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Sent: Tuesday, December 22, 2009 6:23 PM
To: ATR-Agricultural Workshops <agriculturalworkshops@usdoj.gov>
Subject: Food Concerns

I am currently a stay at home mother but my background is nursing in the community health arena. I am a public-health advocate. I work with low income families helping them to access services to improve their children's health and their overall well-being through volunteer work. I am deeply concerned about corporate consolidation in the agricultural, processing, and supermarket sectors, as I see its repercussions every day in my work with my clients.

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. All the while, my own children have to take a lunch to school from home almost every day to avoid the so called healthy lunch options at school. It is the shame of our nation that we choose to put corporations before our own future. You have the unique opportunity to change this downward spiral.

The data corporations use to say this was done to feed the hungry is simply not accurate. I see hungry people all the time in our own country. Please carefully consider making positive change for those who are not in a position to fight for themselves.

My family volunteers at a local farm in exchange for organic fruits and vegetables. We also grow our own without the use of any pesticides. The cost to feed a family of 5 is ever increasing, yet we will continue to pay a premium and work for our food to avoid pesticides & severe genetic modifications. My family is worth it. The families we serve in the community through our volunteer efforts sacrifice to be able to afford the absolute basics and are unable to see the benefits of true agriculture. On their behalf, I ask you to take the time to seriously consider the wealth of our country----it's PEOPLE.

We adore our local farmers and appreciate their passion in providing the most nutritious foods available. Supporting local producers provides premium pay when their profits usually diminish as the market is overrun with seasonal product, allows us to enjoy foods left on the branch or vine until ripe, and limits long distance traveling of food. While we're not the most eco-friendly family on the planet, I like to think we do our part when we can. I do not understand the agricultural system as it has been set up and further am highly upset that companies have been allowed to snatch up smaller seed companies and genetically alter what mother nature intended purely for the sake of corporate profit. How is this process not a monopoly?

We have become a nation of "CORNivores" and corporations have become the providers of said corn, making efforts to see that their products go worldwide. The health of our children and fate of our nation lie in your capable hands.

Thank you for the opportunity to weigh in on this important matter. I look forward to following the hearings process in the coming year.

Heather A. Lint

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