

From: Shaun Vanneman <shaun@neb.rr.com>
Sent: Wednesday, December 23, 2009 3:34 PM
To: ATR-Agricultural Workshops <agriculturalworkshops@usdoj.gov>
Subject: Comments Regarding Agriculture and Antitrust Enforcement Issues in Our 21st Century Economy

To Whom it May Concern,

I am a concerned parent, food lover and involved member of my community. I am very troubled about the consolidation of corporate power in the food and agriculture sector, and I want you to know about it. Please take the time to understand that choice/freedom is one of the most important tenants upon which our country is based, and that the large corporations which are in control of our food system, severely restrict the choices that I as a parent and consumer can make, as well as restricting the options of those who produce and market the food. This is a dangerous path, and it needs to change.

Here are some concerns that I have regarding the food system we have in place right now:

Prices are rising at the supermarket, but farmers are struggling (I know this because I know farmers personally). Food prices are up, and large-scale food companies are making huge profits. Under-privileged families are not able to find locally sourced, organic or even good "natural" foods that would benefit them, and if they do, it is too expensive to be a real option. Local IS better - for the environment, the farmer and for the consumer.

Why do we not have more control over labeling of GMO foods as well as labeling of applied chemicals to our foods? This is a dangerous precedent. I don't want to eat these foods. Like many things we have seen (transfats is an example), I feel that years down the road, we will find out that GMO foods are putting our health at risk, as well as our environment, and I want the ability to choose not to eat these foods. It is my right to know what is in the foods I buy, and what chemicals they have been treated with. More research needs to be done to see the impact GMO has in the real world.

I also am concerned that one company controls most of the seeds in the US, and the strong-arm tactics they use to keep control over them is certainly questionable. Big business has proven time and time again that they are about the bottom line and ethics don't really have a place into that scenario. Farmers, seed savers, and small farming operations are being put out of business due to the stranglehold they have on our very way of life (ie - they OWN most of the SEEDS for FOOD). This kind of monopoly should not be legal, and it should not be tolerated. Please do something about this before it is too late.

The government should be promoting earth-friendly and people-friendly farming of crops. Chemicals actually destroy the soil, and create a system where more chemicals have to be added every year so that the soil can produce anything. This also pollutes our water, which has far-reaching implications. Our health is at stake. Let's change things

for the better by using farming practices that rely on natural processes, not chemicals.

I appreciate the opportunity to relate to you my views regarding this very important subject, and I certainly hope that you take my opinions into account when you are making decisions that affect me, my family and my community. There is truly nothing more important than making sure the food we eat is safe, and that we are allowed the freedom to make our own choices as individuals.

Sincerely,

Shaun Vanneman