

From: Angel Dobrow <adobrow@hotmail.com>
Sent: Monday, December 28, 2009 10:20 AM
To: ATR-Agricultural Workshops <agriculturalworkshops@usdoj.gov>
Subject: Hearings on relationship between corporations and food

Hello, I am a mother of three boys, an office worker, and local food activist. My passion for local food and farming grew out of my interest in eating whole foods and organic growing practices. That path was determined by motherhood, luckily I was an at-home mom for 10 years; I believe that type of time with kids and in the kitchen created the space to be inquisitive and reflective about American food policies and trends.

While a child in the 60s and 70s, and grandchild of chicken farmers, I ate garden crops and freshly-caught crab from the Chesapeake. Everyone ate seasonally, canned Italian tomatoes were exotic; one of my strongest memories of childhood visits to the grandparents was that paternal favored Pepsi, maternal Coca-Cola. I like to say my food maturity mirrored globalization trends: as the grocery store choices became more varied so did my palette. I learned to eat various ethnic foods, and once finances dictated and time allowed, I learned to cook them.

And cooking introduced me to corporate food. Now, as a disclaimer, I worked on several campaigns that highlighted food surpluses in government warehouses while people went hungry; I protested Coca-Cola's presence in South Africa; I honored Chavez's grape boycott. But in all honesty, those activities seemed academic once I was responsible for feeding my own children. Reading package labels and seeking local produce and learning about pesticide use changed something fundamental inside of me...almost as if I was one of those mothers depicted in war-torn countries crying as she struggled to feed her kids.

I began ordering bulk food from a whole foods warehouse, I started to learn gardening, I worked to open a natural food co-op in my town. Access to quality food became my rallying cry, not tears of fear and apathy.

So, I walk away from advertising, and pesticides, and unfair labor practices. I walk towards sustainable farming, small family-owned farms, repairing my local food shed, learning to eat (again) seasonally. I do this alone within my family: they appreciate the effort but are not inclined to alter diets too much. However, what they do know is that local control of one's food supply is more reliable, transparent, accessible. Each of my kids can shop at our farmer's market and know all the cashiers at the co-op. 95% of our food purchases are organic, 25-30% grown by someone we know.

Corporate control of food is like something out of a bad sci-fi movie. Anytime profit is considered more important than people a bad idea is hatched (literally.) I wish you good luck with the hearings, and hope for an equitable outcome; but I won't hold my breath. I've got too much work to do!

Sincerely,

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