

11 November 2014

Ambassador Nicolas Bideau, Director  
Présence Suisse  
Bundesgasse 32  
3003 Bern  
Switzerland

Re: Promotion of Nestlé bottled water at Expo Milano 2015

Dear Ambassador Bideau,

I write to you regarding the prominent role that Présence Suisse is granting Nestlé in the Swiss Pavilion at the upcoming Expo Milano 2015. Recent media reports suggest that Nestlé will display a 15-meter tower filled with water bottles. Given the undisputed evidence of the inefficiency and pollution produced by bottled water, we implore you to rethink this visual representation of your country.


According to a study by the Pacific Institute, the manufacture, production and transportation of bottled water is 1,100 to 2,000 times as energy intensive as the treatment and distribution of tap water. What's more, the vast majority of plastic water bottles are never recycled, thus adding to the world's vast pollution problems on both land and sea.

Nestlé's poor corporate citizenship is renowned the world over, but recently, they have been specifically targeting Hispanic immigrants in the United States and "emerging markets" in developing countries — consumers who are accustomed to inadequate water infrastructure and therefore less inclined to drink from the tap because of safety concerns. Specifically selling bottled water to populations around the world that do not have access to safe drinking water capitalizes on the world water crisis. While this may be profitable for Nestlé, it does not provide a long-term solution for the billions of people abroad who lack adequate water and sanitation and undermines support for public tap water.

Nestlé's chairman, Peter Brabeck-Letmathe, also chairs the 2030 Water Resources Group, a public-private initiative housed at the International Finance Corporation and engaged in setting water policy in key locations around the world. This group has unfortunately been used as a mechanism for water-intensive corporations to buy access to policy-setting spaces, promote market mechanisms for solving water shortages, and ensure that their factories have sufficient water for producing goods.

Ambassador Bideau, you have been quoted saying that bottled water "represents a sustainable, responsible and innovative Switzerland." In light of the evidence, I hope you will rethink that statement and choose instead to promote any of the countless wonderful Swiss creations—including your enviable public water system—rather than an unnecessary, unsustainable, polluting product.

Sincerely,



Wenonah Hauter  
Food & Water Watch, USA