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To: ATR-Agricultural Workshops <agriculturalworkshops@usdoj.gov>
Subject: agricultural letter

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Legal Policy Section

Antitrust Division

U.S. Department of Justice

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To whom it may concern:

In regards to the upcoming agricultural public comment period, I would like to take a few moments to express my views and opinions on some of the matters that affect farming in my area.

Years and years ago, my grandfather began farming in southwest Iowa, which today is a three generation operation that I run, along with my brother, my father and my son. We farm just under 5,000 acres of corn and soybeans, and have also been a seed corn and seed beans dealer in my area since 1972.

I estimate there are about a dozen different brands of seed that are available for purchase in my area, but because of the specific needs on my farms, we plant one brand of seed corn and two brands of soybeans. Different things drive decisions for different farmers, but profitability is usually the primary consideration. The many fields in a farm may demand a need for different traits in seeds, but having a seed company that you can trust is very important.

I think the competition between the seed companies is strong as they try to earn farmers' business based on both performance and price. And sometimes they may even offer premiums to get new customers, in hopes of keeping their business for years to come. Price is always important but I, personally, would rather buy more expensive seeds because they offer a better crop. I've never changed seed companies, because I appreciate the relationship we have. If I saw, however, that it would be more profitable to change, I wouldn't hesitate. Farmers always have that option.

Innovation has increased significantly since the introduction of biotech seeds, and I think farmers have become more conscious of seed waste since. Yields have increased and performance is better, allowing us to optimize what we can get per acre. And the different traits that are offered, allow farmers to deal with specific problems and needs that may arise on farms, whether it's a problem with insects or disease, not to mention cleaner fields because of weed control. In addition, while public programs are falling by the wayside, private research is increasing because of the money available to put back into the research. In doing so, it is providing far more seed innovation and seed technology which gives farmers an advantage in the over-all international market.

In my opinion, the products they have come up with are good, however I don't want to see companies over-price themselves out of the market. I believe that when corn prices go down, seed prices should go down too.

Again, many thanks to the Department of Justice and U.S. Department of Agriculture for allowing my comments and views during these workshops.

Sincerely,

Dennis McLaren

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