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To: ATR-Agricultural Workshops <agriculturalworkshops@usdoj.gov>
Subject: Comments Regarding Agriculture and Antitrust Enforcement Issues in Our 21st Century Economy

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I am a middle class, tax-paying citizen, I vote regularly but I feel very powerless as I watch big corporations spend huge amounts of money on lobbying the elected officials of this country to get things legislated in their own best interest. I am especially concerned about corporate consolidation in the agricultural, processing, and supermarket sectors. The profit structure and incentives of large corporations are distinctly misaligned with positive nutritional and health objectives. As food and agricultural corporations have grown and consolidated, their lobbies have become ever more powerful, ultimately influencing every aspect of US agricultural policy -- with consequences that are entirely detrimental to public health. It is so disheartening that my tax dollars subsidize the production of corn syrup, for example, which is significantly contributing to the obesity crisis -- which is then requiring even more of my tax dollars to address.

I am also deeply concerned that the FDA, is staffed with former employees of the agricultural industry and pharmaceutical industry. Those people should be banned from the FDA due to conflict of interest, as their decisions affect the finances of those companies from which they stand to profit. There is a "revolving door" of personnel between corporate lobbyists and government regulators. No wonder corporations aren't held to strict standards.

Additionally, I feel very strongly about climate change. The carbon footprint of our well-traveled food (1500 miles from farm to plate, on average) is enormous, and seems like an inevitable byproduct of corporate concentration -- large corporations will always want to centralize production to create efficient economies of scale. There are certainly real benefits to efficiency and centralization in some sectors of the economy, but transporting tomatoes or beef or milk across the country -- when much of it could be done just as well more regionally -- doesn't make sense.

And our food supply is not safe and it is the practices of factory farming that create the most threat, the conditions, besides the inhumane treatment of the livestock, that exist create the danger in the spread of dangerous e-coli the over use of antibiotics and hormones poison us all. Food is 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.

Prices are rising at the supermarket, but farmers are struggling -- and **big food companies have made record profits** this year. **Just one company controls the majority of seeds in the US**, and regularly threatens farmers who don't buy its seeds. And farmers often find themselves entirely at the mercy of corporations who own all parts of the supply chain (called "vertical integration") and can set prices in such a way to drive competitors out of business. I watch prices rise, and feel there's really nothing I can do about it. Then at times it seems like intentional attempts to deceive the public, I drink organic soy milk, my personal choice and opinion is that it is better for me, when a large company bought out my brand, Silk Soy Milk, they kept the label exactly the same, and simply removed the word "organic", when the public became aware of this, they claimed that they could not

afford the organic soy beans, however the price went up anyway even though they were buying soy beans from China, a user of GMO soy.

Upwards of 80% of the food in the grocery stores contain GMOs. GMO's have not been adequately tested, though the companies tell us they are safe, and so we should just take them at their word, like the cigarette industry told us cigarettes were safe, and they made billions before being caught, so I guess it was worth it for them. I wonder what the executives at Monsanto feed their families.

When these mega corporations are calling the shots and then try to appease us by putting fiber in Froot Loops it is a very sad day indeed.

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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