



Reclaiming your power

Cornucopia gives you opportunities for action in an overwhelming food system

Problem: Just a handful of corporations control the majority of critical junctures in the US food supply chain, giving them tremendous influence over all aspects of the food system, from seed production and genetics to processing, distribution, and grocery.

Antitrust scholars generally deem markets “tight oligopolies” if the top four firms control more than 60% of the market. This concentration of capacity and control increases supply chain fragility by putting more production in fewer hands and fewer places. This consolidation is also what gives these corporations the market power necessary to dictate prices paid to producers and push down workers’ wages, even while they charge consumers more (Kelloway, C. (2022). Consolidation in America’s food supply chains: A key factor in price gouging, shortages, and inequality. *Open Markets*).

What Cornucopia is doing about it: Until anti-trust laws are enforced and even improved to meet the times, Cornucopia is mobilizing the power of the people. When you use our consumer purchasing tools, you drive resources to the best food and farmers, protecting and promoting a true alternative food system.

Problem: Chemical companies control the narrative around what we eat, obfuscating the clear human health benefits of organic.

The pesticide industry has established a “private social network,” used by a range of influential allies, to denigrate organic and other alternative farming methods. The site’s creator, Jay Byrne, characterized conventional agriculture as being “under attack” from what he called “the protest industry,” and alleged that powerful anti-pesticide, pro-organic forces were spending billions of dollars “creating fears about pesticide use” (Gillam, et al. (Sept 27, 2024). Revealed: the US government-funded ‘private social network’ attacking pesticide critics. *The Guardian*).

What Cornucopia is doing about it: Cornucopia is doubling down on the fight against anti-organic propaganda. We will hunt down the most recent studies conducted by non-industry-funded scientists, then work with YOU to set the record straight.

Problem: Consolidation in the grocery industry has created mega-companies that largely dictate what you eat, how much your groceries cost, and which stores you have access to.

Today the US has one-third fewer grocery stores than it did 25 years ago. With less competition, big retailers and food processors use their dominant position to hike up prices on consumers. Food prices increased by more than 11% in 2022— the highest yearly percent change since 1974. Yet the last couple of years have also been the most profitable for big food retailers and manufacturers since 1950. In the absence of other grocers, consumers must submit to mega-retailers’ price hikes (Cusworth, J, et al.. (2023). Retail consolidation: Crisis across the food chain. *Farm Action*).

What Cornucopia is doing about it: We promote the important role of co-ops and independent retailers in your community. And we aggregate information about production practices and ownership structure behind the brands so that these stakeholders can bring the best organic food to you.

Problem: There are many barriers that make it nearly impossible to bring new organic products to market. Many small companies do not have the financial wherewithal necessary to get in with a large distributor.

Wholesalers are major gatekeepers and bottlenecks, and command significant market access to the retailers. Wholesalers will nickel and dime every supplier and manufacturer that must use their facilities to gain access to their coveted retail outlets. By controlling market access to select retailers, wholesalers make the rules and they can charge brands whatever a constricted market will bear. They are the kingpins. It is a one-sided discussion (Schweizer, E. (2024). Grocery update #20: Retail and wholesale fees and upcharges 101. *The Checkout*).

What Cornucopia is doing about it: With your help, we will continue to work closely with independent retailers to identify and promote independently owned organic brands so that grocers and shoppers can invest in an alternative food system that is better for our bodies, our communities, and our planet.

Problem: Perhaps nowhere in the organic marketplace is there a lack of transparency like there is in organic dairy. Consolidation and its impacts on the dairy industry make this byzantine market even more opaque.

In January of this year, Platinum Equity announced a definitive agreement to acquire Horizon Organic and Wallaby from Danone. Platinum Equity is a global investment firm with approximately \$47 billion of assets under management and a portfolio of approximately 50 operating companies. In recent years Platinum Equity has also acquired businesses from Ball Corporation, Caterpillar, ConAgra, Emerson Electric, Ingersoll Rand and Johnson & Johnson, among others (Platinum Equity. (January 2, 2024). Platinum Equity to acquire Horizon Organic and Wallaby from Danone [Press Release]).

What Cornucopia is doing about it: We will release our updated Organic Dairy Scorecard in 2025. Knowing where your milk comes from allows you to make purchasing choices that align with your values on issues like animal welfare and the environment.

Problem: The massive, complex food system keeps eaters in the dark, making it difficult for them to see a pathway for change. Big Ag views your role as strictly transactional, perverting your relationship with your food and taking away your right to choose what you feed your family.

Today's consumers are demanding ever-greater transparency. They want to know where their food comes from, what sustainability efforts retailers and farmers are making, and the environmental impact of their choices. However, as 52% of consumers also report, there's often insufficient detail available to verify producers' sustainability claims. This lack of information impedes informed decision-making and undermines trust (Jacobs, K. (2024). How growing consumer consciousness is impacting the food industry. *Capgemini*).

What Cornucopia is doing about it: Cornucopia grows grassroots power. We identify the best organic food available so you have the transparency you need to take action.

