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**To:** ATR-Agricultural Workshops <agriculturalworkshops@usdoj.gov>  
**Subject:** Comments Regarding Agriculture and Antitrust Enforcement Issues in Our 21st Century Economy

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I am a small-acreage, all-natural farmer of vegetable, fruit, herb, and fruit crops.

I am concerned that so few large food producers are in such great control of our country's food supply. The reason these companies have reached such great power is a direct result of their abuse of our country's environment and its creatures. They by and large do not produce healthy food. The crops produced to grow such food are often largely government subsidized, and often are processed into many other types of calorie-rich, nutrient-sparse foods. These foods appear cheap to the average consumer (particularly the poor), because the true total cost of the food is not reflected in its purchase price, including the energy it took to :

- produce the food -- maintaining a large monoculture of the same crop grown in the same fields year after year is much more deleterious to the environment than more sustainable methods such as regular crop rotations; synthetic fertilizers are much more expensive and toxic than more natural methods such as good composting and crop rotations; it takes a lot more energy to "sanitize" (the large Ag company's term for killing everything) the soil and then fertilize it to plant another huge crop of the same thing in a field that's been grown there year after year than it is to continually enrich the soil with compost and rotate crops;
- harvest and package the food -- it takes a lot of petroleum and electricity to run those huge machines that pick all those perfect, bug-free, identical plants that produce multitudes of the same variety, shape, and size of the same huge crop monocultures year after year;
- and to deliver those foods -- it still takes a lot more petroleum and wear and tear on the roads to deliver a tracker trailer load of food over several hundreds of miles with perhaps several stops at various distribution/storage points along the way than for a local farmer to load up a much smaller load of the same type of crop in their delivery truck and take it a few miles to market.

Aside from the energy costs, there is a tremendous price all of us taxpayers pay in terms of subsidizing medical costs for many of those in the high percentage of the U.S. population that are overweight largely as a result of consuming these unhealthy foods. Yes, every one of us is responsible for what goes into our mouths and can say no to fast food. However, our society is bombarded every day by advertising from the fast food industry and the pharmaceutical industry that encourages us to buy this unhealthy food and then either take a (expensive) pill or get a (expensive) surgical procedure that will fix all of our problems. The small farmers of the country don't have those deep pockets to fight the big ag and big pharma companies because our values are different: we believe if you eat healthily and take care of yourself, by and large you don't need many of those pharmaceuticals much of the rest of our society has come to rely on.

The rise in obesity and all of its associated health problems and costs can be directly traced to the growth of the fast food industry, which can be directly traced to the growth in the big Ag companies that figured out a few decades ago how to produce much more corn (and other crops, but corn is a great example) with no regard for the effects on our soil, air, water, and creatures. For more information, see "The Omnivore's Dilemma" by Michael Pollan [http://www.amazon.com/Omnivores-Dilemma-Natural-History-Meals/dp/0143038583/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=1262108781&sr=1-1](http://www.amazon.com/Omnivores-Dilemma-Natural-History-Meals/dp/0143038583/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=1262108781&sr=1-1) or "Fast Food Nation" by Eric Schlosser <[http://www.amazon.com/Fast-Food-Nation-Eric-Schlosser/dp/0060838582/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=1262108750&sr=8-1](http://www.amazon.com/Fast-Food-Nation-Eric-Schlosser/dp/0060838582/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=1262108750&sr=8-1)> .

Those who argue that small farmers cannot feed our country (and therefore justify why we need huge agricultural companies) are wrong in my humble opinion. Small farmers can grow enough healthy,

unprocessed food to feed our country. But as long as big Ag has their say and all the laws are tilted to their benefit (the huge ag companies will no doubt be exempt from the proposed new produce processing laws, even though all the outbreaks of food-borne illnesses come from the big processing plants, us little guys know how to process food the correct way and don't need to take short cuts because M\*cD\*nalds needs their potatoes yesterday), small acreage farmers will continue to dwindle, as they have in this country since at least the 1950s. Again, see Pollan's book for more facts to support this assertion.

As a final point, I want to know as much about how the foods at the market are produced. Are they made from genetically modified sources or all-natural sources; were the crops treated with organic or synthetic substances of any kind; were the animals given "medicines", hormones, etc; did they eat foods they were biologically engineered to eat or foods that man decided were "better" but not part of their natural diet? I want ALL this stuff on the label; fifty years from now we might (or might not) have good, unbiased scientific evidence that eating GMO corn or soy or beets or whatever is perfectly healthy for us; but right now the only "studies" we have are short term and funded by the huge Ag companies or those who work for them. Only a foolish person would trust that sort of thing. I don't care if 99% of society is fine with eating GMO corn; as a consumer I am entitled to know if the product I am considering buying contains crops from GMO sources. With all due respect, it is not up to the government or anybody but me to make the decision as to what is healthy for me.

In a society where money is THE measure of success, there are those of us who place a much higher priority on producing good, wholesome food while at the same time caring for the earth, the environment, ourselves and the creatures with which we share this planet. One model is sustainable, while the other is not. One model has been practiced for thousands of years; the other for a few decades. To us, the choice is simple. Please help.

Thank them for the opportunity to submit comments.

Laurie Bostic - small acreage farmer in Texas