

From: Gracey <wildchantrel@yahoo.com>
Sent: Thursday, December 31, 2009 5:22 PM
To: ATR-Agricultural Workshops <agriculturalworkshops@usdoj.gov>
Subject: Comments on US Food Security

Dear DOJ Fact Finding Mission,

This e-mail is in regards to your current efforts to uncover the relationship that big corporations have on the food security of people like myself, a farmer on the west coast of Oregon. I'm heartened to hear that the US government is finally starting to look into what, for many of us, is an enormous problem and a global weakness that threatens the safety and security of all of us.

As a very small-scale farmer, I'm constantly on the verge of bankruptcy, live well below the poverty line and have to compete with huge ag business just to survive. I understand that corporate agriculture gets huge subsidies from the government, both in the ability to write off the cost of petroleum and shipping, and directly through price supports for such 'commodities' as corn.

The biggest insult is perhaps that now its not just corporate agriculture from this country but China that farmers have to compete against. For example, last year I ordered 50#'s of black beans from United Natural Foods and only on delivery did I discover that they'd been imported from China! When the Chinese out-compete farmers in this country who are perfectly capable of growing the crop, we undermine our own food security and the living of thousands of farmers here. What will happen in the future if China can no longer provide this country with food because of drought conditions in its own country? If this country is unable to provide those foods because its allowed its farmers to go under, domestic prices will skyrocket and people will go hungry.

In addition to the policies pursued under the guise of globalization, huge corporations are attempting to take over domestic control of food. Monsanto has been bringing lawsuits against farmers simply for saving seed and even for operating seed cleaning businesses! It seems so obvious that no large corporate entity should hold total monopoly over the largest share of our food production but is it? If so, why isn't it something that more people in this country are concerned about? I think its because they've undertaken a dirty campaign to cover up the truth.

Additionally, most of this huge ag business is so utterly dependent on cheap fossil fuels that people in this country face food insecurity simply from the depletion of fossil fuels. Independent, small farmers may not be quite as efficient with person hours for the produce they supply but in terms of fossil fuel they're much, much more efficient. Large corporate farms have no flexibility and without fossil fuels will be able to produce nothing at all. Fossil fuels are by their nature non-renewable resources. In that regard its only a matter of time before we face the consequences of a decline in oil reserves.

In 2009 there were droughts in China, South East Asia, the Middle East, Australia, Mexico, Argentina, East and South Africa and the US. These droughts were not single year events. There is mounting evidence that at least Australia's drought is the result of global warming and climate change, possibly 'permanently' altered weather patterns. While its hard to say at this point whether the droughts in other countries are similarly related, the results stand regardless. Stores of food world-wide are at an all time low and food security is shrinking. With shrinking food security comes increasing social and political unrest which bears on us in many ways.

To address these problems, we need to step back and look at how it happened and wrestle the control of our food supply out of the hands of the huge mega-corporations and take food out of the global commodity market. We need to guarantee that healthy food is one of our basic human rights and that farmers must be supported as independent and essential to this country's survival. Independent farmers will make or break our future. Will they be there for us in times of crisis? Its really up to people like yourselves to decide that. Please gather facts and inform the policy makers about this crisis. Thank you.

Sincerely,
Grace Brookman