

**From:** writer@ptfoodcoop.coop  
**Sent:** Friday, December 18, 2009 2:28 PM  
**To:** ATR-Agricultural Workshops <agriculturalworkshops@usdoj.gov>  
**Subject:** Comment

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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."

I'm very concerned about the increasing consolidation of our food system. Larger and larger national and multinational corporations are putting food on the table for most Americans. Why does this concern me?

I'm concerned about food safety and food security. Several food recalls over the past few years suggest that putting food production and processing into the hands of larger and larger companies compromises the safety of our. And the more we consolidate our food system the more stretched and vulnerable to a number of threats it becomes. We need many small and mid-sized family farms with strong regional food systems to best supply Americans with healthy and safe food.

One of the most egregious examples of consolidation is the Monsanto Corporation. 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 food buyers 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.

Sincerely,

Deborah Schumacher  
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