



Big Does Not Just Happen: Our Government Is Failing to Do Its Job

By Joe Maxwell

Because our government has failed to do its job, a handful of transnational corporations and their overpaid CEOs control our food system, driving family farmers off the land, abusing workers, and leaving consumers without healthy and safe food choices.

These transnational corporations have gained monopolistic control over our food system by systematically concentrating their power, wealth and undue political influence over the agriculture, food, and manufacturing markets. They use this abusive control to strangle out competition in the market that would

otherwise allow for fairer compensation for the individuals' work and the investment they have contributed in supplying our food.

In our capitalist economy, fair competition within markets allows for an inclusive economy with shared prosperity, more fairly distributing the wealth created within the market to each individual based on their work and investment. A competitive market provides individuals and their families economic security and access to the American Dream.

It is our government's responsibility to ensure the economy works for the people and is

inclusive and equitable. To meet this responsibility, our government must implement and enforce necessary market safeguards that ensure a fair, honest, accessible, and competitive market, allowing all citizens their fair opportunity to share in the prosperity they help build. Over one hundred years ago, starting with President Teddy Roosevelt's trust (monopoly) busting policies, our government accepted this responsibility.

Through the enactment of three landmark pieces of legislation—Sherman Act, Clayton Act, and the Packers and Stockyards Act—Congress established the rules that would govern the market and granted authority to the Federal Trade Commission, the Department of Justice, and the United States Department of Agriculture to act as the referees in the market to ensure the rules were followed. In this way, they bridled capitalism and its natural abusive tendencies setting up a legislative framework that would allow our capitalistic economic system to work for the people delivering a shared prosperity for all

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"Today no greater concentration of corporate power, monopolistic practices and exclusion of economic prosperity exists than in the livestock markets where four companies control over 80% of the cattle market, 68% of the hog market, and over 60% of chicken/poultry market."

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OFFICIAL NOTICE
OCM ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING
Saturday, August 10
9:00 AM

By this note we are hereby giving official notice to all OCM members of the 2019 OCM Annual Membership Meeting to be held on Saturday, August 10, 2019 at 9:00 AM (CST) at the Kansas City Airport Marriott,

775 Brasilia Avenue, Kansas City, Missouri as required in our bylaws. All memberships must be processed prior to Thursday, August 8 by 4:30 PM in order to be eligible to vote at this Membership Meeting. If you haven't paid your 2019 dues, please do so as soon as possible.

We hope that you will join us for the 21st Annual Food and Agriculture Conference "Arming the Movement for Independent Family Agriculture" prior to the Membership Meeting and hear all the great speakers we have lined up. Watch for Conference details on our website and in this newsletter. Please join us in Kansas City!

MAXWELL (continued from page 1)

Unfortunately, through lack of enforcement of this legislative framework and nearly people who contribute to building America's prosperity. a complete abandonment of the recognition of government's role and responsibility in the market, our government has unbridled capitalism and released a monopolistic and likely oligarchic economic system onto the backs of the people. Our government is now for the corporations and by the corporations.

Today no greater concentration of corporate power, monopolistic practices and exclusion of economic prosperity exists than in the livestock markets where four companies control over 80% of the cattle market, 68% of the hog market, and over 60% of chicken/poultry market. This lack of competition denies farmers, local and regional businesses, and the families in rural communities their fair share of the economic prosperity they

help build through their hard work and investment.

In agriculture, this undue corporate power has been allowed to occur by USDA's failure to implement necessary safeguards, to properly administer the law and to enforce the law they were entrusted with through Congress's enactment of the Packers and Stockyards Act of 1921 (P&S Act). P&S Act granted the USDA the authority, power, and responsibility to ensure the markets remain competitive and that a shared prosperity exists for America's family farmers and ranchers within the food system. Big does not just happen; it is allowed to happen when our government fails to do its job as a referee. USDA has failed.

OCM and independent family farmers have been fighting for two decades to get USDA to do its job to establish market safeguards necessary to protect them against the predatory, retaliatory and discriminatory

Please see **MAXWELL** on page 6

USDA is expected to issue rules sometime later this summer, but with Secretary Perdue announcing that he believes the corporate monopolies' abusive practices are moral actions that neither regulation or litigation can solve, it is clear he is simply ignoring USDA's imperative and defined role to establish the rules and be the referee in the market.



