

From: Rabiner, Adam <arabiner@dycd.nyc.gov>
Sent: Wednesday, December 30, 2009 9:43 AM
To: ATR-Agricultural Workshops <agriculturalworkshops@usdoj.gov>
Subject: Food Systems

I am a member of the Park Slope Food Coop, an organizer of a grass roots Brooklyn Food Conference held last May, and a current member of the Brooklyn Food Coalition. I am actively involved with issues of food safety and food systems through this volunteer work. Part of my activity is working to promote healthier food in the schools. I also write a series of articles in the Park Slope Food Coop's bi-weekly newspaper, the Linewaiters' Gazette, about the Plow to Plate monthly film series which features documentaries about the food system. Next month we will be showing the documentary FRESH. All of these activities have caused me to become deeply concerned about corporations' increasing control of the entire food system, also from plow to plate.

It seems to me that Cargill, Monsanto, and others, are primarily concerned with making a profit and much less concerned, if at all, with providing proper nutrition and promoting public health. Why are we subsidizing corn and other commodity crops that allow Snickers and other fast foods to be sold cheaply and not offering any subsidies to apple farmers and other producers of healthy foods? Don't we prefer to keep the doctors away to exacerbating the growing scourge of obesity and the health problems like diabetes that being overweight worsens? Is this the best use of my and other Americans' tax dollars? Seems to me that these subsidies are creating massive costs to the health system and are a very unwise use of our limited financial resources in these times of growing debt and deficits.

Additionally, I am very concerned with food safety. As I am sure you are aware, the New York Times recently did an expose on the health risks of contamination to the supply of commercially processed beef. Who ever thought eating a hamburger could kill or paralyze you? There are two tragedies to this story. One is the way it affected the life of a perfectly healthy young woman, a former dancer, who now is struggling just to learn to walk again, something doctors are skeptical of, despite her valiant efforts to recover the use of her legs. Another is the power of the corporations to self-regulate (poorly) and the powerlessness of the U.S. government to adequately protect its citizens. Clearly if there is a moral to this story it is that the balance of power needs to be reexamined and that just as the financial markets need more regulation and Wall Street cannot be expected to serve Main Street's interests, so too must we take a more proactive stance against the meat and other powerful food industry interests.

I look forward to following these issues in the coming years. Hopefully we can expect an improved Child Nutrition Act next year and a better Farm Bill in the near future. Listening to concerned, average, Americans like myself is a positive first step.

Adam Rabiner
Budget Analyst

NYC Department of Youth and Community Development
156 William Street
New York, NY 10038
T: (212) 442-5976
F: (212) 442-5972
arabiner@dycd.nyc.gov
www.nyc.gov/dycd

Connect with DYCD:   