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Sent: Monday, December 28, 2009 10:34 AM
To: ATR-Agricultural Workshops <agriculturalworkshops@usdoj.gov>
Subject: End Coporate Concentration in our food supply!

Greetings. My name is Sheila McCarthy, and I struggle to purchase affordable, healthy food at supermarkets in Albany, NY. As someone who's interested in community gardens, environmental justice, composting, and eating more nutritious food, I think about food issues a lot. I'm very concerned about the consolidation of power in the agricultural and food processing sectors, for a number of important reasons:

Our food supply is not safe. Through my professional awareness, I firmly believe that it's just a matter of time before a major outbreak of a food-borne illness hits. I feel completely powerless here. I can choose to grow my own (which I did some this summer, but I am a working girl with a long commute!) and choose to shop at the local farmers' markets (this was easy over the summer when there was a once a week market near my office; it's much harder in the winter.), and try to frequent restaurants that use local produce... But that's not enough to keep me safe from a widespread epidemic. I can do some of those things some of the time, but I can't do all of them all the time, so I feel like a sitting duck.

It seems that food prices are set by just a few companies. I watch prices rise, and feel there's really nothing I can do about it. My food budget is stretched. I don't like to imagine what it's like to feed a family.

Finally, food from the large grocery does not have produce that comes from America's smaller farmers, who once were the backbone of our country. The food I get at local farmers' markets is always healthier, but I don't always have time to go to them, and they're more expensive. They are also more expensive as smaller farmers must charge more to compete with concentrated, giant agribusiness that uses lots of pesticides and antibiotics and genetically engineered seeds. 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 expect that you at the Antitrust Division of the Department of Justice are eager to compile research about the above issues I reference in this letter. I thank you for the opportunity to express my concern on this matter and urge you to educate the citizens of this country as well as elected officials about the impact of corporate dominance on our food supply. I look forward to following this investigation in the coming year.

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