

Robert Lepore, Chief
Transportation, Energy and Agriculture Section
Anti-Trust Division
United States Department of Justice
Suite 8000, Liberty Square Building
450 Fifth Street, NW
Washington, DC 20530

Dear Sir,

Thank you for inviting me as a farmer and Ag business owner to submit my concerns and comments to your department as invited in an article in the High Plains Journal dated June 7, 2021 regarding the Department of Justice and Zen-Noh. I appreciate your time and attention to this critical matter.

I started farming in 1972. We are an Iowa farming operation. Our background includes approximately 5000 acres of farmland, an Ag retail operation, an Ag drainage business and our son has a 500 head cattle feedlot operation.

We are part of the small businesses that made this country. We employ 12 full-time employees divided between the different entities. We also employ part-time help seasonally. For years, we have felt that Anti-Trust laws were not protecting our family operated Ag businesses.

EXPORT HOUSES

When foreign companies align themselves with grain export houses, they don't have to offer competitive prices for our products. We need competition to keep prices competitive and allow for the average farm operation to have a profit. More grain dealers, more export houses, more packers, more fertilizer and chemical import companies are needed to keep the American farm engine running. We need free trade to keep our costs sustainable.

If export houses are monopolized along the Mississippi and other waterways, I can no longer bid multiple locations and discern competitive pricing. If the 48 Bunge elevator sales go through it greatly reduces our competition for bids. By Zen-Noh purchasing those elevators, they no longer have to bid competitively from other export houses controlling a large market share. From where we sit on the farm, it appears they are exploiting grain merchandisers by limiting competition.

This isn't the only industry that we see Anti-Trust laws not being honored.

CATTLE INDUSTRY

As we look at the cattle industry. There are basically 3 packers left. JBS, the Brazilian-owned and controlled packer is profiting \$1000 per head right now while the producer is losing \$200-\$400/ head because our government has let the packers monopolize this industry. They don't have to bid up on cattle because they know they are the only game in town.

FERTILIZER AND CHEMICAL INDUSTRIES

Another instance is the fertilizer and chemical industry. The same thing has been allowed to happen, being controlled by 3 major companies. Last season we did have some relief because of foreign imports of fertilizer. However the MOSAIC company complained, filed a law-suit to lessen import by implementing strong tariffs. Our government officials went along with it without regard to the family farmer's struggle with prices. In less than a year, phosphorus fertilizer prices went from \$285/ton FOB Dubuque, Iowa on the Mississippi to \$645/ton. That is a 227% increase in less than 12 months.

SEED AND GRAIN INDUSTRIES

Another Ag sector being controlled is the seed industry. Foreign countries are buying up small and large seed companies. Look at Bayer (German owned), Syngenta (China owned), all monopolizing this critical industry while our government allows foreign ownership and control.

NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS

Another thing happening in our area and across the United States is the activity of allowing Non-profit organizations to buy farmland. Non-profit organizations do not pay the state or federal taxes the average farm operation has to pay. Locally we are seeing the Latter Day Saints Church (Mormon) buying tillable and production farmland under the operating name of Deseret Trust Company. Other Non-profit entity names the Mormon church controls include Farm Reserve Incorporated. We have several young farmers in central Iowa trying to either get into farming or buy enough land to grow their operation large enough to sustain the business. They can not bid and win against these large Non-profits and their seemingly unlimited funds.

As you are probably aware, Bill Gates controls another Non-profit owning and controlling exorbitant amounts of farmland. These groups buy the land, raising the cash rent so high the young and local farmer can not get a foothold. It is a rare bank that is going to go along with the risk associated with a young farmer paying higher cash rent than is profitable. We, as local farmers, have to compete with these Non-profits and it is not a level playing field.

Non-profits are milking our state and federal governments out of approximately \$100-\$150/ acre per year of state and local taxes. By our accounts, because these Non-profits do not pay the local and state taxes, their burden is passed along to the local farmer, smaller communities and rural areas.

It is time for an investigation into these Non-profit organizations

STEEL INDUSTRY

Previous administrations have stopped foreign imports which caused US steel prices to skyrocket as major suppliers were only in our country. This lack of competition has doubled the steel price - leading to increased burden on farming operations. We need both. We support competition.

Finally, please stop allowing our country to be sold piece by piece to foreign entities. It seems of national interest that foreign ownership of our resources is unwise for economic and security reasons. Family-owned, hard-working Ag business are giving up the fight and giving in to the pressure of foreign ownership and the dollars it represents. We support legislation that would limit foreign investors ownership and control of American farmland and the inputs to support the industry around it.

From where we sit, it would be easy to believe that large corporations are allowed to merge with other conglomerates to the benefit of the individuals, governments and share-holders while Americans are unprotected even though Anti-Trust laws have been established but seemingly unenforced and ignored.

Please understand the need to open up imports and free trade! We as farmers have to compete with our products being exported to foreign markets, while our side has controlled input prices by tariffs being leveled by by our government siding with big business. We see the economic impact of our government allowing monopolies without regard to Anti-Trust laws.

I invite more discussion on these matters. Feel free to call my cell [REDACTED]. I also want to personally invite you to be on the grounds of our small business and operations. I would

welcome the conversation.

Thank you,

Mark Calmer
Mark Calmer

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]