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Sent: Tuesday, January 5, 2010 4:51 PM
To: ATR-Agricultural Workshops <agriculturalworkshops@usdoj.gov>
Subject: Comments

I am writing because I am concerned about the lack of competition in agricultural markets. The repercussions of non-competition are many.

My first concern is for my children. I take them to farmer's markets and talk to them about what they are putting in their bodies so they have a fighting chance, but with less and less competition, they will have fewer healthy, clean choices. Even more concerning to me are the kids out there whose parents have no idea that corn syrup isn't good for their babies so they put pop in their bottles or that conventionally grown strawberries are pumped full of chemicals that aren't good for our bodies. I am tired of hearing parents tell me how their children won't eat anything other than processed foods- mac and cheese out of a box or pizza from a major chain. I am sad for the kids who don't know mini carrots aren't grown that way but are whittled down. I am sad for the kids that have no opportunity to taste the difference between a fresh piece of lettuce and a piece that has been shipped hundreds or thousands of miles, is at least two weeks old and possibly even irradiated.!

I get frustrated that I have to pay nearly twice as much to feed my family as I would if I shopped ?conventionally? so that I don?t have to worry about long-term effects on their bodies from chemicals and GMOs. However, I will pay the premium to buy an heirloom tomato that tastes soooooo much better than a tomato grown from a seed forced into some poor farmer's soil by Monsanto. I will spend the extra money to ensure the meat I eat hasn?t been raised on lots and force-fed an unnatural diet. I do invest in food that has been locally grown so that I am connected to my community and not directed by lobbyists and government regulators. I hope it will not always be so challenging or expensive to maintain these standards.

I am concerned that people don't know where their food comes from and that we are importing food from all over the world when our own farmers are struggling. I read the labels on the food I buy, but not everyone does. It is time consuming and frustrating to seek out employees of grocery stores to ask them where the food they are selling was raised or grown and in which manner and if they have local and organic food. Better labeling of where and how foods are grown and processed would be a great time saver.

I look forward to the day I don't have to search far and wide to find a restaurant that offers local and/or organic ingredients. I hope for a time when we won't have to weigh the pros and cons of drinking water from a plastic bottle because of leaching, origination and additives against drinking water out of the tap that has soaked up pesticides from nearby farms or factories then sent through lead pipes (I'm in the DC metro area) and been rendered potable by multiple chemicals.

Food matters. It affects our bodies, our soil and our future.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

Dawn J Herron

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