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**Sent:** Tuesday, December 22, 2009 6:40 PM  
**To:** ATR-Agricultural Workshops <agriculturalworkshops@usdoj.gov>  
**Subject:** Concerns about the corporate food system

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I'm an eater in California and I'm lucky. In California, it's pretty easy to get fresh, locally grown food year round. But we're not immune to the consolidation of power in agriculture and food processing companies and the problems that consolidation brings, such as problems with food safety.

Big food conglomerates have shown that they cannot consistently produce food that is safe to eat. They might be able to produce cheap food, but that seems to come from cutting corners on safety. The spread of lethal bacteria like E. coli happens much faster when meat and vegetables are processed in big centralized locations and when animals are raised in feedlots. There seems to be a new recall each week or a new report showing that "downer" cows and pigs make it into our food, and that really scares me.

I'm also very worried about antibiotic resistance from animals that are treated with low-dose antibiotics. I try to avoid meat from antibiotic-fed animals, but it's hard to know what you're buying at the market these days.

When I shop at the farmers market, I can get my questions answered easily. But at the supermarket, I have to rely on labels and often they don't have enough information on them. I believe I can make smarter choices and buy healthier food if I have better information about my food, like where was the food grown? Is it pesticide free? What about hormones and antibiotics?

Once you start reading labels, you realize how much corn syrup is in our food! It's even in bread and spaghetti sauce. It makes me wonder about all the statistics we hear about obesity and diabetes. With all the focus on health care reform these days, I truly think we could all be healthier if we changed the food system.

Thank you for letting me weigh in on this matter.

Phaedra Schroeder