

From: Sara Franklin <sara.b.franklin@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, December 31, 2009 10:05 AM
To: ATR-Agricultural Workshops <agriculturalworkshops@usdoj.gov>
Subject: Concerned Farmer and Community Activist

To whom it may concern:

My name is Sara Franklin. I am a young farmer, community health activist, writer, and grassroots outreach coordinator. I have farmed and worked primarily in New York and Massachusetts, but have traveled extensively in the U.S. and internationally working with communities around issues of food security, agriculture, health and land rights.

I am incredibly concerned about the toll the consolidation of corporate power in the food and agriculture industry is taking on our health, environmental impact, and ability to provide healthy food for ourselves and communities.

Having worked with various farming operations and non-profits that work in health and agriculture, I have seen a domino effect of health and economic issues directly related to the corporate control of our food system. From American Indian communities that are locked in battles over a corporate desire to patent and market wild rice-- a food that has been cultivated, bred, and cared for by Native peoples for centuries-- to a whole slew of urban communities that have lost the ability to purchase healthy produce for themselves and their families; from farming families in Iowa who are forced by conglomerates to grow genetically altered and trademarked corn in order to break even financially to migrant laborers sickened and killed by the pesticide poisoning that is an inevitable side effect of working in fields that must be fertilized and sprayed with toxic chemicals in order to maintain production in mass mono-cropping season after season.

As an eater, a teacher, a writer, an activist, and someone concerned with the well-being and future of this country and others, I fear for us. If we were denied the ability to steward land and seeds in a way that can protect land and provide for our health and survival by an ever-tightening corporate domination of our food system, we are doomed to deplete our soils and fall into ill health as a population. We have already seen this in regions whose populations have devastated by pesticides in the air and water, in areas where land has been bought up and ruined by chemicals (such as the Mississippi Delta), and urban areas where families' only affordable and accessible options are the processed, nutritionally-devoid foods that perpetuate our industrialized food economy. People are becoming sick, the incidence of diet-related disease is through the roof, the rates of hunger in this wealthiest nation in the world are through the roof, and rural communities are crumbling as young people flee to cities, knowing that farming as a viable living has disappeared in this country.

We are in a food crisis, a health crisis, a crisis of community, economy and conscience. Without seeds and land, we can't farm. Without farmers, we don't eat. Without eating, we die. This isn't a complicated equation. We as a society must re-evaluate the way we protect our ability to grow, market, and consume food, or we will have no society left to protect.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit comments.

Best,

Sara Franklin
Brooklyn, NY

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Sara B. Franklin
Food Justice Advocate, Organic Grower, Writer