

From: seg4400@comcast.net
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To: ATR-Agricultural Workshops <agriculturalworkshops@usdoj.gov>
Subject: Comment

Stephanie White
4400 Tacoma Blvd
Okemos, MI 48864-2738

December 18, 2009

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."

I agree with much of the text below, so have left it, but also wanted to add my comments that I think it criminally dangerous to rely on a small number of companies to control the food system via concentration and homogenization of seed genetics. It is dangerous from both a biological and social standpoint. I also think it is irresponsible to sell and advocate for these seeds in developing countries, which will have the effect of undermining agricultural systems. Food systems should be as diverse as the cultures and ecologies in which they are found. To homogenize food production in the name of efficiency is just plain stupid, and is based on a very narrow definition of what constitutes success. Food systems must be viewed as more than a bunch of commodities. Now...onto the rest....

As an organic consumer, I am particularly concerned about Monsanto's control over the seed supply.

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 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.

Sincerely,

Stephanie Ann White
5173474023