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Sent: Monday, December 28, 2009 10:23 PM
To: ATR-Agricultural Workshops <agriculturalworkshops@usdoj.gov>
Subject: large corporations controlling the US food supply

I am a teacher who recently retired, and I am very concerned about the state of our food supply in this country. The consolidation of corporate power in food and agriculture has profound effects which are mostly negative. I feel so strongly there is a bias in favor of corporations and that government agencies fail to properly monitor and regulate what the corporations do.

When **profit** is the bottom line, short cuts happen all the time. Animals are treated inhumanely because it is cheaper. Feed is supplemented with cheaper materials that may not be healthy for the animals or the human consumer. Antibiotics are administered routinely. Birth-to-market times are shortened by use of hormones, etc. Seeds are engineered to be sterile so that farmers must return each year to the supplier. Genetically modified (GM) foods are made and sent to market before adequate testing is done on human health and environmental health. BGHr is given to cows to increase milk production with no testing on the amount that makes it into the human food chain and its effects on human growth and development. (Could this hormone contribute to obesity or breast cancer? We don't know. We do know that synthetic hormones have numerous deleterious effects.) I could give you examples on each point: books and articles have been written, television shows have been produced, independent research has been done.

The two ways out of the bottom-line mentality are: 1. for a corporation to develop a conscience regarding all issues concerning human health and safety and product safety, or 2. to "enforce" a concern for such ends through proper regulation. That is the role of government.

Another problem with the current situation is that there are not adequate protections for small farms. Large corporate farms reap huge benefits from federal subsidies. Small, local farms are going out of business because they cannot compete with the giants in food production. This doesn't bode well for local economies. Maintaining local food production should be a goal of government.

As a consumer who wants a healthy world and food, it is extremely difficult to find this in this country.

For the future, my deep concern is about the sustainability of the food supply for the US. When seed is made to be sterile so it cannot be used for future crops, when BT is engineered into potatoes (New Leaf potatoes) and can no longer be used for treatment of insect problems, when chemical fertilizers have so damaged the soil and the nearby waters, when pollinating insect losses continue largely as the result of pesticides that were quickly approved and not adequately tested, our ability to feed ourselves and keep our share of the planet healthy are in doubt.

The proper role of the government is to protect its citizens. In order to do that government must keep the needs, the health, and the safety of its citizens uppermost when making decisions. The reason to block a corporation from doing any of the above-mentioned things is to answer such questions as "What does this do for the health, safety, and needs of our citizens?" Or "What does this do for the health of our environment?" The question from the government's point of view should never be about what does this do for the corporation.

I appreciate the opportunity to express my views on this most important topic.

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