

From: Rachel Van Patten <rvan73@gmail.com>
Sent: Saturday, December 19, 2009 1:29 AM
To: ATR-Agricultural Workshops <agriculturalworkshops@usdoj.gov>
Subject: Comments

I am writing because I am concerned about the lack of competition in agricultural markets.

As an avid supporter of local independent farmers and ranchers in my region I find it appalling that so many of them are struggling to make ends meet, and that one corporation has such a chokehold over their industry/markets. It's bad enough that Monsanto threatens farmers in India who don't/won't buy its seeds; the fact that they get away with it here in the US is unconscionable. Organic farmers in particular want nothing to do with Monsanto and its Franken-products and yet are increasingly finding themselves without options, or at least not affordable ones. Even worse, their fields are often tainted by "run off" (via wind, water and pollinators) with genetically modified organisms and/or pesticides and fertilizers - many if not most of which can be traced directly back to Monsanto's door.

In addition, and generally speaking, all of the food-safety scares of the last few years have - without exception - involved giant, corporate agribusiness companies. To the best of my knowledge not one small, independent farmer/rancher has been implicated, yet they are routinely harassed and intimidated by USDA/FDA regulators while corporations such as Monsanto - literally - get away with murder. As direct suppliers of the communities they live in and serve, small independent farmers and ranchers have a vested interest in keeping their land, animals and customers happy and healthy. It's way past time we (i.e. we the people at the public policy level) supported them, as they represent the best of our American agricultural and business traditions, rather than catering unquestioningly to the whims of greedy and destructive corporations such as Monsanto.

It's time to put competition back into our agriculture markets and stop stacking the deck in favor of the worst players. Small businesses keep this nation running, and small farms and ranches are no exception. More to the point: for most of our history it was our small farms and ranches which fed us. The food they produced was healthy and nourishing and their communities thrived. It's time to return to those traditions and to stop the rampant kowtowing to corporate greed and influence.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

Rachel Van Patten

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