

From: Tammy Parker <ljedibabe@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, December 23, 2009 10:36 PM
To: ATR-Agricultural Workshops <agriculturalworkshops@usdoj.gov>
Subject: Impact of big business in farming

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December 23, 2009

Dear Justice Department:

I am writing in regard to the impact of big business in farming. I am greatly concerned about the state of food security in America. Small farmers are overly constrained by regulations intended for agribusiness, which are poorly enforced within big-ag. Local producers need better access to processing facilities and markets and consumers need better access to sustainable, ethically grown food and the farmers who grow it. We need transparency in the system, not big ag hiding behind sealed doors in the name of food security. Food security is best served by consumers having visual access to the processing floor.

Currently, agribusiness holds far too great a power in our food system and over public policy in general. A handful of companies are responsible for the majority of food consumed in our country and that increases food system vulnerability. We need to strengthen antitrust enforcement within agribusiness to prevent companies like Monsanto from strong-arming innocent farmers and destroying bio-diversity through genetic manipulation and ownership of genetic material.

Sustainable, agro ecological family farming needs to be our American standard once again. We need to halt expansion of government supported biofuel programs and put that effort into the production of healthy, nutritious foods. The outdated subsidization of food crops (corn) we don't need must stop. We have a health crisis in America that is primarily caused by the cheap availability of corn based products. If we intend to address this crisis, it has to begin in nutrition, and that begins on the farm. Let's return to a solar based agriculture, this would be an enormous step toward lowering America's carbon foot print, while simultaneously improving our countries health and environment.

As a student of agriculture, now working on a thesis related to urban agriculture I feel well informed on this topic and the more I learn the more concerned I become. My life is impacted by my distrust of our corporate farming system in that I no longer feel able to confidently buy from this corporate agribusiness sector. I shop exclusively at my local food co-op in the winter and during the growing season I grow what I can myself and buy the remainder at my local farmers market, where I have established relationships of trust with local farmers. I only buy meat when I know the farmer, have had the opportunity to visit their farm and can feel confident that my meat lived a happy, healthy, natural life without any major scientific interventions. This seems to limit my choices, but in reality I feel I have much greater choices because Con-Agra's marketing department does not control me.

We know what needs to be done, writers like Michael Pollan and Barbara Kingsolver have written at length about this problem. All we really need now is for those who set our policies to listen and act.

Sincerely,
Tammy Parker

"Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better, it's not."
-The Lorax, by Dr. Seuss