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Sent: Monday, December 28, 2009 9:00 PM
To: ATR-Agricultural Workshops <agriculturalworkshops@usdoj.gov>
Subject: Comments Regarding Agriculture and Antitrust Enforcement Issues

Hello,

I am a professor of geography, and regularly teach a course on food and agriculture.

Every year, my students want to know why our government spends so much on farm subsidies that benefit so few farmers. They want to know why our agricultural trade negotiators demand open world markets for US exports while demanding protection against other countries'. They want to know why our food safety regulations are dangerously far behind where they need to be. They want to know why efforts to genuinely reform the Farm Bill fail again and again.

Every year, the answers turn out to be pretty much the same. Corporate control of our food supply, especially (but not only) in the grain and livestock industries, has given the so-called 'farm lobby' a level of political power that endangers not just Americans' health, but also our democracy. It is a depressing message to deliver to my students. The appointments and actions of our new administration are, so far, not very encouraging. But I hope that the Department of Justice's upcoming investigation signals a renewed willingness to use antitrust legislation when and where it's needed. I hope that I'll be able to give my next crop of students better news about the state of the U.S. food supply--and the state of the political system that's supposed to govern it.

Sincerely,

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