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21ST ANNUAL **FOOD and AGRICULTURE**

Conference and Membership Meeting

AUGUST 8-10, 2019

Kansas City, MO

ocm
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Competitive Markets

*Arming the
Movement for Independent
Family Agriculture*

Marriott Kansas City Airport
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Reservations may be made under the group name Organization for Competitive Markets at a rate of \$102/per night. Book your room at www.competitivemarkets.com or by calling (816) 464-2200. Rooms are available at the discounted rate until 7/19/19.

**Join us for the only national conference
focused on breaking up corporate
consolidation and abusive monopoly
power in agriculture.**

This year's conference is a two-day gathering of experts and advocates from across the United States for a rare opportunity to meet in person, exchange expertise and plan for the fights ahead of us to defend farm families against abusive corporate power.

The experience will begin even before the conference, with our exclusive pre-conference packet containing the latest research and thinking from farm and food experts on corporate power, consolidation, and market barriers.

The conference will be split between learning and action planning. For the learning portion, we will have an opportunity to hear about the expertise, experiences and hopes for the fight for farm families of some of the most recognized names within our movement. As for action planning, we will be leading workshops that will allow for in-depth networking and result in concrete, coordinated strategies to win the battle for our better farm and food future.

Agend

THURSDAY, AUGUST 8, 2019

12:00 - 1:00 PM **Registration**

Session One

1:00 - 1:15 PM **Welcome**
Speaker: **Don Stull**
Organization for Competitive Markets

1:15 - 2:00 PM **Opening Keynote**
Speaker: **John Ikerd**
University of Missouri

2:00 - 4:30 PM **Presentations:**

- **Why the Movement for Independent Family Agriculture?**
- **Finding a Shared Voice**
- **Making an Impact in 2019**

5:30 - 6:30 PM **Networking Reception with a Cash Bar**

6:30 - 8:00 PM **Dinner**
Speaker: **Sarah Lloyd**
Wisconsin Farmers Union

FRIDAY, AUGUST 9, 2019

Session Two

9:00 - 12:30 PM **Campaign Workshop Breakouts:**

- **Checkoff Program Reform**
- **Food and Agriculture Merger Moratorium and Antitrust Review**
- **Messaging Corporate Power**

12:30 - 1:45 PM **Lunch**
Opening Remarks: **Rohit Chopra**
Federal Trade Commission

Session Three

2:00 - 3:00 PM **Campaign Workshops Debriefing**

3:00 - 3:15 PM **Break**

3:15 - 4:00 PM **Closing Keynote**
Speaker: **Pakou Hang**
Hmong American Farmers Association

4:00 - 4:30 PM **Final Thoughts and Call to Action**

SATURDAY, AUGUST 10, 2019

9:00 AM **OCM Membership Meeting**



OCM Member Spotlight:

EQUAL EXCHANGE



By Katherine Un

Welcome to this new section of our newsletter. OCM members are a diverse group of dedicated advocates who share a distinct point of view. We're all committed to competitive food and agricultural markets that reward entrepreneurship, not cheating, corruption and abuse. In this section of the newsletter, we'll be celebrating the passion and innovativeness of our membership and learning from each other's experiences.

To kick off this series, I spoke with Danielle Robidoux, Action Forum Organizer at Equal Exchange. Equal Exchange is an OCM associate member. They are a fair-trade organization most famous for their red-packaged coffee. They are organized as a democratic worker cooperative and, as Danielle explains in this piece, they will soon include the leadership of citizen consumers alongside workers. Joe Maxwell, OCM Executive Director, recently attended the Equal Exchange Summit where he connected over issues of anti-consolidation and our campaign to pass the Food and Agribusiness Merger Moratorium Act.

What is your favorite Equal Exchange product? How do you prepare it? And how do you enjoy it?

I've been a coffee person my whole life.

I'm Italian. They give children coffee! Ethiopian Yirgacheffe* is my favorite Equal Exchange product for sure. The coffee is sun-dried, that means that it's dried in the fruits, which gives it a lot of flavor. For Equal Exchange coffees, we always support small farmers, who are organized in democratic cooperatives. Any coffee that we sell is not made on a plantation [to mean 'monocrop']. We encourage small farmers to diversify their business. They'll be growing other things along with the coffee that gives them economic resilience and it changes the flavor of the coffee as well. Equal Exchange is not about coming in and telling farmers how to do things. It's

about empowering farmers and connecting them to market access so that they are able to build and grow in the way that best suits them and makes use of their know-how.

