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**Sent:** Thursday, December 17, 2009 7:47 PM  
**To:** ATR-Agricultural Workshops <agriculturalworkshops@usdoj.gov>  
**Subject:** corporate control in agriculture

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To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing because I am worried about the growing power of agribusinesses and the resulting decline of family farms. To be more specific, I am a landowner in North Dakota, and, more importantly, I am a consumer--that is, a person who eats, preferably organically certified food.

In the early part of this decade, Monsanto tried to commercialize a transgenic variety of wheat, Roundup Ready wheat. On May 10, 2004, the company shelved its plans for RR wheat because of consumer resistance--most notably, from consumers in Asia and Europe. Many U.S. wheat farmers were, and are, concerned about the loss of their valuable export markets. Much of North Dakota's hard red spring exports eventually end up in the bellies of Asian and European consumers.

Now, Monsanto is at it again. The company has purchased WestBred LLC, a Montana-based firm specializing in wheat germ plasm. If Monsanto successfully introduces a transgenic wheat, it won't be long before the organic bread I prefer won't be available because the transgenic wheat will likely contaminate organic wheat fields. Again, it's only a matter of time, and Canadian research shows that the outcrossing (contamination) may happen sooner than later.

What's more, if Monsanto dominates the wheat seed market as it does other transgenic seed markets, the renter (a family operation) who farms my cropland eventually will be forced to buy seed from Monsanto and sign a grower's agreement that prevents them from saving seed. In short, input costs will go up for farmers, and if history is any indicator of the future, the likely outcome will be fewer farmers and larger farms. This lack of competition among farmers wanting to rent my land will result in my having to take whatever the handful of remaining farmers feel like offering me. Thanks to Monsanto, the market for farmland will belong to the renters, and I will be left, in retirement, with a highly devalued asset.

I could offer more examples about how agribusinesses are killing family farms and rural communities, but one needs only consult Census data to understand the negative effect. In a word: depopulation. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to comment.

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