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Deborah A. Garza, Chair
Jonathan R. Yarowsky, Vice-Chair
Antitrust Modernization Commission
1120 G Street, N.W.
Suite 810
Washington, D.C. 20005

Chair Garza:

I am submitting this letter as an individual small farmer who knows firsthand the effects of consolidation and concentration in agriculture. I hope agriculture, including fresh market and specialty agriculture (other crops besides milk, corn, wheat, rice and soybeans) be considered for genuine study. Specialty agriculture is traditionally a different type of "market" than a computer widget and since specialty agriculture does not have stature like computers, we generally get overlooked or sold out for some other industry.

The freemarket concept of supply and demand in agriculture doesn't exist at all anymore in fresh market or specialty agriculture. It is supply and demand, subject to the concentration and control which dictates the price we receive for our crops. American farmers are generally being paid less for their crops than their fathers did 20 to 30 years ago, but with today's growing and harvesting costs, directly because of the consolidation and control of the industry dictating the price.

Fifteen to twenty years ago there were many buyers to sell to. Now there has been so many horizontal acquisitions of the firms farmers sell to, (including processors and fresh market wholesalers and especially supermarkets), that there are now just a small handful of places farmers can sell to within each commodity.

Individual small farms do not have the million of dollars needed to bring a suit for antitrust enforcement, so we just have to suffer the effects. Americas small farmers need help, so if you genuinely exist to actually find problem areas in antitrust, agriculture should be at the top of your list.

Sincerely:
Erin Thoeny
Thoeny Farms, Inc.