

**From:** g m <garmum99@hotmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, December 23, 2009 10:52 AM  
**To:** ATR-Agricultural Workshops <agriculturalworkshops@usdoj.gov>  
**Subject:** Comments Regarding Agriculture and Antitrust Enforcement Issues in Our 21st Century Economy

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To Whom It May Concern:

As a Vision Rehabilitation Therapist who works with low income clients in their homes every day, 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. I am also someone who is extremely interested in environmental justice, composting, and eating tasty, organic food.

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. I find it hard to swallow 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. Many of my clients suffer from obesity and diabetes as a direct consequence of their poor diets because they have easy access to this cheap and unhealthy food.

I also feel very strongly about climate change. The carbon footprint of our food 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 -- just doesn't make sense.

I also firmly believe that it's just a matter of time before a major outbreak of a food-borne illness hits as a direct consequence of all of this consolidation, due to the higher chance of getting contaminated food from these big agribusiness sources. I can choose to grow my own produce and choose to shop at the local farmers' markets but that's not enough to keep me safe from a widespread epidemic as I still must go to the grocery store for a lot of my food.! Many times it seems that the federal government feels that the answer lies in more spot-checking food processing plants and feed lots around the country for safe and clean practices. While this is good, it is not enough. We need to rethink whether having huge feed lots, huge chicken farms, etc. is good for the environment and good for our health. We all know the answer is that these outfits are NOT good for the environment and our health, and yet we maintain the status quo and actually ENCOURAGE this kind of monstrous growth, no matter what the negative impact is to our wildlife and our families through tax breaks, subsidies, etc.. This has got to stop.

Finally, food from the large grocery stores just doesn't taste as good as the food grown from local farmers. 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.

I have listed many concerns that I hope you will take seriously. I realize that these are huge issues and that they will not be solved easily or quickly, but they should be examined, nonetheless, and serious solutions should be sought for the health and safety of our citizens. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to submit my comments.

Sincerely,

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