

**From:** Joanie Blanton <updf@earthlink.net>  
**Sent:** Friday, December 18, 2009 8:15 AM  
**To:** ATR-Agricultural Workshops <agriculturalworkshops@usdoj.gov>  
**Subject:** Comments

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I am writing because I am concerned about the lack of competition in agricultural markets.

Large corporate farms that are fueled by petroleum based fertilizers, using single crop plantings and bolstered by genetically engineered crops and pesticides to maintain maximum yields are being subsidized by government funds, while the small, organic and family farms are being squeezed out of the market.

Our food supply, our environment and our agricultural future are all being jeopardized by this action. Much of the food available in our grocery stores comes from hundreds of miles away and is unmarked as to how it is grown. Decisions on our food supply are made by what makes maximum profit, as opposed to what is nutritious or tasty.

The means to correct this is easy. Stop favoring the big agribusiness. Do not spend our money on them and stop taking their bribes. Without government price supports, these non-foods will not be able to compete favorably with "real food" grown by real people in our own communities and these small farms and businesses will thrive.

The money that would be spent on subsidies should be spent on keeping tough standards of inspection for health, cleanliness and environmentally sound farming practices.

I am aghast at how much power these agribusinesses have in Washington. Companies such as Monsanto are gaining great power over our food crops and are threatening our very sources of food by limiting the genetic diversity of our food crops. They should not be able to push out seed companies that keep diverse strains of our food crops in production.

As a home gardener, I try to have greater control over the quality of the food my family eats, but nobody can control their entire food supply, nor would they want to. Keep competition healthy and fair, require explicit labeling to allow shoppers to know what they are buying and keep our food production diverse and sustainable.

These are or should be the goals of our government regulations regarding our food supply. Please keep this in mind as you appoint regulators, draft legislation and grant monies to support this part of our economy.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

Joanie Blanton  
Shepherdstown, WV

Joanie Blanton

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