

From: Beth Schermerhorn <bethrosballs@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, November 24, 2009 7:31 PM
To: ATR-Agricultural Workshops <agriculturalworkshops@usdoj.gov>
Subject: Concerning Our Country's Food System

To Whom It May Concern,

I am a small scale urban farmer in Harrisonburg, VA. I heard that the Dept. of Justice is doing a comment period on US agribusiness and would like to share my thoughts with you.

The food system is terrible! I try as hard as I can to grow as much food as I can so that me and my community do not have to suffer from it any longer. With the government's subsidies on things like corn, wheat and soy, we are not paying the true costs of our food and our citizens and our farmers are suffering from it. From the average farmer making about \$20,000/year to the large number of people with diabetes, obesity and heart disease, we have to link it back to how our food is grown and prepared. I myself suffer from a blood sugar related Poly Cystic Ovarian Syndrome. With the research that I have done trying to figure out why I have this and what causes it, I have found that it is directly related to the food that I ate as a child. Pasta, fast food, sweets, high fructose corn syrup, margarine, are only a few of the symptoms. I know there are many people who have it worse than me because they are who I work with.

I also care about the conditions that the farmer workers are put into and how animals are treated. Factory farming is good only to the business men running the company. The workers are not paid fairly for what they do. My friend Gary, who works in a poultry plant, had his hands stained white after one night of working with really strong bleach. his eyes and hands stung, even though he wore goggles and gloves. The animals are kept in tight confinement in order to make money. How are these animals healthy to eat if they're lives are not valued? Tomato workers in Florida are picking by the weight, most of them migrant workers from Latin America whose work conditions are not improving here in the States.

Cuba (who I know the US hates!) pays its farm workers more than any other type of worker. Why is this? Because we all have to eat, and if we eat fresh, local, chemical free produce, meat and grains, we are healthier physically and mentally. My solution is to drastically change the way we grow our foods, put it back into the hands of the majority of the population. Soil is the number 1 export in the US right now. It is eroding into our rivers and oceans, washed away forever. How do we grow healthy food without healthy soil? I'm not even going to start on Monsanto. They are monopolizing our farmers, seeds, and practices that are just flat out manipulative and destructive.

I hope that we can begin to rebuild our food system with the help of you all. Thank you for letting me rant in this email and I hope that you get 10 million more like it!

Beth Schermerhorn

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backtotheearthfarm.wordpress.com

"The real work of planet-saving will be small, humble, and humbling, and (insofar as it involves love) pleasing and rewarding. Its jobs will be too many to count, too many to report, too many to be publicly noticed or rewarded, too small to make anyone rich or famous.