

From: Doreen Miller <doreenemiller@yahoo.com>
Sent: Tuesday, December 29, 2009 9:41 AM
To: ATR-Agricultural Workshops <agriculturalworkshops@usdoj.gov>
Subject: corporate consolidation

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing to you to express my grave concerns over the consolidation of corporate control in our food and agricultural sector. I am an educator, mother and avid gardener. I understand the supreme importance of healthy, wholesome and organically produced food. I am finding it more and more frustrating to find simple, fresh, unadulterated food in my local supermarket. As a result I buy mostly organic when I can and very few processed foods, as they contain all kinds of questionable chemicals, preservatives and hidden genetically modified ingredients.

In this day in age of global uncertainty concerning fuel, pollution, disease outbreaks, terrorism, etc., allowing giant food conglomerations to proliferate is not the answer. Corporations exist solely for creating profit and satisfying the financial expectations of shareholders. As a rule, they are not concerned with upholding ethics or serving the needs of a people. Over the years, they have exercised undue political influence in weakening the very laws that were meant to protect the public interest and health. They have proven to be adept at externalizing the costs of pollution, sickness and disease, passing the costs of toxic clean up and treating disease they have created onto the public sector. They also are highly subsidized by the government, further placing small community farmers at a great disadvantage and driving them out of business.

Agribusiness has been at the heart of the e-coli and salmonella outbreaks in our food supply. It is also at the heart of the current war against nature with genetically modified food crops that have proven to be uncontrollable and are contaminating other plants, permanently damaging the soils they are grown in, leading to higher pesticide usage as weeds become more and more resistant to the toxins used against them, and causing untold physical damage within our own bodies, as we ingest novel proteins created by adulterated DNA sequences.

Giant food corporations are also highly vulnerable to acts of terrorism. A single well-planned action could throw our whole food system into complete disarray. Small community-based farms spread out across the country, on the other hand, are much harder to target and disrupt as a whole.

Corporate control of our food supply means less variety in produce - i.e. fewer choices in the types of potatoes or tomatoes available- and with reduced competition much less control over the costs of those products. Giant food corporations are impersonal and separate us from the appreciation of where our food comes from and how it is produced. Smaller farms can offer a greater variety of healthier food with fewer pesticides, and more competition, which will keep prices reasonable and affordable. As an added benefit, they serve to keep a balance in how we use the land, and reduce our need for fuel by shortening the distance between farmer and market. By keeping more small farms in business, we affirm our commitment to our agricultural heritage by keeping those skills and knowledge alive within the general public. Small farms overall can provide more economic employment at the local levels. People involved with their local farms will feel more connected to the natural world and to one another, further strengthening their sense of community.

If you move to further consolidate food practices in this country, you are dooming the local farmer and ultimately making our food supply much less secure in the long run. If anything, we should be moving towards a more decentralized but interconnected food supply system. I thank you for hearing some of my concerns on this issue and ask that you seriously consider these in your deliberations on the future of agriculture in this country.

Sincerely,
Doreen Miller

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