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

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January 18, 2010

US Department of Justice

Dear US Department of Justice:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit comments in advance of the Department of Justice's workshops on "Agriculture and Antitrust Enforcement Issues in Our 21st Century Economy."

As an organic consumer, I am particularly unhappy about Monsanto's control over the seed supply.

By buying seed companies and aggressively patenting life, Monsanto has gained control over as much as 90 percent of seed genetics. This is anticompetitive, monopolistic behavior that skews markets and subjects farmers and consumers to the unchecked power of a company that can raise prices at will and manipulate the food supply without even the transparency of a "genetically modified" food label.

But, my main concern is that, while Monsanto has acquired a diverse store of seed genetics, they are only making available a few seeds that are genetically modified to be dependent on their chemicals.

The vast bounty of food crops that farmers have cultivated and improved upon over the last 10,000 or so years should not be allowed to be bought up and put out of commission by a company bent on whittling down food varieties to a few pesticide-dependent genetically modified crops.

The most devious part of Monsanto's business model is that their "Frankenseeds" can cross-pollinate with organic and traditional varieties, destroying their unique characteristics and infecting them with genetically engineered chemical dependence or even "Terminator" or "Traitor" technology that renders seeds sterile, a literal death sentence for seeds maintained through conventional breeding.

This would have devastating unintended consequences not just for organic farmers and their consumers, but for civilization as we know it. We would lose more than our right to grow and consume pesticide free, nutrient rich food. We would lose our traditional freedom to sustain ourselves and our communities with the food sources we choose.

Already, our government has failed its public by allowing Monsanto to

patent Round-Up Ready Soybeans where 90 percent of our soybean crop is genetically engineered and sprayed. Farmers who don't buy into Monsanto's program cannot compete. Corn is following the same course. And now genetic engineering is suspected to be the culprit for the collapse of our bee colonies and for a rise in human liver and kidney dysfunctions.

How will this impact future generations? "Folly" may well be the outcry of our children, if we fail to protect biodiversity of the crops they are to consume.

The same way we protect animal species from extinction, we should protect plant species, especially the tens of thousands of food varieties, from companies like Monsanto that are consciously eliminating them. This is not fair competition. It is greedy and unethical, betraying the public interest on a grand scale.

I urge you to please include in your investigation a consideration of the importance keeping seeds, the foundation of human life, at least in the marketplace, if not in the public domain where they truly belong.

Sincerely,

Diana Blend
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