I have this coffee-making contraption at my house that everyone makes fun of because it looks like a science experiment. It's called a vacuum press. There is no best way to make coffee but that's my favorite way. I like to sit and enjoy my coffee. I slowly sip it out of this little mug. It keeps the coffee hot for 8 hours!

*[*For coffee newbies like me: Yirgacheffe is a small area of the Sidama region of southern Ethiopia. Yirgacheffe coffee is a type of coffee bean that was first developed in that area. The high altitude of the Yirgacheffe region give the bean a particularly intense flavor.]*

Please tell us about Equal Exchange's citizen consumers project.

There's a lot of interest in local farming but most folk start their day with a beverage like coffee or tea. Those products only grow between the tropics [of Cancer and Capricorn]. Folks buy those products without being connected to their story. How do we explain the journey of how it gets to you and who are the farmers who make those products? How can you facilitate a connection when they live really far from you? Equal Exchange is trying to humanize the food system. We want to educate people to the fact that we all have a shared responsibility to the market. China owns one in four pigs in the U.S., how does that even make sense? Why is that the case and why don't we just own - have autonomy over - our own land? Similarly, we want folks abroad to have control over their own land. U.S. companies will come and buy up their land in this land grabbing way and they'll take control.

We want to educate people to the fact that we all have a shared responsibility to the market. China owns one in four pigs in the U.S., how does that even make sense?

The citizen consumer piece came in because voting with your dollars just wasn't enough anymore. Starbucks opened

a Pandora's box. Bigger companies started buying up smaller companies that were already selling value-based fair-trade products, like coffee. Take Unilever's purchase of Ben & Jerry's. It's advantageous for Unilever, from a financial stand point, for Ben & Jerry to still appear independent and to let them continue with their value-based

work. It's not enough to buy with your dollar because you can't even keep track of where the money goes anymore. With our citizen consumer program, we're telling folks that their political voices matter. That's how you make change in the food system. We're not a business, we're a community. Our producers and worker owners, they're part of the community. We want citizen consumers to feel as though they're part of that community too. Bring down those walls. We're all sitting around one table. We all care about the food system and we want to make it better. All parts of the supply chain matter and we need all parts to make change happen. That's why we've started down this new path of having citizen consumers sit on our board.

What's the key to building collective power with farmers, workers and consumers?

It takes trust. You have to take risks to share power. People are misunderstanding what it means to be part of a representative democracy. It's not about being involved in every decision. Sometimes you have to trust that folks are choosing the best thing, even though you don't agree. You don't want bodies doing and undoing, working against each other.

And it's not just about learning when to step back. You also have to know when to step up. It's so much easier to say, "I don't like what you're doing." It is so much harder to say, "I don't like what you're doing, this is a solution." If you just criticize you're not building a better world, you're just ripping apart someone else's vision for a better world.

Shared power is good, it makes us innovate. What's best for building an alternative trade organization for the next 30 years? It doesn't look like it did in the past 30 years. If we stay there, we're not going to innovate, take risk and move forward. We're going to get absorbed into other things that are happening.

Why did Equal Exchange join OCM?

We had a lot of requests for the citizen consumer project. There are so many initiatives out there, so much happening.

Please see UN on page 5

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

By Joe Maxwell

Tip Your Hat

With our President Don Stull being out of pocket for a little while, I have the opportunity to write this month's letter. As the Executive Director of the Organization for Competitive Markets, I want to thank you, our members, for your support and trust in OCM. With your support and your work, we have been able to build a strong defense against the abuses of some of the world's largest monopolistic corporations.

Much of the credit for our success here at OCM belongs to three extremely talented individuals, Angela Huffman, Pat Craycraft and Katherine Un. Just as one example, while I am writing this letter, they are the ones doing all of the heavy lifting insuring this newsletter arrives to you on time and provides you the information you need to stay engaged and active in our work.

