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Sent: Thursday, December 31, 2009 12:27 AM
To: ATR-Agricultural Workshops <agriculturalworkshops@usdoj.gov>
Cc: steering@wasatchcoop.com
Subject: Public comment on corporate control of the food system.

I am an organizer of a consumer-owned grocery store start-up. I am deeply concerned about corporate consolidation in the agricultural, processing, and supermarket sectors, as I consider its repercussions every day in my work.

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 makes my blood boil that my tax dollars subsidize the production of corn syrup, for example, which is significantly contributing to the obesity crisis -- then requiring even more of my tax dollars to address. The same goes for wheat. We are also facing the fact that the food people can afford is bad for them and that healthy food is expensive. The financial viability of our cooperative hinges on this reality. To profit from nutritionally devoid food should not even be a consideration.

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 is 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 locally -- doesn't make sense.

Thank you for the opportunity to weigh in on this important matter. I look forward to following the hearings process in the coming year.

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