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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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Hello,

I am a parent, Master Gardener, a cook and, of course, I also eat. I also run small-scale food drives to support the Food Bank of Western Massachusetts, and have an interest in hunger issues. I understand that the hunger/obesity problem in this country has roots in the way corporate interests and government policies and lobbyists are structured, with profit being the highest quality fruit produced. It's shameful.

I'm lucky. I live in rural Western Massachusetts. Here the land is unsuited for monoculture, farmers' markets and summer/winter CSA (community supported agriculture shares) are available, I can grow a vegetable garden, and there is even local milk and eggs from down the road. But the prices rise in nearby cities, and fewer markets, stores, and fresh, safe sources of food are available. In Springfield or Holyoke the choices contract, and health suffers. The Food Bank keeps growing because the need keeps growing.

Much food is filled with corn derivatives like high fructose corn syrup. I don't like subsidizing corn in this way, and then having to help pay for the obesity that results. I don't like knowing the conditions in which animals are raised (and fed on corn rather than grass), the environmental degradation that results from their waste, the huge potential for contamination of a burger made from the meat of many animals from many places. I don't like having no control over whether genetically-modified crops are cross-pollinating with grain crops that I might eat in cereals, breads, or flour. I don't like how corporations have co-opted the 'organic' label and made it expensive and difficult for long-term organic small farms to become certified. I don't like seeing prices rise and container sizes shrink, knowing what that will mean for hungry children.

There has to be a better way. Start with those corn subsidies, take a good look at how that works and why it doesn't.

Thank you for taking my comments.

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