

From: Emily Bragonier <emily@buildinggreen.com>
Sent: Wednesday, December 30, 2009 9:35 AM
To: ATR-Agricultural Workshops <agriculturalworkshops@usdoj.gov>
Subject: Keep Our Food Safe

To Whom It May Concern:

As a farmer and advocate for locally produced, organically raised foods, I am concerned about the consolidation of corporate power in the food and agriculture sector. While a lot of big food companies have made record profits this year, consumers are paying record prices for food, and much of that food is not safe or healthy. It's difficult to find healthy, locally produced foods, especially if you live in a low-income area, where there might not be a supermarket for miles. The food that people *can* afford is bad for them; healthy food is expensive.

Meanwhile, local farms are going out of business and many small farmers can't compete with prices set by industrial farms and consolidated buyers. It's hard for small food producers and processors to find markets for their products and it's equally tough for consumers to find products made by small producers. Many rural communities have become ghost towns. The farmers that have survived often find themselves entirely at the mercy of corporations who own all parts of the supply chain and can set prices in such a way to drive competitors out of business. Additionally, there are fewer and fewer good jobs in food and farming and a real lack of opportunities for both urban and rural youth who are interested in growing and preparing food.

Moreover, our food supply is less safe, with outbreaks and the spreading of bacteria like E. coli, which happens much faster when meat and vegetables are processed in big centralized locations. With just one company controlling the majority of seeds in the US, it's no wonder that we don't know what's in our food or how it's being raised and processed. The majority of our food is currently grown and raised in ways that are terrible for the environment, with methods that pollute the water, poison the soil, and threaten our long-term food security. Cows, chickens, and pigs are being raised in squalid conditions on huge industrial feedlots and pumped full of unnecessary antibiotics, which is unhealthy for them and potentially unsafe for the people eating them. This form of agriculture not only threatens the health of American citizens, but also the health of our agricultural biodiversity.

It is my belief that the transformation of our agriculture system would not only keep us safe, but could be the best way to revive the economy *and* combat global climate change on a national scale.

Thank you for the opportunity to express myself and for your time and consideration of my thoughts.

Regards,
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