

**From:** Merivel <merivel@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 22, 2009 5:55 PM  
**To:** ATR-Agricultural Workshops <agriculturalworkshops@usdoj.gov>  
**Subject:**

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For the past six years I have worked at a nationally and internationally renowned energy and sustainability firm in Boulder, Colorado. As someone who's interested in environmental justice, composting, and eating more delicious and nutritious food, 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 and choose to shop at the local farmers' markets (this was easy over the summer when there was a twice 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, especially now that I've been laid-off. I don't like to imagine what it's like to feed a family.

The profit structure and incentives of large corporations are distinctly misaligned with positive nutritional and health objectives. As food and agricultural corporations have grown and consolidated, their lobbies have become ever more powerful, ultimately influencing every aspect of US agricultural policy -- with consequences that are entirely detrimental to public health. It makes my blood boil that my tax dollars subsidize the production of corn syrup, for example, which is significantly contributing to the obesity crisis -- which is then requiring even more of my tax dollars to address.

Finally, I feel very strongly about climate change. The carbon footprint of our well-traveled food (1500 miles from farm to plate, on average) is enormous, and seems like an inevitable byproduct of corporate concentration -- large corporations will always want to centralize production to create efficient economies of scale. There are certainly real benefits to efficiency and centralization in some sectors of the economy, but transporting tomatoes or beef or milk across the country -- when much of it could be done just as well more regionally -- doesn't make sense.

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

Amanda Walsh  
5251 Euclid Avenue

Boulder, Colorado 80303