vegetables, and no trans fat. I’m confident that will lead to lower obesity rates and better overall health.

Unfortunately, just as school meals and snacks are getting more nutritious, that progress is under attack in Congress. Our opponents’ strategy is to pass a law allowing schools to opt out of the new school-lunch standards. The members of Congress promoting these waivers are hiding behind the “School Nutrition Association,” a lobbying group consisting of school food-service directors—and food manufacturers. Those companies are worried about their sales of French fries, pizza, and other salty, fatty, processed foods in schools…and worried about increasing their bottom lines.

While the congressional debate on the opt-out bill has been on hold because of the recent elections, we fully expect that pizza companies, French-fry makers, and other school-food special interests, along with their allies in Congress, will resume their campaign in 2015. We’ve come way too far to see the enormous advances rolled back by corporate interests who see school food as their own ATM. Our kids and grandkids deserve better.

And our mission in this area is critically important now more than ever! Consider this—Dr. Rachel Johnson, chair of the American Heart Association’s nutrition committee, says, “This is the first generation of children who will not live as long as their parents.” That’s a real tragedy and is preventable. Diet-related disease is playing a big part in deteriorating health.

Another of CSPI’s goals is to reduce advertising and marketing of unhealthy food to kids. Food manufacturers spend nearly $2 billion a year marketing food to children—the average child sees 17 food and drink ads a day, mostly for unhealthy food. We’ve kept the pressure on both food and entertainment companies to cut back, and our efforts resulted in the number of (mostly junky) food commercials on Nickelodeon, the TV channel most watched by children, dropping by a remarkable 60 percent from 2005–2012.

With your help, we’ll keep up the steady pressure from parents and health professionals to urge more companies to strengthen their nutrition standards for food marketing, especially in schools. It’s a David versus Goliath fight, but it’s one we can win.

**Bottom Line:** What kids eat affects their habits and health for life. Please support our efforts to set children on the right path—for their sake and the sake of the overall public’s health for years to come.

**Just Say “No” to Sugary Beverages**

The American Heart Association recommends limiting refined sugars to six teaspoons a day for women and nine teaspoons a day for men. Today, the average daily intake of refined sugars is 22 teaspoons (much of it from the gallons and gallons of sugar drinks the average American consumes each year).

CSPI’s Director of Nutrition Policy Margo Wootan (fourth from left) appears on Katie Couric’s talk show *Katie* in 2014, advocating for better food and health policies.

[www.cspinet.org](http://www.cspinet.org)
Some 35 percent of American adults are obese, and diabetes rates are skyrocketing in both adults and children, along with other diet-related diseases caused by excessive consumption of sugar.

I doubt that you consume a lot of soda, but we all have a stake in stopping our nation’s addiction to sugary drinks. Obesity and being overweight, promoted notably by soft drinks, account for an estimated $190 billion in national healthcare costs. And the future costs associated with the health consequences of obesity could overwhelm the health system’s resources.

That’s why I’m eager to tell you about an exciting CSPI milestone in the fight against sugar drinks: the bill introduced in Congress that calls for the first-ever federal excise tax on sugar drinks. The SWEET Act of 2014, which we helped Representative Rosa DeLauro (CT) to draft, calls for a penny-per-teaspoon tax on sugars in beverages and could raise $10 billion annually for prevention and treatment programs to combat soda-related diseases like Type 2 diabetes, heart disease, obesity, and tooth decay.

And best of all, it would discourage people from buying sugary drinks. In Mexico, which surpasses even the United States in the rate of obesity, a recently imposed peso-per-liter tax on sugary drinks is credited with causing an immediate 10 percent drop in soda purchases. The SWEET Act will be reintroduced in Congress in 2015, and CSPI will be leading the charge to generate support for the legislation. (CSPI also has vigorously supported soda taxes in San Francisco, Berkeley, and elsewhere.)

CSPI’s crusade against soda consumption really started with our 1998 report Liquid Candy, which exposed the soda industry for what it’s promoting: disease. Though we’ve formally petitioned the FDA over the years to put warning notices on containers of sugar drinks and to set maximum sugar levels for drinks, the FDA has never acted.

So instead we’ve increased our work with state and local officials to get sugar drinks out of government cafeterias, office buildings, and other government property, with great progress in Philadelphia, Seattle, Boston, and New York City. And in June 2014, we hosted the second National Soda Summit, bringing together 240 activists, local and state public-health officials, and scientists to highlight the latest research and hone strategies for community-based efforts to reduce sugary-drink consumption.

Yet anytime you target soft drinks, you are taking on some of the most powerful companies and savviest marketers in the country—companies that have invested billions of dollars over the years to get people to associate soda with happiness, not diabetes. CSPI and other health advocates know this is a long battle—but it can be won. Partly due to CSPI’s efforts, the consumption of non-diet carbonated drinks since we published Liquid Candy has dropped by 25 percent! Now even industry is expecting sales to decline another 20 percent over the next decade.

**Bottom Line:** We all pay the healthcare costs of America’s obesity epidemic, whether you drink soda or not. Just like progress made over decades to reduce health-smashing tobacco use, our effort to reduce the harmful effects of excessive soda and sugar consumption is a battle well underway. Please support us in our work to save precious lives.

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Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI)
2014 Fiscal Year Financial Overview

1. FY2014 Expenses
Total Expenses: $21,256,421

- Nutrition Action Healthletter: $7,794,274
- Fundraising: $634,896
- Public Education: $5,534,200
- Membership Development: $2,330,897
- Projects & Programs: $4,494,461
- Management & General: $467,693

2. FY2014 Support & Revenue
Total Revenue: $18,915,091

- Membership Dues & Subscriptions: $11,414,335
- Royalty Income: $799,572
- Contributions: $1,069,340
- Foundation Grants: $447,841
- Other Income: $443,348
- Investment Income: $4,574,676
- Net gain on investments: $799,572

3. FY2014 Statement of Financial Position

- Total Assets: $10,739,607
- Total Liabilities: $2,813,910
- Total Net Assets: $7,925,697