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To: ATR-Agricultural Workshops <agriculturalworkshops@usdoj.gov>
Subject: Comment

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US Department of Justice

Dear US Department of Justice:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit comments in advance of the Department of Justice's workshops on "Agriculture and Antitrust Enforcement Issues in Our 21st Century Economy."

As a farming community organizer and organic consumer, I am particularly concerned about Monsanto's control over the seed supply and chemical promotion on our food crops.

By buying seed companies and aggressively patenting life, Monsanto has gained control over as much as 90 percent of seed genetics. This is anti-competitive behavior that skews markets and subjects farmers and consumers to the unchecked power of a company that can raise prices at will.

I have worked with groups of farmers who no longer can plant on city or county open space because the only available seed supply is genetically engineered and tied to heavy use of chemicals for those seeds to be viable. Many communities have passed and will continue to pass policies to eliminate GMO and chemical use on their open space lands, righty so to protect their health and the environment's health. But farmers have become indebted to Monsanto and other GMO and chemical companies because of the lack of a diverse seed supply in the United States.

But, my main concern is that, while Monsanto has acquired a diverse store of seed genetics, they are only making available a few seeds that are genetically modified to be dependent on their chemicals.

The vast bounty of food crops that farmers have cultivated and improved upon over the last 10,000 or so years should not be allowed to be bought up and put out of commission by a company bent on whittling down food varieties to a few pesticide-dependent genetically modified crops.

The most devious part of Monsanto's business model is that their Frankenseeds can cross-pollinate with organic and traditional varieties, destroying their unique characteristics and infecting them with genetically engineered chemical dependence or even "Terminator" or "Traitor" technology that renders seeds sterile, a literal death sentence

for seeds maintained through conventional breeding.

The same way we protect animal species from extinction, we should protect plant species, especially the tens of thousands of food varieties, from companies like Monsanto that are consciously eliminating them.

We should also be scrutinizing the perverse way Monsanto and other GMO and chemical producing companies have used litigation to wreck the livelihoods of farmers in the US and Canada via "copyright infringement" when another GMO crop has pollinated a farmer's field who doesn't use GMO seed.

For organic farmers and Native American farmers who use precious landrace varieties of seeds saved for 100's of years, the unleashed pollution of GMO pollen by neighboring farms using GMO products is unethical even if it is currently "legal." Farmers using seeds that get contaminated by GMO crops elsewhere should have legal recourse against the producers of these GMO products for loss of livelihood.

I urge you to please include in your investigation a consideration of the importance keeping seeds, the foundation of human life, at least in the marketplace, if not in the public domain where they truly belong. And give farmers and communities legal recourse for when their lands and plant life have been contaminated by GMO products.

Sincerely,

Tawnya Laveta