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To: ATR-Agricultural Workshops <agriculturalworkshops@usdoj.gov>
Subject: Comment

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December 20, 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." The following paragraph is background information from Greenpeace with a little editing:

"Existing living organisms, like plants and animals, as well as their genes, are of course no-one's invention and should therefore, by definition, never be patented and put under private control. By patenting life, the genetic engineering industry gains control not only over its own genetically engineered organisms, but also over our food chain and ultimately over the planet's own genetic heritage for decades to come. Patenting allows industry to take control of and exploit organisms and genetic material as exclusive private property that can be sold to, or withheld from, farmers, breeders, scientists and doctors. "Technology agreements," and fees on seeds, deprive farmers of their generations-old right to replant and exchange their seeds. Vast, unsubstantiated patent claims on DNA deter scientists from research in areas that have already been "claimed" by big companies with large legal budgets. Patents on life create Bio-Piracy and a new form of colonialism: In the South, where most global food crops originate, freely available seeds and specimens are analysed by genetic engineering companies, and then patented to be sold back at high prices to those, who originally maintained and developed these varieties over generations.

Greenpeace opposes all patents on genes, plants, humans and parts of the human body and regards the biodiversity of this planet the common heritage of humankind. "

As an organic consumer, I am particularly concerned about Monsanto's control over the seed supply.

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.

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.

The genetic engineering that Monsanto is doing can take genes from one species and put them in another. This is a physical manipulation that would not naturally occur, but it is not an invention. Anybody could cut something out of one thing and put it in another. You could put genes from a pig in a tomato. You could put genes from a disease in a tomato. The safety of these so called foods is highly questionable. While this might not be a concern in this case, please do not let one industry destroy the healthy nutritious food that has been our heritage for many years. We will have plastic to eat and no other choices due to cross-pollination, as a result of one industry monopolizing the food supply. Monsanto cares about selling chemicals and making money. They don't care about food. Who is going to protect the consumer from this monopoly?

I urge you to please include in your investigation a consideration of the importance of keeping seeds, the foundation of human life, in the marketplace, as well as in the public domain, where they truly belong.

Sincerely,

Barbara Schwartz
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