

From: mercedes@hesselgesser.net
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To: ATR-Agricultural Workshops <agriculturalworkshops@usdoj.gov>
Subject: The Monsanto Monopoly

Mercedes Hesselgesser
7126 Pescadero Creek Road
Pescadero, CA 94060-8840

December 29, 2009

US Department of Justice

Dear US Department of Justice:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit comments in advance of the Department of Justice's workshops on "Agriculture and Antitrust Enforcement Issues in Our 21st Century Economy."

I live in a small farming community in Northern California. My family and community are very fortunate because we do not have to rely on Monsanto, or any other large food production companies, for crop yield, livestock, or poultry. The farmers in my community are never told what to grow, what seeds to use to grow their crops, and they work hard at maintaining sustainable crop and livestock systems. I take great pride in buying locally, and that the local farmers work with the community to get their healthy products to people in the community that could not afford them in the market. The farmers in our community do not live under the threat of a large corporation suing them and taking their livelihood away. The fact that anything like that is occurring in this country literally makes me queasy.

The American government has allowed Monsanto, and other major food production companies, to destroy the lives and livelihoods of farmers. Additionally, our government has allowed these companies to permanently alter the food economy so that eating healthy is nearly impossible for low-income families. To add insult to injury, the way these companies operate do nothing to give back to the environment or to encourage sustainability. To these companies, we are nothing but dollar bills waiting to be sucked into their pockets - from the farmer to the consumer to the government.

As an organic consumer, I am particularly concerned about Monsanto's control over the seed supply.

By buying seed companies and aggressively patenting life, Monsanto has gained control over as much as 90 percent of seed genetics. This is anti-American and anti-competitive behavior that skews markets and subjects farmers and consumers to the unchecked power of a company that can raise prices at will.

But, my main concern is that, while Monsanto has acquired a diverse store of seed genetics, they are only making available a few seeds that are

genetically modified to be dependent on their chemicals.

The vast bounty of food crops that farmers have cultivated and improved upon over the last 10,000 or so years should not be allowed to be bought up and put out of commission by a company bent on whittling down food varieties to a few pesticide-dependent genetically modified crops.

The most devious part of Monsanto's business model is that their Frankenseeds can cross-pollinate with organic and traditional varieties, destroying their unique characteristics and infecting them with genetically engineered chemical dependence or even "Terminator" or "Traitor" technology that renders seeds sterile, a literal death sentence for seeds maintained through conventional breeding.

The same way we protect animal species from extinction, we should protect plant species, especially the tens of thousands of food varieties, from companies like Monsanto that are consciously eliminating them.

I urge you to please include in your investigation a consideration of the importance keeping seeds, the foundation of human life, at least in the marketplace, if not in the public domain where they truly belong.

Sincerely,

Mercedes Hesselgesser
415-439-3624