



Shortlist 2009

Public Eye Swiss Award

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**Nominated for the Public Eye Swiss Award 2009  
by attac, Switzerland:**

## **Nestlé S.A.**

Based in:	Vevey, Switzerland
Industry:	Nutrition, health, wellness
Turnover / Net profit:	CHF 107'552 Mio./ CHF 10'649 Mio. (2007)
CEO:	Paul Bulcke
Owned by:	Shareholders
Workforce:	276 000 (2007)

### **In Brief**

*Big Brother lives in Vevey. The Swiss food company Nestlé spies on its critics every step of the way. In the summer of 2008 it was revealed that an employee of Securitas, a Swiss security company, had spied on members of attac Vaud on Nestlé's orders. For an entire year, the woman followed the authors of a critical book about Nestlé without attracting notice. From the summer of 2003 to the fall of 2004 the agent supplied Nestlé with confidential information. As participant in a working group of attac Vaud she had access to their internal e-mail and was informed about the groups contacts to places as far afield as Colombia and Brazil. She also provided detailed member profiles. Meanwhile it has become known that Securitas inserted another spy in the same attac group in 2005. Such surveillance constitutes not only a breach of morals and manners but also violates the right of assembly and free speech and represents a dangerous precedent.*

### **Irresponsible Corporate Behavior**

The world's largest food company based in Switzerland, hired Securitas, a private security company, to spy on attac. Attac was about to prepare a book on human rights violations committed by Nestlé and, together with other NGOs, organized a forum of resistance against the global food company in June 2004. In the fall of 2003 Securitas inserted an agent posing as a co-author into the working group of attac Vaud. Under the alias Sara Meylan the woman, described as shy by other members of the group, participated in the author meetings and collected confidential information before vanishing without a trace in June 2004, the French-language Swiss television channel TSR reported on June 12, 2008. According to TSR Sara Meylan visited many of the group members in their homes and had access to the groups entire e-mail traffic. In 2003 she filed up to four reports per month to Nestlé. As a mole she regularly informed Nestlé via Securitas about assemblies, provided detailed descriptions of group members, and revealed foreign contacts, notably those to Brazilian and Colombian trade unionists embroiled in a conflict with Nestlé.

## **Consequences**

Attac-members engaged in research about Nestlé are being observed like criminals and presented as a security risk. Nestlé has no compunction about using its power to secretly control and suppress those who put up resistance against its business practices. If necessary the company will resort to highly undemocratic means such as infiltration and spying. This scandalous surveillance violates basic human rights such as the right to freedom of thought, the right to freedom of opinion and the right to freedom of peaceful assembly. Besides, it creates a precedent for dealing with unpopular NGOs. Nestlé refuses to enter into a dialogue with civil society and does not respond to criticism. Instead, the company spies on a peaceful working group that takes a critical look at corporate behaviour in the south.

## **Current Situation and demands**

The surveillance victims filed suit against persons unknown for violation of privacy and data protection laws. Nestlé board president Peter Brabeck supposedly knew nothing about the one year surveillance. In the run-up to the G-8 summit in Evian in June 2003 Nestlé sought the help of Securitas to protect its properties from protesters. Nestlé's lawyer did not rule out future spy assignments. On July 23 the civil court of Lausanne dismissed an injunction requested by the group of authors and attac Switzerland, which would have permitted the confiscation of all documents secretly compiled by the Securitas undercover employee. The snooping, meanwhile, has not stopped. In January 2005, another Securitas employee infiltrated the group that „Sara Meylan“ had spied on earlier. She admitted having written about ten reports for Nestlé in 2005. Securitas claims to have stopped all surveillance missions in 2005, but the second spy continued working until she was dismissed by attac in September 2008 on suspicion of being a mole. Spying for Nestlé does not appear to be anything terribly unusual then. According to a report by the TSR television channel on September 7, 2008, Securitas introduced another spy known as “Shanti Muller” into the Lausanne Group Against Repression, GAR, that specializes in investigations of police violence and repression. Nestlé is urged to give up its snooping activities forthwith. Instead of spying on its adversaries, Nestlé should stop giving them occasion for criticism. 76 members of parliament have signed a public appeal launched by attac. It is high time for the company to start to respecting labour and union rights, pay fair prices to its primary producers, act environmentally responsible and prevent product flaws.

## **For more information:**

- [http://www.fr-online.de/top\\_news/?em\\_cnt=1351587](http://www.fr-online.de/top_news/?em_cnt=1351587)
- <http://www.woz.ch/artikel/2008/nr32/schweiz/16675.html>