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To: ATR-Agricultural Workshops <agriculturalworkshops@usdoj.gov>
Subject: reduce corporate farming, increase family farming

I've lived and worked on small agricultural operations in the US and overseas, and there's a world of difference. Our regulations in the US are geared towards the larger operations, yet the same rules are imposed on the small family farms. There's an excellent reason behind regulating the waste from a dairy herd that numbers in the thousands, but no reason at all to require a farmer with a herd of five cows to follow the same rules, or at least not to the same degree.

As the world's fuel supply dwindles, it makes sense to support local, small-scale farming, which is better suited to mixed-crop organic production and requires less in the way of petroleum to produce and distribute, than to give all of the money to large agribusiness, which has a habit of using huge amounts of pesticides, antibiotics, fertilizer, and GMO seeds that are doing harm to our bodies and our environment, harm that we're only now starting to realize.

Yes, there's the economy of scale, and it would be ideal to have efficient rail transport for crops such as wheat and rice and dent corn, which are impractical for smaller farms to produce in useable quantity, but it makes absolutely no sense to grow lettuce in California and ship it to Vermont. Instead, support local Vermont farmers who can build cold frames and greenhouses. Put money into school-to-table programs so children reconnect with the source of food, and learn to enjoy it from the beginning - and appreciate how lucky we are to live in a country that has so much arable land and available water, even after our misuse of the land.

But above all, help return America to its roots - literally. There used to be families farming in every state, but only recently with the "locavore" and "slow food" movements has there been a return to the land. There are many thousands of people out there who would love a chance to start a farm, or to revive one that had been abandoned. What better way to stimulate the economy than to move corporate farm subsidies into a pool of money for local small family farms, and support a long-term sustainable movement that will continue to feed America for generations to come?

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