

From: Brwyn <memberservices@ptfoodcoop.coop>
Sent: Wednesday, December 30, 2009 9:30 PM
To: ATR-Agricultural Workshops <agriculturalworkshops@usdoj.gov>
Subject: Please Help Keep Local Farms Strong

Dear Department of Justice,

I am writing from my office as the Outreach/Education/Marketing manager of The Food Co-op, a member-owned natural foods consumer cooperative in Port Townsend, WA, established in 1972. At The Food Co-op we have over 5,000 active member-owners in a community with a population of less than 9,000, and as such, we represent a large portion of the population in the bit of the Washington state peninsula we rest upon. I'm grateful we have been given this opportunity to tell you how important small farms and local products are to our membership.

At The Food Co-op, we have a practice of purchasing as much product as possible from producers located within the four counties nearest our store: Jefferson, Kitsap, Island and Clallam counties. We also support sustainable practices, and as such, encourage our community members to eat food grown in a sustainable manner; including consideration about the miles food is shipped. This practice helps insure many beneficial outcomes for our community, not the least of which is keeping profits local to strengthen our local economy. We also support individual farmers through participation in LandWorks Collaborative, a grass-roots collection of organizations dedicated to preservation of agriculture and forest land through access to business training, capital and by assisting with ensuring that consumer demand and robust markets are in place to accommodate local food and timber products.

As such, we are deeply concerned with the consolidation occurring in the food industry of many of the smaller food producers from which we purchase, as well as the strain on small producers that large corporate producers represent, both in regulations not necessary in small regional operations and competitive pricing battles.

The Food Co-op is also impacted when there is a product recall from corporate manufacturers, although many of the recent recalls have not impacted The Food Co-op as we try to source our foods from sustainable, local producers, which statistically have better food safety records than the large scale corporate distributors that sell tainted foods, requiring supreme efforts to trace all the way to the consumer.

With all the efforts we go to locally to protect our farmland, though joint efforts of The Food Co-op, WSU Extension, Jefferson County Land Trust and The LandWorks Collaborative, it is an upward battle when the U.S. Government makes farming on small farms steadily more costly and onerous for those trying to make a living by producing food locally. In Port Townsend, our farmers are beloved, supported and applauded. We have one of the most successful farmers markets in the country. We don't want to lose this beautiful connection to our food producers, but with consolidation of corporate food producers, the battle for the small family farm grows more onerous every year.

Thank you for taking these words into consideration while continuing to look at food issues nation- and worldwide. We're not suggesting going backwards, but rather, to seek balance and sustainability by empowering local food

producers for the betterment of our environment, our health, and the health of our local economies.

Sincerely,

Brwyn Griffin
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Not only is another world possible,
she is on her way.
On a quiet day, I can hear her breathing.

- Arundhati Roy