

From: bilbridge@sprint.blackberry.net
Sent: Friday, December 18, 2009 5:42 PM
To: ATR-Agricultural Workshops <agriculturalworkshops@usdoj.gov>
Subject:

December 15, 2009

Legal Policy Section
Antitrust Division
U.S. Department of Justice
450 5th Street, NW, Suite 11700
Washington, DC 20001

Dear Sir or Madam:

I'm a farmer in northern Alabama and the chairman of the National Black Growers Council. I would like my comments added to the public record for the Department of Justice and USDA workshops on agricultural sector competition in 2010.

On our family farm, we have cotton, corn, wheat, soybeans, and canola. We tend the crops for around 6,000 acres. The Bridgeforth family own approximately 2,000 acres of that, along with my mother, brothers and sisters, for a total of fourteen people. Greg and I farm full-time, along with my two sons and one nephew; five altogether. The farm has been in our family since around 1900. We've added to the acreage as our business has grown.

Farming has grown with biotech seed. The private sector has done a lot with genetic seed improvements. Research and development have gone up. We have more seed choices now. The first thing we look at when buying seed are the trials here in north Alabama. Once we select a variety for north Alabama, we look to see if that variety is near the top across the state, then in Tennessee and Mississippi. As far as traits, we try to stay within budget. We order traits based on what we need and trying to hit all potential problems. If we think the trait can do a better job at controlling the pests than chemicals, then we buy it. I feel like the companies compete for my business.

There are lots of seed varieties available in my area. For cotton, there is DeltaPine, Stoneville, and Fibermax. In corn, there is DEKALB, Pioneer, Syngenta, Southern States, and Cropland. There are others out there, but those are the ones we've looked at. For soy, there is Asgrow, Pioneer, Syngenta, Southern States, and Cropland.

We only have 100 acres of cotton, so we planted all DeltaPine. On the corn, we planted DEKALB, Pioneer, and Syngenta. On the soybeans, we planted DeltaPine, Asgrow, Pioneer, Southern States, and Syngenta. We paid \$37 to \$47 a bag for soybean seed. They were higher than what we paid in 2008. This year, we paid from \$180 to \$230 a bag for corn, depending on the technology and traits. Besides looking at the variety trials before buying seed, we also hire a consultant who can give us input. We also use a yield monitor.

The variety of seed is the most important choice a farmer makes all year long. We stick with what works. I feel like the seed companies know this and try to earn our business with higher yielding varieties and lower prices. But we'll pay higher prices if the variety performs better and gives us protection that we don't already have.

Without a doubt, farming has changed after biotech seed was first used. Yields are up. Before they introduced the Bollgard cotton, we used to spray all the cotton six or seven times to try and control pests. Now we're down to just spraying once or twice. When Round-Up came out, it gave us the opportunity to become no-till farmers. It used to be around here, the creeks and even the river would run red with topsoil. But now the water running out of these fields is clear. No till is a whole lot better.

Thank you for considering my comments.

Yours truly,

Bill Bridgeforth
PO Box 159
Tanner, AL 35671

Sent on the Sprint® Now Network from my BlackBerry®