From: Arran Thomson <arranedmonstone@care2.com>
Sent: Monday, December 21, 2009 6:22 PM
To: ATR-Agricultural Workshops <agriculturalworkshops@usdoj.gov>
Subject: Comments

I am writing because I am concerned about the lack of competition in agricultural markets. This lack of competition is creating consequences which are damaging both to the health and well being of the public and the environment. One consequence I have personally experienced as a conscious consumer is going shopping for food with the intention of buying products which have little impact on the environment. Packaging has a huge impact and most of the foods (even the organic foods) are packaged with harmful plastics and / or non-recycled cardboard. Furthermore the prices of these products are usually much higher than the conventional brands. These products which claim to be "all natural" and / or "green" are owned by bigger companies which hire lobbyists who get to re-define these terms. Toxic pesticides are still being used which cause a long list of health problems and deaths as well as serious damage to wildlife and the environment and crops continue to be genetically modified without accurate testing as to what its consequences might be. To make it worse the same corporate lobbyists hide this by influencing lawmakers to keep laws from being passed which would make accurate labeling for these foods mandatory. Factory farms are no better for the environment as far as the pollution of soil and water goes and the treatment of the factory farmed animals is shameful to say the least. Farmers are also finding it harder and harder to earn a decent living yet food companies continue to make record profits. I want to know that I am supporting companies who really do care and not just business as usual. Part of what it will take for this to happen is far LESS control of the food system and not more.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

Arran Thomson

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