

From: e.gaddis@gmail.com
Sent: Friday, December 18, 2009 1:08 PM
To: ATR-Agricultural Workshops <agriculturalworkshops@usdoj.gov>
Subject: Concern for food security of our nation and the people who eat it and grow it.

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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."

As an organic consumer, I am particularly concerned about Monsanto's control over the seed supply. I am also concerned about the way in which the company treats farmers and I object to the fact that so many officials from Monsanto are now working within the USDA and FDA. According to my knowledge that is a conflict of interest. I urge The US Department of Justice to get on the side of the consumer and the citizen and ignore the lobbying, and pandering of a company whose only mission is fundamentally against everything our forefathers believed in. If nothing else ask yourselves, "if Thomas Jefferson were alive today, would he plant Monsanto's GMO seeds proudly at Monticello, and did Michelle Obama plant GMO seeds on the White House lawn?" The answer is a most fervent "no!" Please respect the wishes of the US people and do the right thing, the effects of your decision regarding this matter will inform the health and vitality of our environment, economy and food supply for many years to come. Say no to Monsanto and instead look to the small farmer and help prop him up and subsidize him, he is the backbone of America, a country founded as an agrarian society, not a immoral profit machine.

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. It also bankrupts farmers as they must apportion a significant portion of their earnings towards buying new seed each year instead of saving seed at no cost to them as they had previously done for centuries.

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. This form of agriculture rapes the land and adds to the environmental demise of the land. The long term costs of cleaning up or restring the lands savaged by this agriculture will be great. Fortunately, we can phase out this agriculture and impose laws and regulations that limit the use of this technology. It is not too late, but the time is now.

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 GMO seed stock 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. Additionally, a farmer who does not plant Monsanto seeds can be financially destroyed and robbed of his or her profession if one of Monsanto's "scouts" finds their seeds, or intellectual property in said farmer's field. As Monsanto cannot sue the wind which is responsible for such cases they instead bury the farmer in legal fees, thus ruining them and sending a message to other farmers. That message is a sad one and I would argue an unconstitutional one. A farmer must be able to save seed and plant it; it should be the role of Monsanto to keep their seeds out of other fields.

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,

Emily Gaddis
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