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Sent: Wednesday, December 9, 2009 7:16 PM
To: ATR-Agricultural Workshops <agriculturalworkshops@usdoj.gov>
Subject: Address market concentration

To whom it may concern:

Thank you for recognizing the anti-competitive environment of agricultural markets in the United States. I appreciate the opportunity to comment on how the growing concentration in all sectors of agriculture affect my livelihood and the economic stability of my community. I am new to agriculture, but I come from a family that has been operating farms and ranches on the Northern Plains for 100 years. I started ranching 3 years ago when I moved back to Montana and had an opportunity to start working my in-laws' place. I have found that the agricultural world today is a much different place than the one my grandfather worked in.

A handful of meatpackers and poultry companies dominates the livestock industry. This has a nearly crippling effect on our ability to sell our product. The lack of competition in buyers forces ranchers to design operations based on volume, and that is not sustainable on the land. We cannot run enough animals to make a living and keep the land healthy. My wife and I both have full time jobs to support our ranching habit, but feel that the knowledge and practice of ranching is too valuable to lose. If our fossil fuel system ever is in dire straights, producers like myself will be vital to our communities. However, small operations are dying every day because they cannot produce the volume of product needed and keep their ranches sustainable. Trust busting is necessary to reintroduce competition back into our industry so that capitalism can function.

There are fewer and fewer independent seed companies providing seed to the farmers who grow the crops we eat. This near-monopoly power of these agribusiness corporations limits competition and makes it hard for farmers to afford inputs to grow their crops and then to get a fair deal and fair price.

I sincerely fear the power that these agribusinesses have over us. We, as a nation, often talk of the need to control our fuel supply, but we forget that food is the most important and basic fuel we use. We are losing control of our food every day and putting control over it in the hands of a few who have a mandate to increase their profits, not feed the world with safe and healthy products.

I look forward to both USDA and DOJ gaining a better understanding of these problems and using their regulatory authority to address these issues that impact every farmer, rancher and consumer of our country.

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