If you have ever wondered, "Did OCM get my membership dues?" Pat Craycraft, OCM's Office Manager, is the go-to person and I guarantee you she will know, and she will take care of any other questions you might have. Working behind the scenes, collecting OCM receipts, paying the bills, taking meeting minutes, mailing out correspondence, keeping track of membership, Pat is too often the unsung hero. Pat has been with OCM almost since its start over 20 years ago. Pat is the team member that makes sure the train stays on the track. She keeps our records and keeps our board straight on our policies and board actions. Pat handles the logistics for OCM's annual conference and if you have attended our annual conference and member meeting and you are aware of how smooth they run, well you should just tip your hat to Pat.

Over the last several years, OCM has grown and it has reached new heights as a voice for a just and fair agriculture and food marketplace. OCM is a force to be reckoned with on social media. OCM has

issued five research papers in less than two years becoming a go-to organization for policy makers and journalists. The credit for this new level of recognition and credibility belongs to our Director of Communications and Research, Angela Huffman. Her sound judgement and attention to detail has allowed OCM to be beyond reproach. Angela has helped all of us here at OCM to understand that you must speak truth to power. And for old politicians like myself, that means keeping the "spin" out of our work. Failing to speak the truth based on the facts would allow Big Ag to punch right through our arguments, discrediting our voice in the debate for justice. The next time you read OCM's newsletter, use one of OCM's policy briefs, "like" a Facebook post, or see OCM quoted in a journal or paper, you should just tip your hat to Angela.

There is not doubt OCM is a great think tank and thought leader for America's family farmers and ranchers, but we do more than just talk about the issues—we engage the fight. Our talented OCM Outreach and Engagement Manager, Katherine Un, leads our campaigns, including our fight for Packers and Stockyards Act reform, Country of Origin Labeling, and a moratorium on agriculture mergers and acquisitions. If there is a campaign to wage, Katherine is prepared to take it on. OCM recognizes that in any of these efforts, we cannot do it on our own. Katherine helps OCM identify other stakeholders and works to build positive collaborations that have a combined power to win. The next time you see legislation filed, regulations changed or your neighbor at the coffee shop finally getting our message, you should just tip your hat to Katherine.

Recently on many of occasions I have had people say to me "Joe, you are doing a great job." While I appreciate the compliment, I wanted you to know it is these three people that make me look good. My hat is off to them!^{JM}

practices of the monopolistic big integrators, packers and processors.

In the 2008 Farm Bill family farmers and ranchers were successful in pushing Congress to direct USDA to implement new P&S Act rules to address the abusive unfair practices that independent family agriculture faces because of corporate concentration and market power in the packing and processing industry.

During the 2008 Presidential campaign and in support of this Congressional mandate, then Candidates Obama and Biden issued the following statement in their Obama Fact Sheet Rural Plan:

“The 1921 Packers and Stockyards Act prohibits price discrimination by meatpackers against small and mid-size farmers, but the law has not been enforced. Obama will issue regulations for what constitutes undue price discrimination and his administration will enforce the law. He will also strengthen anti-monopoly laws; change federal agriculture policy to strengthen producer protection from fraud, abuse, and market manipulation; and make sure that farm programs are helping family farmers, as opposed to large, vertically integrated corporate agribusiness.”

With high hopes OCM and other farmer organizations helped the Obama administration, United States Department of Agriculture and Department of Justice, launch a series of five workshops designed to gather the evidence necessary to fulfill this promise of hope. OCM member Dudley Butler was appointed the administrator over the then agency responsible for drafting and implementing the envisioned new rules, and he did his job.

As could be expected, almost at once, the proposed new rules came under fire from both Republican and Democrat members of Congress. These members of Congress were following the lead of industry trade organizations such as the National Cattlemen’s Beef Association and the National Chicken Council. These trade and lobbying groups do not represent farmers; they represent transnational corporations like JBS, Cargill and Tyson. In June 2011, with the U.S. House of Representatives coming under Republican control and President Obama and Secretary Vilsack seemingly ceding the fight to the packers and processors, the Congress passed an Agriculture Appropriations rider stripping USDA of funds to finalize and implement the new

livestock market safeguard rules. They all seemed to bow to the economic and political power of the meat industry and their trade and lobbying groups. Only Representative Marcy Kaptur (D-OH) had the moral courage to stand up and speak out during the debate.

