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E. Stern <ecr.stern@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, December 29, 2009 1:43 PM
To: ATR-Agricultural Workshops <agriculturalworkshops@usdoj.gov>
Subject: How I am affected by corporate control of the food supply

I am a local government employee living near Washington, DC. As someone who's interested in community gardens, environmental justice, composting, and eating more delicious and nutritious food, I think about food issues a lot. I'm very concerned about the consolidation of power in the agricultural and food processing sectors, for a number of important reasons:

Our food supply is not safe. Through my personal interest in gardening and food, as well as because of my allergy to corn, I firmly believe that it's just a matter of time before a major outbreak of a food-borne illness hits. I feel completely powerless here. I can choose to grow my own (which I did some this summer, but I work 9-5 (and sometimes longer!) and have an hour commute to and from work each day). I try to frequent restaurants that use local produce, and shop at the farmer's market, but this is not enough to keep me safe from a widespread epidemic. I can do some of those things some of the time, but I can't do all of them all the time, so I feel like a sitting duck.

It seems that food prices are set by just a few companies. I watch prices rise, and feel there's really nothing I can do about it. My food budget is stretched. I don't like to imagine what it's like to feed a family. I will have to face a larger food budget in the near future, as my husband and I are planning to start a family. It's frustrating to have to consider that we have to seriously consider whether we can afford to feed a family of three.

Finally, food from the large grocery stores tastes like nothing. The food I get at local farmers' markets is always tastier and fresher, but I don't always have time to go to them, and they're more expensive. I'd like to be able to get fresh, local food at my supermarket, but there doesn't seem to be a way for the small farmers to get their products into these big chains.

Thank you for the opportunity to express my concern on this matter. I look forward to following this investigation in the coming year.

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