

**From:** Mick McAllister <mick.mcallister@rmfu.org>  
**Sent:** Friday, December 11, 2009 4:14 PM  
**To:** ATR-Agricultural Workshops <agriculturalworkshops@usdoj.gov>  
**Subject:** Deadline for written comments on concentration

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Mark B. Tobey  
Special Counsel for State Relations and Agriculture  
Department of Justice  
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20530

Dear Mr. Tobey:

Rocky Mountain Farmers Union, which has represented the interests of family farmers and ranchers in Colorado, New Mexico, and Wyoming for more than a century, has been a vocal critic of concentration in agricultural markets, and our 3,000 members deserve a chance to submit thoughtful written testimony for the upcoming investigation of this important problem. Unfortunately, the December 31, 2009, deadline for submissions severely limits their opportunity to do so.

The concentration of markets impacts agriculture, rural communities, and national food security in too many ways to estimate. Just the impact on agriculture extends from cost, value and availability of inputs like seed, fuel, and fertilizer to the producer's ability to market food, fuel, and fiber at a competitive and profitable rate. Family farmers and ranchers have been impoverished and bankrupted by the loss of such markets and input costs inflated by the lack of competition. Give them a chance to speak from their first-hand knowledge.

We hope that the deadline is merely a bureaucratic oversight, since it's easy to see that far more people are likely to make informed, valuable comments *after* attending the workshops and reading the publicity and media coverage around them. We urge you to adjust the deadline so that family farmers and ranchers have a fair chance to state their views on a subject that is central to their livelihood and one that they have unique experience with.

We look forward to working with the Department of Justice and the USDA to help inform the public and our elected leaders about this issue.

Sincerely,

Kent Pepler, President  
Rocky Mountain Farmers Union

CC (postal): Tom Vilsack, Secretary of Agriculture  
Christine A. Varney, Assistant Attorney General