Each year following 2011 the Congress passed the same appropriations rider until 2015 when John Oliver took the members of Congress and their trade and lobbying groups head on in his memorable broadcast. He personally shamed the individual members of Congress who were leading the rule killing appropriations rider. As a result they backed off, giving the Obama administration a window of opportunity to push forward on the market safeguard rules.

Instead of plowing forward with the rules they had already issued prior to 2011, Secretary Vilsack and USDA delayed issuing new rules until late in 2016 giving inadequate time for the rules to become final until after President Trump had taken office and appointed an agriculture industry insider as the new USDA Secretary, Sonny Perdue.

In October 2017, Secretary Sonny Perdue withdrew the Farmer Fair Practices Interim Final Rule, and announced it would take no further action on the proposed rule, Unfair Practices and Undue Preferences in Violation of the Packers and Stockyards Act. Further, he has taken no action on the proposed rule, Poultry Grower Ranking Systems. These were the market safeguards OCM, other farm organizations, and individual farmers and ranchers had been pushing for over a decade to protect farmers and ranchers against predatory, retaliatory, and discriminatory practices by the large corporate monopolies.

In response, OCM along with the legal team from Democracy Forward Foundation filed litigation against the Secretary and USDA for illegally withdrawing the rules. In one of their efforts to avert an unfavorable court decision, USDA attorneys announced to the judges that USDA was “working” on rules that would meet the 2008 Congressional mandate.

USDA is expected to issue rules sometime later this summer, but with Secretary Perdue announcing that he believes the corporate monopolies abusive practices are moral actions that neither regulation or litigation can solve, it is clear he is simply ignoring USDA’s imperative and defined role to establish the rules and be the referee in the market.

Secretary Perdue and the USDA must balance the scales of justice and take on the abusive corporate power. They must do their job and implement and enforce meaningful market safeguards that protect farmers and ranchers from predatory and discriminatory actions and that protect them against retaliation when they speak out about the abuses in the market. Secretary Perdue must accept it is his job and his job alone to right the market. He and his agency, USDA, are the only ones with the authority and power to take action.

Therefore, despite how tired we can become from a twenty-year fight, it is time to once again demand justice for independent family agriculture and stand up for America’s family farmers and ranchers. We must accept our responsibility and do our part. We must call on Secretary Perdue and the USDA to do their job: implement the necessary market safeguards on behalf of the American farmer and rancher, balancing the scales of power in the market so our capitalist economy works through fair, equitable and open market competition. For it is only then that our economy works for the people and not the corporations, delivering a shared prosperity through a just, inclusive economy.

OCM is working with RAFL-USA and the Government Accountability Project to begin the campaign. Visit www.standwithfarmfamilies.org for more information and please be prepared to join us in continuing this fight.^{JM}

UN (continued from page 4)

But we’re trying to build a better food system, right? If you have large companies buying up independent food companies, the independent ones aren’t able to breathe. They’re not able to build a better world because they’re just being bought up. How can you move forward if you don’t create space for alternatives to exist? They’re just going to be absorbed into the larger system. That’s where we are now. So we unanimously believe in the Agribusiness Merger Moratorium Act. We said no to a lot of campaigns, but this one hits on everything that we’re trying to do. We need to rally folks around this.

I’d like to thank Danielle Robidoux for taking the time to be interviewed for this piece.^{KU}

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Conference and Membership Meeting

AUGUST 8-10, 2019

Kansas City, MO



*Arming the
Movement for Independent
Family Agriculture*

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_____ Number attending OCM conference @ \$75.00 = \$ _____
**Thursday, August 8, registration begins 12PM,
conference begins 1PM and all-day Friday, August 9**

_____ Number attending reception and banquet @ \$50.00 = \$ _____
**Thursday, August 8, reception 5:30 PM,
banquet 6:30PM**

_____ Number attending lunch @ \$28.00 = \$ _____
Friday, August 9, 12:30PM

Total Registration and Meals = \$ _____

_____ **Attending OCM membership meeting, Saturday August 10, 9AM**

**Make check payable to OCM,
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- \$200: Organization receives bimonthly newsletter and webinar, weekly email news roundup, and campaign toolkits
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All members will receive the bi-monthly newsletter electronically, unless you mark this line for a mailed copy: _____

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