



Department of Justice

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DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE AND USDA HOLD COMPETITION WORKSHOP FOCUSED ON MARGINS IN THE AGRICULTURE SUPPLY CHAIN

Washington D.C. Workshop is the Final in Series on Competition Issues in Agriculture

WASHINGTON — The Department of Justice and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) today held the fifth of five joint public workshops to explore the appropriate role for antitrust and regulatory enforcement in American agriculture. The workshop, led by Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack and U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder, examined margins at various levels of the agricultural supply chain. The workshop also included opportunities for public comments.

“These workshops have marked an important and unprecedented chapter in public-private collaboration, and although this is the last workshop, it is not the final chapter. Vigorous and appropriate enforcement is an essential component of our commitment to ensuring market fairness and robust competition,” said Attorney General Holder. “The Departments of Justice and Agriculture will continue working in close coordination to ensure fairness and opportunity for America’s farmers, producers and agriculture industry.”

“Today’s open and transparent dialogue with farmers, ranchers, industry and academics is resulting in a clearer understanding of the complex competitive issues facing American agriculture,” said Secretary Vilsack. “A fair and competitive marketplace is important not only for producers, but also for consumers.”

These joint workshops are the first-ever to be held by the Department of Justice and USDA to discuss competition and regulatory issues in the agriculture industry. The goals of the workshops are to promote dialogue and foster learning with a diverse group of stakeholders regarding the agricultural marketplace. Additional information about the workshops can be found at www.justice.gov/atr/public/workshops/ag2010/index.htm#overview.

Secretary Vilsack and Attorney General Holder began the workshop with opening remarks before moderating a discussion with participants representing each level of the agricultural supply chain, followed by a panel consisting of dairy farmers, academics and industry representatives to discuss dairy margins. In the afternoon a third panel looked at issues in the retail sector, examining concentration, margins and similar trends. The final panel discussed margins in the livestock and poultry industries. Assistant Attorney General for the Antitrust Division Christine Varney gave closing remarks. Officials also received public testimony from audience members.

Videos and transcripts from today's workshop will be available for review at a later date on the Antitrust Division's website at www.justice.gov/atr/public/workshops/ag2010/index.htm#dates. Individuals seeking more information on the workshops should contact agriculturalworkshops@usdoj.gov.

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