From: Randy Kiel <randy_kiel@yahoo.com>
Sent: Tuesday, December 22, 2009 9:12 AM
To: ATR-Agricultural Workshops <agriculturalworkshops@usdoj.gov>
Subject: Corporate Control of the Food System

To whom it may concern,

I am writing in regards to the upcoming workshops exploring the issues of possibly too much corporate control of the food system. I would like to express my concerns about the current situation related to how food is developed, grown, harvested, packed and delivered to consumers.

1) Genetic engineering of any food, but today the issue with corn and soybeans, and how farmers and consumers are affected.
a) There is no true understanding of the long term impact on the various food supplies due to the genetic engineering being introduced into the food system
b) Companies such as Monsanto should not be allowed to make these changes without a lot more long term study and understanding of the future effects.
1) They should not be allowed to patent these genes (this is life and it should not be patentable.
2) They should not be allowed to force farmers to pay them off just because their gene(s) show up in other seed due to natural pollination.
3) Farmers should be able to save any seed they have grown
4) This current model basically allows Monsanto to hold the "current" food supply for meat, hostage, if they were to choose to do so.
c) We need to maintain as much biodiversity in the food chain as possible. It has been shown over and over that lack of biodiversity leads to calamity.
d) People should have a choice of what they eat. Proper labeling is essential.
1) GMO food should be kept segregated from non-GMO, in its growing process.
2) All food should be labeled that it is GMO or it is not GMO.

2) Meat growing and handling
a) Many animals are being raised in truly deplorable conditions. They are barely allowed to move during their lives. They are living in unsanitary conditions.
b) They are being fed corn and other additives to help them grow faster.
1) This is not their natural diet
2) There is a negative environmental impact from animals eating corn
3) Does anyone know if there is any potential problems for humans from eating this type of meat (obesity and other problems)?
4) The cost of this is enormous, but mostly hidden. Tax subsidies keep the true cost from being seen and understood. Transportation costs alone are enormous.
c) More needs to be done to ensure sanitary conditions in the large meat processing plants, and more needs to be done to empower small outfits to do more (today they are being harassed out of business, though they are far more sanitary).
d) Once again proper labeling is essential and should be required. Let us know what is in our food, where it comes from, and how it was raised and handled.
e) The same issue of biodiversity holds true with animals and the potential for a calamity.

3) Laws protecting the food industry - Very simply, anyone and everyone needs to be allowed to see what is going on. Transparency is a must. Anyone and everyone needs to be allowed to question and criticize any player in the food industry, as long as it is not libelous or slanderous. Today, laws are on the books protecting these large interests. They are allowed to go after anyone they feel is criticizing them to silence dissent. Due to the laws on the books, they are almost always successful. Every citizen is negatively affected by this, when we are not allowed to see the facts, and not allowed to discuss what is right or wrong with the current situation.

4) Though these workshops are about what is happening in the U.S., it might be worthwhile following up this review with other countries, particularly India, right now. In India, as the Monsanto process is being put in place with GMO seed, Indian farmers are realizing they can not afford to continue to farm. They are committing suicide, to escape the trap, and maybe, though we can't truly know, to bring this situation more to the light of day.

As long as these large interests are too close to the legislators, at the federal and state level, the common man's welfare and food supply is at risk. No one is watching out for the citizens of this country. The U.S. government needs to be more proactive in understanding the path we are on, and realizing that it is not for the long term welfare of this country.

Thank you for listening, and please figure out someway to bring more transparency to this arena, and help move the country in a better direction, where growing and distributing food is for the common good, not the good of a few organizations.

Understanding full well what might happen to my family and me, simply from sending this letter to you, please do not use or share my name.