From: Rachel Goldberg <rmgoldberg@salisbury.edu>
Sent: Monday, December 21, 2009 11:05 AM
To: ATR-Agricultural Workshops <agriculturalworkshops@usdoj.gov>
Subject: Farming

I am a university professor in Salisbury, Maryland. I teach Environmental conflict Resolution, and have researched and learned about some of the issues you are considering for a long time. I'm very concerned about the consolidation of power in the agricultural and food processing sectors, for a number of important reasons:

We are making disastrously bad agricultural decisions and have been doing so for some time. We subsidize conventional agriculture, which is designed to be herbicide and pesticide intensive. In addition, most of those crops are genetically engineered and so are genetically identical. Genetic diversity is one of the only ways species survive climate change. Genetically identical species are the MOST susceptible to climate change. and climate change is happening. In addition, there are known cancer rates associated with chemical pesticides and herbicides. Look at a bag of any one and they list, on the lable, expected rates. These are low, but why on earth do we support a riskier food sully over a safer one? the only reason organic food costs more is that conventional food is subsidized. I live in the part of the country with the highest cancer rates in the country. Johns Hopkins researchers think that this is because the trade winds sweep chemicals from across the country and dump them here. We have research on how a few chemicals impact human health, but we have no research on how the tens of thousands of chemicals we are exposed to all impact human health taken together.

Monsanto originally promised the agricultural and scientific world that when they produced GMO crops that they would do so in a way that supported organic farming and made healthier food available to everyone. A friend who is a genetic engineer was part of these original conversations. Monsanto has, instead, engineered crops that undermine organic food, and are even more pesticide intensive than previous crops. Finally, there is evidence that genetically engineered crops are not good for human and animal health, which I find no surprise. We have a relatively primitive understanding of how the human body uses food to fuel and heal the body, and it took millions of years to evolve into a system that is designed to work with this environment and the food it produces. Ignorance plus huge investment plus essentially experimenting with the human population is truly unconscionable.

Secondly, we are not supporting farmers the way we need to. The Pennsylvania Dutch country in PA was one of the richest agricultural areas in the world. Rich, fertile soil was feet deep. That area was fertile enough to feed Rwanda. However, because farmers are not protected, the developers were able to outbid the Amish and that land, which should have been a national treasure, is now developed, paved over, covered with homes. The Amish from that area, whose lifestyle we should also have been protecting, are now running factories. Nor can we reclaim that land for farming. It took thousands of years for that soil to develop. Where I live every other farm is for sale to developers. If anything, in the coming climate change, we will need MORE farmland. We MUST protect it and farmers.

Thank you for the opportunity to express my concern on this matter. I look forward to following this investigation in the coming year.

Dr. Rachel Goldberg