



DOJ/USDA release new details on competition workshops

By Sara Wyant

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While many of the details seem to still be evolving, the Department of Justice and the USDA released an overview of their first joint public workshop designed to “explore competition and regulatory issues in the agriculture industry.” The workshop will be held at the Des Moines Area Community College's FFA Enrichment Center on March 12 in Ankeny, IA.

Ironically, a draft release of the event circulated throughout Washington circles last week, raising speculation about what was taking so long to actually make it official. This highly anticipated first session was supposedly going to serve as an introduction to the series of workshops, but also will focus specifically on issues facing crop farmers. But the preliminary list of speakers also includes a pork producer and representative from Food and Water Watch. A farmer roundtable discussion and testimony will also be given, but Farmer panelists will be posted on the Web site at a later date. The list of speakers is so long within each segment, it's difficult to see how much discussion and dialogue can actually take place during the event. The workshop schedule follows:

Workshop details:

March 12, 2010
9 a.m. to 5 p.m.
DMACC campus
FFA Enrichment Center
1055 SW Prairie Trail Parkway
Ankeny, Iowa
To register:
<https://go.dmacc.edu/ffa/agworkshop>.

Opening Remarks (9:00 a.m. CST - 9:15 a.m. CST)

Tom Vilsack, Secretary of Agriculture, U.S. Department of Agriculture

Christine Varney, Assistant Attorney General for Antitrust, U.S. Department of Justice

Roundtable Discussion and Presentation of Issues (9:15 a.m. CST - 11:30 a.m. CST)

Tom Vilsack, Secretary of Agriculture, U.S. Department of Agriculture

Christine Varney, Assistant Attorney General for Antitrust, U.S. Department of Justice

Tom Miller, Attorney General, State of Iowa

Bill Northey, Secretary of Agriculture, State of Iowa

Tom Harkin, Senator, U.S. Senate (tentative)

Chuck Grassley, Senator, U.S. Senate (tentative)

Leonard Boswell, Congressman, U.S. House of Representatives (tentative)

Invited:

Chet Culver, Governor, State of Iowa

A farmer roundtable discussion and testimony will also be given at this time. Farmer panelists will be posted on the Web site at a later date.

Seed Competitive Dynamics Panel (1:00 p.m. CST - 2:15 p.m. CST)

Moderator:

James MacDonald, Chief, Agricultural Structure and Productivity Branch, Economic Research Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture

Panelists:

Ray Gaesser, Soybean and Corn Farmer, Corning, Iowa; Vice President, American Soybean Association; Former President, Iowa Soybean Association

Neil E. Harl, Charles F. Curtiss Distinguished Professor in Agriculture and Emeritus Professor of Economics, Iowa State University; Member of the Iowa Bar

Dermot Hayes, Professor of Economics and Finance, Pioneer Chair in Agribusiness, Iowa State University

Diana Moss, Vice President & Senior Fellow, American Antitrust Institute

Jim Tobin, Vice President, Industry Affairs, Monsanto Company

Agricultural Trends Panel (2:15 p.m. CST - 3:15 p.m. CST)

Moderator:

Phil Weiser, Deputy Assistant Attorney General, U.S. Department of Justice

Panelists:

Brian Buhr, Professor and Head of Department, Applied Economics, University of Minnesota

Rachael Goodhue, Associate Professor, Department of Agriculture and Resource Economics, University of California, Davis

Mary Hendrickson, Extension Associate Professor of Rural Sociology, University of Missouri

John Lawrence, Professor of Economics, Iowa State University

Chuck Wirtz, pork producer, Whittemore, Iowa

Patrick Woodall, Research Director, Food & Water Watch

Enforcer Roundtable Discussion Panel (3:30 p.m. CST - 4:15 p.m. CST)

Moderator:

Mark Tobey, Special Counsel for State Relations and Agriculture, U.S. Department of Justice

Panelists:

Steve Bullock, Attorney General, State of Montana

Richard Cordray, Attorney General, State of Ohio

John Ferrell, Deputy Under Secretary for Marketing and Regulatory Programs, U.S. Department of Agriculture

Stephen Obie, Director, Division of Enforcement, Commodity Futures Trading Commission

William Stallings, Assistant Section Chief, Transportation, Energy and Agriculture Section, Antitrust Division, U.S. Department of Justice

Public Testimony (4:15 p.m. CST - 5:15 p.m. CST)

This is an opportunity for those in the audience to make comments in an open forum.

Additional updates and information will be posted on the Antitrust Division's agriculture workshop Web site at <http://www.justice.gov/atr/public/workshops/ag2010/index.htm>. While no streaming Web cast will be available, transcripts will be available for review at a later date on the Antitrust Division's Web site. Individuals seeking more information on the workshops should contact agriculturalworkshops@usdoj.gov.

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