

**From:** Jim Miller <millerwsu@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, December 31, 2009 2:15 PM  
**To:** ATR-Agricultural Workshops <agriculturalworkshops@usdoj.gov>  
**Subject:** Small independent family farmers vs. Corporate farming.

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To whom it may concern,

Thank you for allowing me to express my concerns regarding small independent family farmers vs. corporate farming. My name is Jim Miller, and I have a Ph.D. in applied mathematics with an emphasis in genetics and cellular biology. My dissertation was titled: Exon and intron detection in human genomic DNA.

I often see problems being "solved" in a very restricted sense with only minimal attempt at seeing the "larger picture". While agribusiness has certainly maximized certain aspects of food production, it has just as certainly had many negative effects on our nation in terms of our national security as defined by the true security of our populace (the ability to eat, the ability to stay healthy, the ability to live in a safe and clean environment).

While in high school and college I worked on a family run farm for approximately six summers. I remember how impressed I was when Mr. Sparks decided that his John Deere tractor could have been made even better if one of the drive shafts had the ability to slide and then lock into place rather than being a fixed length. He asked me if I saw any flaws in his logic. I told him I did not. He then proceeded to take out his cutting torch and welder, and made the modifications. Another time he approached another high school student and me and asked how much we thought \$1,000 a year for eternity was worth. The other high school student would not hazard a guess (and later told me he'd thought it was infinite), but I said (knowing I might be erring on the lower side) \$7,000. Mr. Sparks said he thought it might be closer to \$9,000, but was impressed with my reasoning. We need more men and women with this mechanical ability, financial savvy, and of course, the ability to put food on our table, in our countryside for our true national security. This knowledge is being reduced year by year as more and more independent farmers are being driven out of business.

We also need food to be grown locally. All too often we hear of Johnny answering "the supermarket" when queried "where does \_\_\_\_\_ come from". We know from history that disruptions of supply lines can have dire consequences. We are told that we should learn from history. I implore you to take these last two sentences into consideration during this fact finding mission.

I believe we need to encourage small independent farming, dispersed throughout all regions of the United States, to help ensure a higher level of security for our citizenry. I am reminded of the policy of power companies having to purchase independently produced power (solar, wind etc.) from consumers at peak electrical rates. Wouldn't such a policy for smaller independent farmers in less productive regions of the United States provide a higher level of security for that region in the event of a) natural disaster, b) invasion by another power, c) disruption of supply lines (due to oil shortages, striking drivers ...), etc. Instead of this encouragement of small farming, just the opposite is true. It is becoming harder and harder for the independent farmers and processors to find markets for their goods as (I'm no judge, but it seems) VERTICAL MONOPOLIES are being formed.

This last sentence brings me to one of my biggest concerns of all regarding agribusiness. I fear it puts the human population of the world in jeopardy. In a single word – MONOCULTURE. This, to me, is the single most significant danger we face in agriculture today. The lessening of genetic diversity needed to stave off catastrophic crop failure on a global scale is one of our most shortsighted policies in agriculture. Of course farmer A, B and C all want to grow the same crop if it generates an x% higher return on their investment. Here is where I see one of our government's largest role. Offer certain farmers, as indicated by the local conditions of their own unique farm and land, incentives to grow a different strain of the same crop. I'm reminded of "The Tragedy of the Commons" without governmental input for the good of the whole.

Thank you for your time in reading this e-mail and for letting me express my concerns regarding small independent family farmers vs. corporate farming.

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