

From: Julene Weaver <trippweaver@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, December 23, 2009 1:29 PM
To: ATR-Agricultural Workshops <agriculturalworkshops@usdoj.gov>
Subject: Comments Re: Agriculture and Antitrust Enforcement Issues

Re: Agriculture and Antitrust Enforcement Issues in Our 21st Century Economy

I am interested in community gardens, environmental justice, composting, and eating more delicious and nutritious food. Food issues are my primary passion. I tend to purchase organic food, go to farmers markets to purchase local produce, and am glad to have access to fresh whole raw milk in my state. Given this, I'm very concerned about the consolidation of power in the agricultural and food processing sectors, for several reasons:

The normal, regular food supply in average supermarkets is not safe. There have already been outbreak of a food-borne illness, in spinach for example. I will only purchase spinach that is organic. I could choose to grow my own but I live in a condo, I try to frequent restaurants that use local produce, but I can't always eat in restaurants that serve healthy, grain fed, organic meat and vegetables. All this costs me more money but it is worth it for my health.

What is truly upsetting, is that 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 upsets me that my tax dollars subsidize the production of corn syrup, which is significantly contributing to the obesity crisis -- which then requires even more of my tax dollars to address.

I also feel 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 weigh in on this important matter. I look forward to following the hearings process in the coming year.

Sincerely,
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