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To: ATR-Agricultural Workshops <agriculturalworkshops@usdoj.gov>
Subject: Comments

What do I think about Monsanto's monopoly over global food supply?

In one word it scares me more than anything else at this point, being a citizen of a country with a billion plus population, this is a recipe for disaster for our food security, food sovereignty and our very existence. If a country like the United States is not able to hold up in the face of such corporate hegemony what hope does India have?

I got exposed to Monsanto when I arrived in the US and started exploring the food system; it piqued my curiosity that while there seemed to be apparent plenty, there seemed to be so less choice. Hunger in the US has touched new highs with 49 million going hungry, food related illnesses have risen to unprecedented levels, obesity and lifestyle diseases have taken over the society, and food contamination incidents, food scares and recall of tainted food have become a regular affairs. This is supposed to be the most advanced agriculture and food system in the world which the world is supposed to emulate!

Reading, researching and doing academic work on the issues plaguing American food system and agriculture and working with small farmers in the US, the one name which came up the most is MONSANTO. It is not a compliment because I did not come across one laudatory reference to the company except their own PR and their website which dis-ingeniously tells us that they are the new Monsanto different from the old Monsanto and that they are an agricultural company, which would have been funny if it did not sound so much like a threat!

I discovered that farming in the United States is tantamount to a prison sentence? a debt trap which the farmer can't escape, small farms are going bust everyday, farmers are sued by companies for contamination by GM seeds, they are bankrupted buying expensive seeds and other inputs and sign restrictive technology agreements, farmers and their wives hold second jobs in the city to keep the farm going, suicide is one of the leading causes of death in the farming community, whereas seed, pesticide, grain, food retail and chemical fertilizer companies are reaping mind boggling profits. Amongst these I realized Monsanto is one of the worst offenders.

Some of the things that I am incensed most about Monsanto is -their double speak, talking about using every drop of rainwater and then using bio-technology and selling chemicals which are harmful to life and the planet - their extreme callousness towards farmers, farming and hunger, the impunity with which they sue American farmers is matched by the manipulateness with which they sell Bt cotton in drought prone vidarbha(India) and attribute resultant farmer suicides to psychological problems among the farmers -their absolute power they have with the US political corridors and the ease with which they are able to operate the revolving doors with their officials, consultants, lobbyists join government, write policy for them and then make it back to Monsanto stables to reap the rewards- their single minded pursuit of GM technology, terminator and GURT technologies merely for profit at any cost to mankind, manipulating research, getting deals with universities, designing restrictive contracts -their disregard for public opinion! The list goes on.....

I think for global food security and food sovereignty and for our health it is essential that control over food and farming is returned to the homesteader and these transnational corporations are kept away from managing it! They have more than proved that public good will be sacrificed at the altar of private profits!

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

Devi

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