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Sent: Tuesday, December 22, 2009 2:51 PM
To: ATR-Agricultural Workshops <agriculturalworkshops@usdoj.gov>
Subject: Agri-business

I am a retired Special Education teacher in Seattle, WA. As someone who's interested in eating more delicious and nutritious food and maintaining my excellent health, I think about food issues a lot. I'm very concerned about the consolidation of power in the agricultural and food processing sectors, for a number of important reasons:

Our food supply is not safe. Through my professional awareness, I firmly believe that it's just a matter of time before a major outbreak of a food-borne illness hits. I feel completely powerless here. I can choose to grow my own (which I did some this summer, but I am a working girl with a long commute!) and choose to shop at the local farmers' markets (this was easy over the summer when there was a once a week market near my office; it's much harder in the winter.), and try to frequent restaurants that use local produce... But that's not enough to keep me safe from a widespread epidemic. I can do some of those things some of the time, but I can't do all of them all the time, so I feel like a sitting duck.

It seems that food prices are set by just a few companies. I watch prices rise, and feel there's really nothing I can do about it. My food budget is stretched. I don't like to imagine what it's like to feed a family.

Finally, food from the large grocery stores tastes like nothing. Groundbreaking urban farming entrepreneur and MacArthur genius grant winner Will Allen recently said that much of the imported food we eat is simply cellulose, and I believe it. The food I get at local farmers' markets is always tastier and fresher, but I don't always have time to go to them, and they're more expensive. I'd like to be able to get fresh, local food at my supermarket, but there doesn't seem to be a way for the small farmers to get their products into these big chains.

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

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