

From: Tom Dierolf <tsdierolf@yahoo.com>
Sent: Thursday, December 31, 2009 9:52 PM
To: ATR-Agricultural Workshops <agriculturalworkshops@usdoj.gov>
Subject: Comments Regarding Agriculture and Antitrust Enforcement Issues in Our 21st Century Economy

I am a small farmer, have a PhD in agronomy and soils, and am a program manager for an international non-profit that is helping develop socially-just, environmentally-sustainable, and economically-viable local, regional, and global food systems. I am also a husband, parent, food consumer, and someone who cares.

I am very concerned about the consolidation of corporate power in the food and agriculture sector. We are facing an amalgamation of paternalistic, corporate powers that unfairly eschew the voice of individuals in the name of short-term "efficiency" and "safety". It is very fitting, that the Department of Justice is looking into this issue of injustice. I have faith that my thoughts, when added to those of thousands of others who share similar concerns, will guide decision-makers to find creative and equitable alternatives.

Our story is one of the difficulties of trying to be a sustainable small farmer in the U.S. We sell honey, eggs, vegetables, goat's milk soap and other added value-products from our farm and at the local tailgate market. People in our small mountain community both love our products and the simple fact that we are farming sustainably. Many neighbors were particularly relieved that we did not build houses on our very visible 5.5 acre farm when we bought it five years ago. But, how many families can afford to farm on \$20,000/acre land or without the health insurance obtained through an off-farm job? We are going to have to sell a lot of lip balm at \$2/tube to send my daughters through college.

The corporate control of agriculture has resulted in many policies, regulations, and loss of infrastructure that makes it nearly impossible for young people to get into any scale of farming, much less to make a living wage from it. For example, the consolidation of meat processing plants that cater to large producers means that there is currently no place in our part of the state that will process our spent hens. Many regulations are made for corporate agriculture and are not scale-dependent. For example, it is becoming harder for small producers to sell to institutions because they are demanding Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) certification. The time and cost of meeting GAP requirements should allow for the scale of the operation. Some policies also seem politically motivated, and not based on science. For example, we are not allowed to sell raw goat's milk for human consumption in NC, but farmers in SC can.

I am heartened by the more progressive views taken by the current administration in regards to rebuilding our food system. But, like our flawed healthcare and financial systems, major reforms, which you can help support, are needed to revamp how we currently produce, distribute, and sell our food. Small, token programs and increased budget allocations, while greatly appreciated, will not stem the tide of hunger, poor health, and poverty among our population.

Sincerely yours,

Tom Dierolf
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