



Department of Justice

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DOJ AND USDA HOLD FIRST-EVER WORKSHOP ON COMPETITION ISSUES IN AGRICULTURE

First of Five Workshops Features Discussion on Competitive Dynamics in the Seed Industry, Trends in Contracting, Transparency and Buyer Power

WASHINGTON — The Department of Justice (DOJ) and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) today held the first-ever joint public workshop on competition and regulatory issues in the agriculture industry. The workshop, led by U.S. Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack and U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder, featured panel discussions on a variety of topics important to America's farmers and ranchers, including competitive dynamics in the seed industry, trends in contracting, transparency and buyer power, and concluded with public testimony.

"Today's workshop provided the Department with an important opportunity to hear from a variety of perspectives and individuals about competition in the agriculture sector," said Attorney General Eric Holder. "We appreciate the importance of this industry to our economy and are committed to enforcing the antitrust laws effectively to ensure fair and open competition that protects both consumers and farmers."

"In my travels across the country, I hear a consistent theme: producers are worried whether there is a future for them or their children in agriculture, and a viable market is an important factor in what that future looks like," said Vilsack. "These issues are difficult and complex, which is why this workshop today is so important and long overdue."

Today's meeting was the first in a series of workshops that will be held over the next several months, the first joint DOJ/USDA workshops ever to be held to discuss competition and regulatory issues in the agriculture industry. The goals of the workshops are to promote dialogue and foster learning, as well as to listen to and learn from people involved in agriculture. Additional information about the workshops can be found at <http://www.justice.gov/atr/public/workshops/ag2010/index.htm>.

A six-person panel of farmers presented their views on competition and regulatory issues. Other workshop panels examined the competitive dynamics of the seed industry; trends in contracting issues, marketplace transparency and buyer power; and agriculture enforcement and cooperation at the Federal and state levels. Following the panels officials received public testimony.

The workshop was held at the FFA Enrichment Center at Des Moines Area Community College (DMACC) and was attended by several key federal and state leaders, including Iowa Senator Chuck Grassley, Congressmen Leonard Boswell, Assistant Attorney General for the Justice Department's Antitrust Division Christine Varney, Iowa Lt. Gov. Patty Judge, Iowa Attorney General Tom Miller and Iowa Agriculture Secretary Bill Northey, Montana Attorney General Steve Bullock, Ohio Attorney General Richard Cordray and Missouri Attorney General Chris Koster.

Transcripts from today's workshop will be available for review at a later date on the Antitrust Division's Web site. Individuals seeking more information on the workshops should contact agriculturalworkshops@usdoj.gov.

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