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**To:** ATR-Agricultural Workshops <agriculturalworkshops@usdoj.gov>  
**Subject:** Corporate AG and our food supply

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I am a retired professor of physiology and biophysics who now lives in a rural community in central Pennsylvania. I have come to see first hand the effects of the large Ag-related corporations on family farms, the food supply, and prices. In my immediate region:

A chicken farmer I know went out of business recently because he insisted on being independent. Because he would not contract with any major poultry corporation, he had a very difficult time selling his chickens at a competitive price. The market for poultry is controlled by the large companies, and this shows up at the supermarket as well as at the farm. There are no independent brands, only "name" brands or the store brand. Farmers are basically reduced to being poorly paid employees of the corporations. Consumers can not easily change brands because there are so few to choose from and they must pay whatever price is asked; they can not even comparison shop. All the chickens are the same, too.

I know an award-winning dairy farmer who has a very successful family farm that supports his family and a son's family very well in most years. He is having the worst year in his working life. Milk prices for farmers are at record lows but farmer-costs are very high and rising. Milk prices in the store are very high and dairy company profits are too. My friend is surviving for now because he grows his own feed. Not all family farmers can do that, and they are going under daily. There is a huge disconnect between what farmers are paid and the retail price of milk that strongly suggests that the farmers are being "milked".

My farming acquaintances also complain about how they are trapped into buying patented seeds. If they attempt to use their own seeds, they have trouble selling their corn or beans because the pressure is on the middle men to have grains all of the same kind. Furthermore, if they do not use Roundup Ready seeds, their crops will have a higher percentage of weed seeds and that will result in a lower price for their harvest. They see the price of seed (and Roundup) rising uncontrollably, and they can not go elsewhere for a better price. They also worry that, if they use their own seed, there will be cross-fertilization of their plants with those produced from patented seed and they could be sued by the seed company. The Amish community is especially worried about this because they cherish their heirloom crops.

There is nothing inherently wrong with large corporations that a reasonable amount of competition and regulation can't cure. Right now, we have an effective monopoly of AG corporations, each of which controls one sector of agriculture. This needs to stop for the good of all.

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