

From: Ashley Fent <amar0625@yahoo.com>
Sent: Thursday, December 31, 2009 3:56 PM
To: ATR-Agricultural Workshops <agriculturalworkshops@usdoj.gov>
Subject: Antitrust & Agriculture Comments

Comments Regarding Agriculture and Antitrust Enforcement Issues in Our 21st Century Economy

We are a group of community members who participate in AGRA Watch, a project of the Seattle-based Community Alliance for Global Justice, which has been working on the political economy of food for a number of years (see our website for more info: www.seattleglobaljustice.org).

We are concerned about the increasing consolidation of corporate power over the food system. We note that both horizontal and vertical integration degrade competition and increase monopolies' political, social, and economic leverage, which in turn erode choices for farmers and consumers, both in the US and abroad. In terms of seed, monopolistic corporations like Monsanto push genetically-engineered seed, along with dangerous chemical inputs. They tell us these are safe for us and for the world, despite having few peer-reviewed studies to back up these claims. They also exert influence over scientific researchers and "buy out" research universities, so that the majority of public scientific research supports their claims.

We are especially concerned about the precedent this trend sets for the rest of the world. These corporations are transnational, and they are highly involved in the debates around international development. The practices that currently exist in the US are not good for the world?they carry enormous health, environmental, social, and political repercussions. And in the developing world, where farmers are still a majority of the population and many people rely on their own production for food security, the costs of monopolistic corporate control are even higher.

We strongly encourage the Department of Justice to challenge corporate consolidation, and to uphold the laws made in this country to protect us from the kinds of problems monopolistic practices create.

Thank you sincerely for this opportunity to share our concerns. We look forward to following the hearings process in the coming year. If the Department holds a hearing in the Northwest, we would hope to testify.

Ashley Fent
For AGRA Watch, Seattle, WA
2500 E Denny Way #405 Seattle, WA 98122