

From: climberjc@gmail.com <jere.harrison@ucla.edu> on behalf of Jere Harrison <jere.harrison@ucla.edu>
Sent: Saturday, December 19, 2009 1:50 PM
To: ATR-Agricultural Workshops <agriculturalworkshops@usdoj.gov>
Subject:

I am an Electrical Engineering PhD student, and small business owner, in Los Angeles. While I do not come in contact with the agricultural industry outside of the grocery store, I am concerned about excessive lobbying influence and price collusion resulting from corporate consolidation.

I have read that the price of food products have quadrupled while income has doubled in the last 30 years, and wonder why the price supports from agricultural subsidies have not been removed. Why are my tax dollars being used to inflate prices that hurt the most vulnerable segments of our society? Given the current economic climate, surely we should be letting prices fall naturally to their supply-demand intersection. The only impediment to this that I can imagine to still exist is the lobbying efforts of companies whose financial interests would be harmed by the return of competitive pressure in their markets.

My Uncle has a small farm producing feed and beef in Mississippi, and struggles to make ends meet. He does not have enough land to make good use of the subsidies for crop rotation, so is at a competitive disadvantage to his larger competitors purely by legislation. His interests are in conflict with the enormous lobbying efforts representing the centralized agricultural corporations, stifling his voice in the government. I believe that his situation is not isolated, and that he is emblematic of the loss of the family and local farm around our country. Nearly all of the food in my grocery store is shipped in from hundreds of miles away. The food is not nearly as fresh as the food available in the farmers markets that carry produce from the couple local farms that still remain.

The food in my grocery store is treated very heavily at their sources so that they will not perish before they have been sold off of store shelves. I am in contact with a variety of chemicals every day because of my job, and know all too well the effects of chronic exposure to nearly any organic compound that does not rapidly break down. While I am sure that the FDA has studied the chemicals used in the agricultural industry thoroughly, 20 year exposure studies from infants to adults that could determine the actual effects of chronic exposure are not required before approval. I understand that this sort of study would be cost prohibitive, but without them, I wonder how much of my health insurance premiums go to subsidizing diseases that are aggravated by chronic exposure to the chemicals that have been absorbed into our food. I believe that further studies of these important public health issues are against the interests of the few remaining biotech firms that produce the seeds and treatments for

our foods, and as a result, their lobbying influence should be limited by the restrictions of mergers and rigorous enforcement of anti-monopoly laws.

Thank you for your interest in the public opinion on this matter. Expressing my opinion directly to my government always renews my faith in the success of our democracy.

Jere Harrison