

From: biz2@grabiak.net
Sent: Friday, December 18, 2009 1:08 PM
To: ATR-Agricultural Workshops <agriculturalworkshops@usdoj.gov>
Subject: Please halt production of genetically engineered life and foods

Elaine Danforth
1809 Wellington Street
Oakland, CA 94602-1757

December 18, 2009

US Department of Justice

Dear US Department of Justice:

It is with gratitude that I accept your invitation to submit my comments in advance of the Department of Justice's workshops on "Agriculture and Antitrust Enforcement Issues in Our 21st Century Economy."

Since President Obama says he is seeking information, I would like to refer him and members of the Justice Department to Michael Pollan's book, "The Botany of Desire," especially the chapter on genetically engineered potatoes, which have, I am sure, been unknowingly eaten by millions of people who have anytime in the last several years eaten any McDonald's french fries or potatoes from many other sources.

I would also like to refer him and you to amberwaves.org, whose work is familiar to Congressman Dennis Kucinich (D-Ohio), whose purpose is to save organic grain, which is one of the most vital foods on earth, and which is under relentless attack by Monsanto and the biotech industry.

Perhaps the President is already aware of one or both of these resources, as Amberwaves Winter 2009 newsletter mentions that Michael Pollan had written an open letter to the President calling for the White House lawn organic garden, an idea which he has implemented. The article "Strong or Weak? Obama's Organic Agenda" outlines some of Obama's actions and statements on related topics, including genetic engineering. The article quotes the President, calling for "stringent tests for environmental and health effects," and stronger regulatory oversight." I am not sure there are adequate tests that could even conceivably be done, given cross pollination or "genetic drift" from one field to another puts practically the world's entire natural (untampered) food supply at risk.

Stronger regulation might be preferable to weaker regulation, but I do not think it is sufficient. I am convinced that the uncontrolled development over the last decade or so of genetically engineered agriculture has already taken us so far in the wrong direction with regard to the quality of our food supply that it is questionable whether we can recover the bio-diversity of the whole, natural foods, and surrounding life that has been harmed by the introduction of these artificially created plants into the ecosystem.

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.

Even more fundamentally serious a 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. And both animal and plant species have been shown to be under risk. In the case of the Monarch butterfly, Monsanto was well aware of the danger, much as the cigarette industry knew about the cancer risk associated with smoking their product well before that became public knowledge.

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,

Elaine Danforth
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