

From: Liz Lerman-Kling <realgenes@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, December 31, 2009 2:26 AM
To: ATR-Agricultural Workshops <agriculturalworkshops@usdoj.gov>
Subject: Corporate Control of Our Agriculture and Food

To Whom it May Concern (And it concerns all of us!),

There is so much wrong with our food chain right now. Which mostly stems from the fact that a few companies are controlling over 80% of our food from the seeds to the manufacturing of food products.

A friend of mine just wrote a telling example: "Back in the day if you wanted a piece of cake it only contained flour, butter, eggs, and vanilla. Now there's 30 different ingredients we don't need. [...] We can eat in moderation but when we would like to have a treat, it (can) give us a heart attack or cause cancer in the long run. Too many unnecessary chemicals, toxins, preservatives, GMOs, and additives in our food."

This scenario is a direct result of the corporate control of our food. These large companies are permitted to put hazardous ingredients-- GRAS approved--in our food. The typical store cake contains partially hydrogenated oils (trans fats), genetically modified (GM) oils such as soy and cottonseed, artificial colors, carrageen and other gums and fillers... 30 or so ingredients...dough conditioners, flavor enhancers. There is unequivocal evidence showing that these ingredients are harmful to our health. Why are they allowed?

Why is there GM soy in Ritz Crackers? The majority of Americans think they are getting one product when really the formula and ingredients have drastically changed and are jeopardizing our health. Panera Bread company touts itself as providing freshly baked goods. Their ingredient lists--along with Cinnabons-- disclose long lists of a dozen...or sometimes 20 or more ingredients in which I could identify carcinogens and contributors to heart disease. A lot of artificial ingredients, GM ingredients, trans fats, and chemicals. I've personally read these ingredient lists over the past several years. I found that even the soups and salad dressing at Panera contain GM corn and soy oils. Who are the corporations behind this? A few corporations are supplying almost all of our food manufacturers and establishments with insufficiently tested and undisclosed GM ingredients. FDA approved has come to mean little--virtually nothing---to me. M&M Mars puts a non edible substance on their M&Ms to keep them from melting in hand. Tran fats and addictive flavor enhancers abound.

There have been improvements in labeling over the past decades. First, having to list ingredients in order from greatest to least. Then, disclosure of high allergens such as peanut, soy, wheat and milk. Does anyone wonder why the allergies have increased so? One study correlated the rise in soy allergies with the introduction of GM soy. Even given these improvements, there still exists many hidden ingredients under terms such as "natural flavors". The non-disclosure of GM ingredients is perhaps the biggest affront to the American People. Many people think they are consuming the same Kellogg's Corn Flakes that they were 20 years ago. They do not know it is now from Round-up Ready or BT varieties of Monsanto or Syngenta's corn. These are dishonest and unjust practices. First, the high distribution of these GM grains and then the non-disclosure of the them being GM throughout much of the food system. I am guessing Kellogg's-- or the company that owns them-- knows they are buying GM corn, but the consumer does not. More and more of us are finding out and we are not happy!

What has happened to the non-GMO sources of corn, soy, canola, and cotton? The farmers that grow them should have access to selling them and the right to make a living from them and not worry about their crops being contaminated from GM crops. Monsanto has run a fear-based operation. Small farmers and seed sorters are at constant risk of being sued by Monsanto because Monsanto has contaminated their crops. Even Bayer's Liberty Link Rice has contaminated crops when it was never approved for human consumption. Now, wheat is also being experimentally genetically modified. Where are the farmers rights in this? Where is the tracking of GM crops, the studies into their safety for both consumption and the environment? How are they being

contained? They are not being contained. Corn cross pollinates miles away. Hundreds of native varieties of corn are at risk of being lost forever. GMOs have shown up in Mexican corn. There are some GMO crops being planted there too. It is of utmost priority to protect the non-GMO crops and farmers growing them. Many farmers are trapped in debt and contracts to the Bio-tech companies.

This loss of seed and plant diversity that already is happening threatens our ability to sustain ourselves in the future. Seeds that do not reproduce, soil systems disrupted with the BT pesticide, the decline of the pollinators...these things all threaten our future sustenance. And these costs will be felt by the people for generations to come. All this for the profit of a few companies so that they can now own and control the DNA of our food. This must be stopped. These are very serious issues.

How did these companies gain such free range? There needs to be more protections for the people and for the diversity of our crops. Small farmers need to be encouraged to save their seeds and plant a variety of crops. GMO crops have no long-term future other than requiring newer chemicals for the super resistant weeds and insects that are being bred. When has our food production turned into a chemical profit machine?

Please look into these practices at all levels throughout our food system to give the farmers who want to grow healthy and truly sustainable crops a fair chance to do so. Look into the food manufacture and suppliers and find out why in this age of mega super markets that all the products are filled with similar chemical and filler ingredients. Look into who is supplying restaurants with cooking oil. Why is cottonseed oil mixed in with olive oil and these GM ingredients not disclosed? Why are poisons used in the processing of meat. Why are nitrates still allowed? The food corporations have acquired so much power and control that they affect the decisions of the agencies who were constructed to look out for public interest. These corporations even have board members and past executives in positions of power and decision making within the ranks of the USDA, the FDA and even WHO. And these associations have not been freely disclosed during the nomination periods. Some serious changes need to be made to equalize power and opportunity and to truly look out for the health of this Country.

Thank you for hearing my concerns and comments,

Appreciatively,

Elizabeth Lerman Kling