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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:

Monsanto's assault to limit seed availability is multi-pronged. Since 2005 they have bought out multiple seed companies, the largest being Seminis which at the time accounted for the largest portion of seeds available to farmers and gardeners.

They use the law as a club against individuals who cannot fight their multitude of attorney's and investigating intimidators.

They have effectively put seed-cleaners out of business through the tactic of following them to the farmers with whom they do business by cleaning their seed. They follow-up this tactic by depositions of the seed cleaners to obtain the names of all the farmers for whom they clean seed. They then proceed to intimidate and sue those farmers who attempt to grow and use their own non-GM seed as they have for generations.

Monsanto uses their own inability to keep GM pollen from non-GM fields as a club against traditional, seed saving farmers. They win in court or settle with these farmers not because the farmers have done something to try to steal their GM products but rather because defending against Monsanto would cost them their livelihood.

Most insidious is Monsanto's control through the US government. The government was tied, early on, to GM seed development. It established relationships with Monsanto through that process that have allowed for tens of GM execs and attorneys to move into government positions and back to Monsanto after furthering the needs of Monsanto as opposed to anyone else, consumers in particular.

Through their control of FDA they have succeeded in keeping the labeling of GM foods off the table completely. Consumers should have the right to knowledge that helps determine what goes into their food choices.

In addition, 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.

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.

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.

Monsanto isn't the 500 pound gorilla in the room; its the 20,000 pound bully at the door.

Sincerely,

Pamela Larsen